

Executive Committee

Minutes

Wednesday, 31 January 2024 (14:45 – 16:30 CET)

Copa Cogeca (Meeting Room A), Rue de Trèves 61, 1040 Brussels

Interpretation in EN, ES, FR

Welcome from the Chair, Yobana Bermúdez

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

Adoption of the agenda and of the last meeting's minutes (30.11.23): adopted

Action points of the last meeting

- **State-of-play of the decisions made during the last meeting - information**
- 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
 - Agenda item scheduled for this meeting
- Finances:
 - Finance Officer to consult various banks in Belgium about the possibility to invest around half of the accumulated reserves in a risk-averse manner, for example a savings account
 - Information note prepared by the Finance Officer sent to the Management Team
 - Agenda item scheduled for this meeting
- 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
 - Ongoing
- 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
 - WGs Written Procedures: 5-20 December 2023 & 5-19 January 2024



- Talking points for the roundtable circulated: 6 December 2023

Working Groups

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

Julien Lamothe (EAPO) informed the Executive Committee that, at the 31 January 2024 meeting of Working Group 1:

- Members exchanged with a DG MARE representative on the “Fishers of the Future” project. Members agreed to, at the next meeting in April 2024, to schedule an exchange of views about the survey circulated by the Commission’s consultant, and to potentially draft advice on missing information and knowledge gaps in the project.
- DG MARE representatives updated members on the STECF Expert Working Group meeting on validation of selected sustainability indicators and underlying methodologies, which took place between 11-15 December 2023. Mr Lamothe proposed to members to invite the Chair of the Expert Working Group to the next meeting in April 2024 to present the results of the sustainability indicators report. He also expressed interest in taking stock of the tools that already exist to validate indicators and offered to add this to the agenda for the April 2024 meeting.
- Members exchanged with a DG MARE representative on EUMOFA’s 2024 work programme. Members agreed to postpone finalising the draft advice on the topic to the next meeting in April 2024. Mr Lamothe encouraged members to share any relevant information on the topic before the next meeting.
- Following discussions with and contributions from several members, the final draft advice on the Terms of Reference of the 2024 edition of the Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet was tabled at the Working Group meeting. Members agreed to put this advice forward to the Executive Committee for approval.
- Following extensive discussions between members, the draft advice on the expected effects of the Commission’s Marine Action Plan on the supply to the EU market was not finalised at the Working Group meeting. To allow for Oceana (and other interested members) to include their comments in the draft, the Secretary General proposed to proceed with an urgent written procedure and put the draft forward to the Executive Committee as soon as possible.
- Following discussions with and contributions from several members, the draft advice on the energy transition in EU fisheries and aquaculture was tabled at the Working Group meeting. Members could not come to a consensus on the draft. The Secretary General proposed to prepare a written procedure and reconsider the draft the next meeting in April 2024.

The Executive Committee approved the advice on “Terms of Reference of the 2024 edition of the Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet”.

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



Pierre Commère (AIPCE) informed the Executive Committee that, at the 30 January 2024 meeting of Working Group 2:

- DG MARE representatives updated members on various free trade agreements and trade policy instruments (specifically: Thailand, the European Economic Area, Mercosur, and Morocco). Updates on the EU's General Scheme of Preferences and DG TRADE's 2023 Implementation and Enforcement report were also provided.
- Following discussions with and contributions from several members, the final draft advice on the negotiation of the EU-Thailand Free Trade Agreement was tabled at the Working Group meeting. Members agreed to put this advice forward to the Executive Committee for approval.
- A presentation by Ecorys of a study on risks and vulnerabilities in the EU food supply chain was rescheduled for the next meeting in April 2024.
- Members received an update from a DG MARE representative on 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. Mr Commère underscored the importance of ensuring that fisheries operators are aware of the changes coming their way.
- A presentation by a Commission representative on the EU Talent Pool and other new measures on skills and talent to help address labour shortages was postponed to the next meeting in April 2024.

The Executive Committee approved the advice on “the negotiation of the EU-Thailand Free Trade Agreement”.

