

Executive Committee

Minutes

Thursday, 30 November 2023 (14:00 – 16:00 CET)

Zoom

Interpretation in EN, ES, FR

Welcome from the Chair, Yobana Bermúdez

Click [here](#) to access the Chair's presentation.

Adoption of draft agenda and of the last meeting's minutes (20.09.23): adopted

Action points of the last meeting

- **State-of-play of the decisions made during the last meeting – information**
- Secretariat:
 - Chair to proceed with the celebration of a contract for administrative and financial support services, for the period of three years, with EBCD
 - Chair to send letter of appreciation to the Director of EBCD for the previous years
 - Services contract signed by both parties on 30 October 2023
 - Letter of appreciation to the Director of EBCD sent on 30 October 2023
- Statutes:
 - Following the approval of the required modifications to the Statutes by the members, Secretariat to proceed with the corresponding filing in the clerk's office of the competent Commercial Court
 - Modifications to the Statutes filed at the French-speaking Commercial Court of Brussels on 22 November 2023
- Seat:
 - Following the approval of the transfer of the seat of the association, Secretariat to proceed with the official registration of the transfer
 - Transfer of the seat to "Regus EU Commission, 6 Rond-Point Robert Schuman, 1040 Bruxelles" filed at the French-speaking Commercial Court of Brussels on 22 November 2023
- AOB:
 - Ahead of the next meeting, Secretariat to prepare an overview comparing the costs of organizing in-person, hybrid, and remote meetings
 - Financial Officer to calculate the current financial reserves
 - Agenda items scheduled on these two issues



Membership of General Assembly

- **Endorsement of new member Cofradía de Isla Cristina from Spain**

Mariano García (Cofradía de Isla Cristina) thanked the Executive Committee for endorsing his association. Representing fisheries guilds, the Cofradía de Isla Cristina is a consultative body that collaborates with public administration and helps guilds with planning and management issues. The Cofradía advocates for the interests of fishers and shipowners, and, on the Isla Cristina, shipbuilders and fishers decided to join forces. Mr García provided information on the membership and turnover of his association. The fleet is made up of around 300 vessels, which catch and sell their landings on the same day. With over 21 million EUR in turnover in 2022, the Cofradía ranked first in sales in the Andalusia region. The main points of sale for the association are Madrid, Andalusia, and Portugal. Italy and Croatia are also markets that the Cofradía serves. While the vessels under the Cofradía sell around 140 species, anchovies, mackerel, hake, squid, nephrops, prawns, octopus, and clams are caught and sold the most.

The Executive Committee endorsed the Cofradía de Isla Cristina as a new member of the General Assembly.

- **Endorsement of new member Ribarska Zadruga Friska Riba from Croatia**

The Secretary General, on behalf of Ms Linda Zanki Duvnjak (Ribarska Zadruga Friska Riba), delivered an overview of the Ribarska Zadruga Friska Riba. The association was founded in February 2007 on the initiative of professional fishers from middle Dalmatia, Split and its surroundings. At present, the cooperative is composed of 22 professional fishers who use small-scale pure sein and trawlers to provide a wide range of products, including small blue fish, and all types of white fish. The association buys and sells fish, providing trade mediation on the domestic and foreign markets. In February 2020, the Croatian administration recognised the association as a “Producer Organisation in Fisheries”, which is supported and co-financed by the European Union.

The association is situated in the fishing port of Brižine and is in contact with the Port Authority of Split. The fishing port was renovated with EU funding in June 2021. The association provides, to its fishers, storage for tools and net service, recipients for the fish, ice production, plus supply of electricity and water. Therefore, all the necessary logistics for the landing and receiving of fish are provided. The association has land and building permits for the construction of a fish processing facility, which will enable the disposal of market surpluses and raise the profits of fishers through the added value of fishery products. In this way, the association can establish a mechanism for storage and added value of fishery products and use discards for other industries. The association is looking for partners in the fishing industry that would invest in the purchase and processing of fish and in the construction of a fish processing plant.

As part of other activities, the cooperative also does the procurement of equipment and tools, accounting and bookkeeping, information about legal and other changes related to the fishing sector, counselling and professional assistance when applying for tenders, and protecting and promotion of



the interests of the members. The association collaborates on EU projects with universities and research institutions, supporting academics and students at the Maritime Secondary School of Split.