- **Reporting by Secretary General (on behalf of Benoît Thomassen, Chair of Working Group 3)**

The Secretary General informed the Executive Committee that, at the 30 January 2024 meeting of Working Group 3:

- Members exchanged with DG SANTE representatives on recent food fraud initiatives and were presented “GoldFish”, an EU coordinated action on short-weighting of fishery products. The Working Group decided not to draft any advice on the topic yet. Members agreed to invite DG SANTE representatives back for the next meeting in April 2024.
- Members exchanged with a DG GROW representative on the co-creation of a transition pathway for a more resilient, sustainable and digital agri-food ecosystem. The Working Group agreed to invite the Commission representative back once DG GROW's report on the topic was published and decided not to draft any advice on the topic for the moment.
- Following discussions with and contributions from several members, the updated draft advice on the “Taste the Ocean” campaign and other potential campaigns for awareness about fishery and



aquaculture products in the EU was tabled at the Working Group meeting. Members agreed to put this advice forward to the Executive Committee for approval.

- Following discussions with and contributions from several members, the final draft advice on EU-level targets for food waste reduction & good practices in the fisheries and aquaculture market was tabled at the Working Group meeting. One outstanding point remained in the draft text, so the Secretary General proposed to informally consult with the interested members and to proceed with an urgent written procedure after.
- Members were updated on the establishment of a joint MAC/AAC Focus Group on Consumer Information in the HoReCa Sector. The Secretary General explained that the Terms of Reference had been circulated to all members. Several members expressed interest in joining the Focus Group. The Secretary General stated a poll would be circulated for members to indicate their meeting availability.
- Jarek Zieliński (PFPA) presented the state of play of the legislative procedure around stiffening in the AOB section of the meeting. A Commission representative stated that a response to the MAC letter on the issue was being finalised.

The Executive Committee approved the advice on “the “Taste the Ocean” campaign and other potential campaigns for awareness about fishery and aquaculture products in the EU”.

Membership of the General Assembly

- **Overview of the composition of the membership, including distribution across the various categories of the value supply chain, by Pedro Reis Santos, Secretary General**

The Secretary General provided an overview of MAC's membership composition and geographical distribution. He stated that the MAC has 69 members from 12 Member States, with Spain and France having the highest membership share and emphasised that Belgian membership was skewed due to the registration of several member organisations in Brussels. Mr Reis Santos stated that membership is lowest in the Baltics and Balkans.

Looking at interest distribution, Mr Reis Santos pointed out that seven of the 69 members are classified as "other interest groups." Of these, six are in the Executive Committee. He explained that ideally, the Executive Committee should include ten members from this category. Mr Reis Santos also outlined that the remaining 62 members fall into the “value supply chain” category, which is further categorised into primary producers (41 members), processors/traders/suppliers (18 members), retailers (2 members), and trade unions (1 member).

- **Exchange of views**

Christine Absil (Good Fish) asked whether the Secretary General had made any contact with other NGOs and highlighted that she thought the PEW Foundation had expressed interest in applying.



The Secretary General explained that he had several meetings with representatives of the PEW Foundation, but that confirmation of their interest in applying was still pending. Mr Reis Santos mentioned that, based on their areas of operation, the Nature Conservancy could also be a relevant member, but that contacts with their representatives had not resulted in an application. He also discussed the difficulties he faced in obtaining commitments from NGOs, stating that they either lack capacity or are focused on non-market issues, such as plastic pollution or fishing opportunities.

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) stated that, based on the recent revision of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) laying down detailed rules on the functioning of the Advisory Councils under the Common Fisheries Policy, he did not believe that Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) should be included in the "other interests group" category. Mr Guillaumie argued that membership representative favoured marine production over farmed production, and that more aquaculture representation is required in the MAC to align with overall EU market trends. Mr Guillaumie also underlined that too few distributors are members of the MAC and that HoReCa organisations should be invited to join. Amongst the "other interests group", there should also be organisations representing consumers interests. He called on other members to contact local NGOs and encourage their applications. Ending his intervention, Mr Guillaumie mentioned that he was retiring and that this would be one of the last meetings he would attend.

The Secretary General stated that the MSC is registered as a charity and that has been accepted by the members of the "other interests group" as being part of their college. Mr Reis Santos mentioned that, from his understanding, when the MAC was established, there was an informal agreement amongst several that major EU-level associations that the EMPA and FEAP would join the MAC, while the national and local aquaculture associations would focus on the Aquaculture Advisory Council. Nevertheless, he attended the meetings of the Aquaculture Advisory Council as an observer and always expressed availability for their potential applications to the MAC. Recently, he encouraged HAPO, the Greek association of aquaculture producers, to apply. He was also contacted by APA, the Portuguese association of aquaculture producers, but they seemed to lack capacity. Concerning associations representing consumers interests, the Secretary General informed that he contacted BEUC, the EU-level association, and Test-Achats, the Belgian association, but these association covered all products in the market, so were not available to dedicate time specifically to fishery and aquaculture products. He recognised that it could be relevant to contact associations in the HoReCa sector, even though similar issues might be faced.

The Chair thanked Mr Guillaumie for his dedication to the MAC and for all the knowledge he shared in the forum. The Chair reiterated what the Secretary General had said about increasing membership, emphasising that the comments about including HoReCa and consumer organisations had been taken into account.

Christine Absil (Good Fish) stated that the MSC did not consider itself a fisheries interest group, but rather a standard holder. She acknowledged that the MSC receives some funding from the fishing industry but emphasised that this is not the organisation's sole source of revenue. Ms Absil informed the Executive Committee that the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) could be a group to contact for membership, as they now have an office in Brussels.



The Secretary General stated that he would contact the ASC regarding membership.

Quentin Marchais (ClientEarth) stated that the involvement of local NGOs would mean issues of funding and capacity, which should be further discussed with the European Commission.

The Secretary General highlighted that, on several occasions, Secretariats of the Advisory Councils had drawn the attention of the European Commission about the lack of representation of NGOs, but that these efforts had not been very fruitful.

The Chair stated that additional attempts would be made to invite both local and international NGOs with offices in Europe.

Financial Reserves

- **Presentation on investment opportunities by Dawlat Bik, Finance Officer**

The Finance Officer informed that he approached ING, Belfius, and KPG banks to discuss investment opportunities. He proposed that MAC invest approximately 100,000 euros in a portfolio that balances both benefits and risks and stated that ING provided the best options. Mr Bik highlighted that investment periods of six or twelve months could be sought, but advised members to select the six-month option to ensure flexibility and liquidity.

- **Exchange of views**

The Chair agreed with Mr Bik's proposal to invest 100,000 euros in a savings account for six months.

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) expressed support for the proposal of six months. Mr Guillaumie encouraged Mr Bik to contact financial institutions across the EU, instead of only in Belgium, providing several examples of investment options in France.

The Chair proposed to proceed with the six-month investment period in ING, while other options across the EU could be considered for the following period.

European Maritime Day

- **Presentation of proposal for joint workshop with the other Advisory Councils by Pedro Reis Santos, Secretary General**

The Secretary General presented the proposal for a joint workshop with the other Advisory Councils at the European Maritime Day (EMD) in Svendborg, Denmark, 30-31 May 2024. He stated that the Commission organises the European Maritime Day every year to raise awareness about ocean and maritime issues and explained that DG MARE typically issues a call for applications for workshops at the event. At the initiative of DG MARE, to raise awareness about the work of the Advisory Councils, a spot was reserved for a joint workshop by the eleven Advisory Councils.



The Advisory Councils have never been allocated a spot. However, Mr Reis Santos highlighted that this year, a spot has been reserved for all Advisory Councils combined.

Following a series of meetings, the Secretariats of the eleven Advisory Councils agreed on an event titled “Why should you eat fishery and aquaculture products? Stakeholder engagement on carbon footprint, nutrition, food security, and socioeconomics”. Mr Reis Santos mentioned that Mark Dickey-Collas may provide moderation. The plan is for a panel of experts to answer questions on the various topics mentioned in the event title, with interactive elements planned throughout. Panellists include Ronan Cooney (BIM), Dr. Iodia Sain Luis, and Mariana Toussaint (FAO). Mr Reis Santos proposed sponsoring Mariana Toussaint (FAO) because the topic she will discuss is most relevant to MAC's work. Mr Reis Santos informed that he would be attending the EMD.