The Executive Committee endorsed the Ribarska Zadruga Friska Riba as a new member of the General Assembly.

The Chair thanked the Cofradía de Isla Cristina and the Ribarska Zadruga Friska Riba for becoming members and encouraged Mr García and Ms Zanki Duvnjak to actively engage in the work.

Working Groups

- **Reporting by Julien Lamothe, Chair of Working Group 1**

Julien Lamothe (EAPO) informed the Executive Committee that, at the 29 November 2023 meeting of Working Group 1:

- Members exchanged with the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) on the 2023 annual economic report on EU fishing fleets. Members agreed to drafting advice on the report in January 2024 and committed to providing input on the topic, on behalf of their organisations. Mr Lamothe underlined that previous advice on the inclusion of fuel consumption indicators in the economic report had been taken on board by the STECF in this year's edition.
- Members exchanged with a DG MARE representative on the EU's energy transition initiative for fisheries and aquaculture. It was agreed that advice on the topic would be considered at the January 2024 meeting.
- EAPO presented their views on the ways the Commission's Marine Action Plan would impact the EU's fisheries sector. Paul Thomas (EAPO) agreed that EAPO would prepare a proposal of draft advice for the Commission based on their presentation and circulate it to other members for comments and input.
- Members exchanged views on fisheries and aquaculture market disturbances linked to Brexit, energy price increases, among other factors. A document on the matter will be prepared for the March 2024 meeting.
- A planned presentation by Thomas Kruse (DFPO) on Production and Marketing Plans would be rescheduled to the January 2024 Working Group meeting.

- **Reporting by Pierre Commère, Chair of Working Group 2**

Pierre Commère (AIPCE) informed the Executive Committee that, at the 29 November 2023 meeting of Working Group 2:

- DG MARE representatives updated members on various free trade agreements and trade instruments (specifically: Australia, Mercosur, Brazil, Thailand, the European Economic Area, and New Zealand). A request was made for the Commission to provide updates on Morocco at the



next Working Group meeting in January 2024. Mr Commère mentioned the possibility of advice being draft on the ongoing negotiations of an EU-Thailand Free Trade Agreement.

- Members exchanged with a DG MARE representative on the modifications to the IUU Regulation, specifically to the Catch Documentation Scheme, which took place in the context of the legislative revision of the fisheries control system. The Working Group decided not to draft any advice on the topic yet.
 - Members exchanged with an FAO representative on the outcomes of the last Committee on Fisheries Sub-Committee on Fish Trade (COFI:FT) meeting. The Working Group was reminded that the next Sub-Committee meeting, for the Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management, will take place virtually from 15 to 19 January 2024.
 - An EUMOFA expert presented members of the Working Group the latest “EU Fish Market” report. Various members shared their thoughts and concerns around the topic with EUMOFA and the rest of the Working Group.
 - Poul Melgaard (Danish Seafood Association) presented the findings of the 2023 edition of the “AIPCE Finfish Study”.
- **Reporting by Benoît Thomassen, Chair of Working Group 3**

Benoît Thomassen (FEAP) informed the Executive Committee that, at the 30 November 2023 meeting of Working Group 3:

- Members exchanged with a DG SANTE representative on a proposed directive to introduce EU-level targets for the reduction of food waste. The Working Group agreed that, before drafting advice on the topic, a questionnaire would be sent out to members for them to provide input on good practices and hurdles faced when combating food waste.
- A member of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors presented the scientific opinion “Towards Sustainable Food Consumption”, outlining what tools, at EU-level, can be used to overcome barriers preventing consumers from adopting sustainable and healthy diets.
- Members exchanged with a DG MARE representative on labelling requirements under Article 35 of the Common Market Organisation (CMO). The Commission shared the results of a Member State survey on the issue. No action point was formulated by the Working Group.
- The Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC) proposed to establish a joint focus group to address labelling matters at the HoReCa’s level. Several members expressed interest in joining such a focus group. Terms of Reference will be drafted by the Secretary General together with the AAC.
- The Secretary General presented the results of a questionnaire to members on potential awareness campaigns on fishery and aquaculture products in the EU. Working Group members discussed amendments to draft advice under development.



- Following discussions with and contributions from several members, the final draft advice on substantiation and communication of explicit environmental claims was tabled at the Working Group meeting.

The Secretary General recalled that, at the Working Group 3's level, no objection from members was received on the draft advice on the substantiation and communication of explicit environmental claims. At a later stage, the Secretariat received a communication via email from Mr Bruno Guillaumie informing that, at the Executive Committee's level, EMPA would not support the document.

The Executive Committee approved the advice on "Substantiation and Communication of Explicit Environmental Claims (Green Claims Directive)".

Inter-Advisory Council's Coordination

- **Reporting back on the following meetings:**
 - **2nd meeting of the Ocean Partnership Forum under the EU-China Blue Partnership for the Oceans (23 September 2023)**

The Secretary General explained that the MAC had received an invitation from DG MARE to attend the 2nd meeting of the Ocean Partnership Forum under the EU-China Blue Partnership for the Oceans, which he attended in person in Shenzhen, China. Mr Reis Santos provided a summary of the main discussion points of the meeting, including the opening remarks of the EU and Chinese representatives and the main points related to the fisheries and aquaculture market.

- **Inter-Advisory Councils' Brexit Forum (9 October 2023)**

The Secretary General recalled that the MAC, together with other Advisory Councils affected by Brexit, established the Inter-AC Brexit Forum. The Secretary General attended the 9 October 2023 meeting on behalf of the MAC. The main agenda items were updates from DG MARE on outcomes of Working Groups and Specialised Committees on Fisheries, and updates on upcoming EU-UK bilateral consultations. At the meeting, the various Advisory Council put forward several topics: a request to ICES on the role of forage fish in the North Sea, preparations for the revision of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, updates on UK consultations, and addressing compatibility of Technical Conservation Measures and control and enforcement.

- **Inter-Advisory Councils' coordination meeting with DG MARE (10 October 2023)**

The Secretary General recalled that the Inter-Advisory Councils' coordination meeting with DG MARE was attended by Ms Yobana Bermúdez (MAC Chair), Ms Christine Absil (MAC Vice-Chair), Julien Lamothe (MAC Vice-Chair and Chair of Working Group 1), by Mr Pierre Commère (Chair of Working Group 2), and by himself. At the meeting, Ms Charlina Vitcheva delivered an opening address focused on working towards fisheries of the future. Afterward, the Commission provided an update on the functioning of the Advisory Councils, and on the international developments for external EU fisheries. A presentation on the implications for fisheries of the revised Control Regulation also took place. Additionally, there was a presentation about the STECF opinion on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems.



○ **Advisory Board of the European Fisheries Control Agency (19 October 2023)**

The Secretary General recalled that the 11 Advisory Councils are part of the Advisory Board of the European Fisheries Control Agency. The Secretary General attended the meeting on behalf of Mr Daniel Voces (Europêche), the appointed representative to the advisory board. At the meeting, Mr Reis Santos drew attention to advice adopted on the harmonisation of import controls to fight the presence of IUU fishing products in the EU market as well as to advice on forced labour. He also mentioned several other pieces of advice and provided an overview of the work programme for year 8 (2023-2024). At the meeting, EFCA representatives presented their programming document, which had been circulated to members via email. The bi-annual rotation of the Advisory Board representative in the Administrative Board of the agency was also addressed.

Finances

- **Update on current financial reserves by Dawlat Bik, Finance Officer**

Click [here](#) to access the presentation.

The Finance Officer provided a general overview of the budget of the ongoing financial year, Year 8 (2023-2024). Mr Bik underlined that there are three income streams: the operating grant provided by the European Commission, the financial support of Member States, and the fees paid by members. He outlined the total budget and highlighted current expenditure estimates. Concerning financial Year 7 (2022-2023), he explained that a final payment from the Commission was still pending. Taking this into account, the estimated budget and the actual expenditure for Year 7 were almost identical. The accumulated reserves from the seven financial years corresponded to EUR 107.398,50€.

The Chair expressed preference for the setting of a minimum financial reserve, which should account for the delays in the payment of the grants by the Commission.

The Finance Officer expressed support for the setting of a financial reserve, but highlighted that it could be challenging to estimate the exact amount, especially since the Executive Committee previously agreed to increase the reimbursement rates and allowances to the members for participation in the meetings.

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) suggested investing some of the reserve to accrue interest. Mr Guillaumie suggested that, if Belgian law allows it, half of the accumulated reserves from the seven operational years should be invested in a banking scheme.

The Finance Officer agreed that the possibility to invest in a risk-adverse manner, particularly via savings accounts, could be discussed with various banks in Belgium.

The Chair proposed that, ahead of the next meeting, the Finance Officer would consult with various banks in Belgium about the mentioned possibilities.



Organisation of meetings

- **Presentation on the financial and operational implications of the different organisation methods (in-person, hybrid, remote) by Pedro Reis Santos, Secretary General**

The Secretary General delivered a presentation on the different financial and operational costs and benefits associated with organising in-person, hybrid, and remote meetings. He explained that, at the Executive Committee meeting on 24 April 2022, an agreement was made amongst members to alternate online and in-person meetings. Mr Reis Santos highlighted that this approach had been adopted ever since. He outlined to the members which meetings in 2024 were planned to take place in-person and which were planned to take place online. The Secretary General presented and summarised the monetary costs associated with the different meeting types, while highlighting the advantages and disadvantages each meeting type provides.

In-person meetings are beneficial for networking, help facilitate informal negotiations during breaks, foster “team building”, ensure that members are more focussed on the meeting, and help the Chair(s) and Secretariat better interpret reactions from members. They are, however, costly to organise and run, and require members to travel. Hybrid meetings help members stay flexible in their participation – if they cannot travel, they can still participate online. However, hybrid meetings lead to a feeling that two separate meetings are taking place (one online and one in-person). Additionally, the Chair(s) and Secretariat are required to pay closer attention to developments both online and in-person. For the Secretariat, hybrid meetings also introduce more uncertainty in the selection of the meeting venue and of the catering. Online meetings are the least costly meeting type and are easy to attend. However, networking at online meetings is difficult. Furthermore, the likelihood of members “multi-tasking” during meetings is higher. It can also be more difficult for the Chair(s) and the Secretariat to interpret the reactions of the members.

- **Exchange of views**

Jacopo Pasquero (Conxemar) underlined the importance of collaboration within the MAC and stressed that in-person meetings foster collaboration. He also highlighted that one of the MAC objectives is to meet stakeholders, something that is not fully possible online. Mr Pasquero stressed that members could get more out of in-person meetings.

Sean O’Donoghue (KFO) expressed that the MAC had learned some lessons from previous experiences. Based on these experiences, in his opinion, hybrid meetings did not work at all. Mr O’Donoghue voiced support for having in-person meetings. He asked whether it was mandatory for the MAC to have online meetings or whether this was just a decision taken by members. He went on to ask whether the Executive Committee meeting planned for July 2024 could be moved to an in-person meeting instead of an online meeting.

The Secretary General explained that the Commission wants and strongly encourages the Advisory Councils to have some online/hybrid meetings. He went on to state that the Executive Committee meeting in July was solely to prepare the Work Programme for the next operational year. If the



meeting were to take place in-person, Mr Reis Santos underlined, the Secretariat would need to make adjustments to the budget of operational year 8.

Guus Pastoor (AIPCE) expressed opposition to the organisation of hybrid meetings. Mr Pastoor expressed support for the current format, adding that the balance between online and in-person meetings was a positive approach.

Quentin Marchais (ClientEarth) agreed with the points above, adding that, if necessary, it was possible to adapt the meetings. Mr Marchais also drew attention to the benefits, from an environmental perspective, of alternating the meeting set-ups, instead of always meeting in person.

Pierre Commère (AIPCE) disagreed with the mentioned views on hybrid meetings, adding that, in the experience of his association, hybrid meetings were more complex, but had benefits. Mr Commère disagreed with Mr O'Donoghue's suggestion of organising the July 2024 meeting in a physical format, since it would require travelling for only one day.

Julien Lamothe (EAPO) underlined that hosting the July 2024 Executive Committee meeting in-person might be difficult due to the Olympic Games in Paris. Mr Lamothe voiced support for having the meeting online. As for hybrid meetings, he argued that these were only relevant when experts could not attend in person.

The Chair proposed to maintain the meetings and calendar as foreseen in the work programme of year 8 (2023-2024). When preparing the work programme of year 9 (2024-2025), the Secretariat could introduce one hybrid meeting as a trial.

AOB

- **Collaboration with Outermost Regions Advisory Council (CCRUP)**

Carolina Silveira (CCRUP Secretariat) proposed the joint development by the MAC and the CCRUP of recommendations concerning the proliferation of invasive algae species in the Outermost Regions. Ms Silveira highlighted the growing interest in algae-based products in the EU market.

Pierre Commère (AIPCE) mentioned that he had the opportunity to look at a preliminary draft text prepared by the CCRUP Secretariat. Mr Commère expressed uncertainty about the competent Working Group to address the topic. On the one hand, the topic was about production, so Working Group 1, while also being about research, which was more relevant to Working Group 3.

The Secretary General suggested that the assigning of a Working Group by the Executive Committee would facilitate the procedure.

The Chair proposed the launch of a consultation via written procedure directed at the three Working Groups. If any specific comment arose, these could be addressed by the most relevant Working Group at the January 2024 meetings.



- **Roundtable of AC Chairs & Vice-Chairs with Commissioner Sinkevičius ahead of December Council (Brussels, 7 December 2023)**

The Secretary General informed that Commissioner Sinkevičius invited the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the 11 Advisory Councils for a roundtable discussion about the decisions on fishing opportunities for 2024 ahead of the next meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries configuration of the Council of the European Union. Mr Reis Santos provided a brief overview of suggested talking points to be raised by the MAC representatives at the meeting, mainly on the disturbances in the market of fisheries and aquaculture due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Additionally, the recommendations in the difference pieces of advice concerning the STECF's economic reports on the fleet, aquaculture, and processing sectors could be mentioned.

The Chair proposed that the Secretariat would include these points in a written document to be circulated to the members, ensuring transparency.



Summary of action points

- Membership of General Assembly:
 - At the next meeting, Secretariat to provide an overview of the composition of the membership, including distribution across the various categories of the supply chain.
- Finances:
 - Finance Officer to consult various banks in Belgium about the possibility to invest around half of the accumulated reserves in a risk-adverse manner, for example a savings account.
- Organisation of meetings:
 - For Year 8 (2023-2024), the organisation of the meetings and the calendar to be maintained as foreseen in the annual work programme.
 - For Year 9 (2024-2025), when preparing the annual work programme, Secretariat to consider the possibility of introducing one hybrid meeting as a trial.
- AOB:
 - Consultation via written procedure of the three Working Groups concerning the proposed joint draft advice with the CCRUP on the proliferation of invasive algae species in the Outermost Regions.
 - Secretariat to prepare and circulate a written document with the suggested talking points for the roundtable discussion with Commissioner Sinkevičius.



Attendance List

Representative	Organisation	Role
Anne-France Mattlet	Europêche	Member
Benoît Thomassen	Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP)	Member
Bruno Guillaumie	European Molluscs' Producers Association (EMPA)	Member
Carolina Silveira	Outermost Regions Advisory Council (CCRUP)	Observer
Christine Absil	Good Fish	Member
Dawlat Bik	Market Advisory Council (MAC)	Secretariat
Els Bedert	EuroCommerce	Member
Emiel Brouckaert	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO)	Member
Gaëtane Le Breuil	European Fishmeal	Member
Guus Pastoor	EU Fish Processors and Traders Association (AIPCE)	Member
Jacopo Pasquero	Conxemar	Member
Jean-Marie Robert	Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne	Member
John Lynch	Irish South and East Fish Producers Organisation (ISEFPO)	Member
Julien Lamothe	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO)	Member
Laure Guillevic	WWF	Member
Linda Duvnjak	Ribarska Zadruga Friska Riba	Observer
María Luisa Alvaréz Blanco	Federación de Asociaciones Provinciales de Empresarios Detallistas de Pescados y Productos Congelados (FEDEPESCA)	Member
Mariano García García	Cofradía de Isla Cristina	Observer
Marine Cusa	Oceana	Member
Massimo Bellavista	COPA COGECA	Member
Maximilian Schwarz	Market Advisory Council (MAC)	Secretariat
Paul Thomas	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO)	Member
Pedro Reis Santos	Market Advisory Council (MAC)	Secretariat
Pierre Commère	EU Fish Processors and Traders Association (AIPCE)	Member





Market Advisory Council

Representative	Organisation	Role
Quentin Marchais	ClientEarth	Member
Rosalie Tukker	Europêche	Member
Sean O'Donoghue	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation (KFO)	Member
Vanya Vulperhorst	Oceana	Member
Yobana Bermúdez	EU Fish Processors and Traders Association (AIPCE)	Chair