The Secretary General highlighted that, due to the short time provided by DG MARE, the Secretariats proceeded ahead with the development of a joint proposal for the 2024 edition. Nevertheless, according to DG MARE, a slot for a workshop would be allocated in all future editions. Therefore, for future editions, he would engage more with the members prior to the submission of the proposal.

- **Exchange of views**

Christine Absil (Good Fish) expressed her support for the workshop, as it was relevant to highlight the role of blue protein. She inquired about the "stakeholder engagement" aspect of the event.

The Secretary General explained that, in the introductory section, the moderator would provide information about how stakeholder engagement takes place through the Advisory Councils. At the end of the event, there would be 15 minutes for participants to provide their views on better stakeholder engagement could be achieved in the topics under discussion, particularly through the Advisory Councils.

Inter-Advisory Council's Coordination

- **Reporting back on the following meetings:**
 - **Roundtable discussion with Commissioner Sinkevičius (7 December 2023)**

The Chair reported on the roundtable discussion with Commissioner Sinkevičius, which was attended by herself and Ms Christine Absil, as OIG Vice-Chair. She highlighted that the Commissioner presented the Commission's next ambitions for fisheries, emphasising the importance of considering the sector's socio-economic aspects. At the meeting, the MAC representatives made interventions on three issues: 1) market disruptions caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, 2) fisheries and aquaculture economic data, and 3) the Sustainable Food System Framework.

- **Inter-Advisory Councils Secretariat's meeting (17 January 2024)**

The Secretary General reported on a coordination meeting held by the Secretariats of the Advisory Councils on 17 January 2024. One of the items discussed were membership fees and financial contributions from Member States. According to the discussions, no Advisory Council had raised their



membership feed, while some Advisory Councils, including the MAC, had encouraged Member States to increase their financial contributions. The Secretariats exchanged also about their experiences with the change to a lump-sum approach in the operating grants, plus coordination issues.

At the meeting, the Secretariats about internal evaluations of the results of the Common Fisheries Policy, plus the European Parliament's report on the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy. In the case of the MAC, advice was prepared on the topic, which was based on the questionnaire sent by the office of MEP Gabriel Mato, EP Rapporteur.

The Secretariats also discussed the ongoing bilateral meetings between the Secretariats and the DG MARE team responsible for the Advisory Councils. In the case of the MAC, Mr Reis met with Ms Julia Rubeck, Mr Vincent Guerre, and Mr Richard Croft, while other Secretariats were still awaiting for their meetings. Additionally, at an Inter-AC meeting, DG MARE proposed to hold presentations to their staff, as lunchtime presentations, of advice from Advisory Councils, but, so far, only Advisory Council had had been invited to do so.

- **Preparation for next Inter-Advisory Councils meeting (6 February 2024)**

The Secretary General provided an update on the preparations for the next Inter-Advisory Councils meeting, which was planned for 6 February 2024 in Brussels. He stated that five MAC representatives would be attending: Yobana Bermúdez, Christine Absil, Julien Lamothe, Pierre Commère, and himself. The main agenda item was an exchange of views with Charlina Vitcheva (DG MARE Director-General). Mr Reis Santos proposed to raise, on behalf of the MAC, the Sustainable Food System Framework, the legislative proposal on forced labour, and the legislative proposal on environmental claims as topics for the exchange with Ms Vitcheva. In the afternoon, there would be an exchange with the units responsible for fisheries controls about the new Fisheries Control Regulation. Questions from the members on this topic had been collected and collated.

Paul Thomas (EAPO) inquired whether it was possible to follow the meeting online and, if so, whether the link could be shared.

The Secretary General stated that DG MARE would provide a link for observers, which he would circulate to the members, once received.

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

- **Reporting back on MIAC (18 January 2024) and MIACO (19-19 January 2024) meetings by Pedro Reis Santos, Secretary General**

The Secretary General stated that all Advisory Councils had been invited to ICES' MIAC and MIACO meetings. He highlighted that both meetings focused on fisheries management and that the topics were outside the areas of activity of the MAC. Mr Reis Santos mentioned that the Baltic Sea Advisory Council had written a summary report on the MIAC meeting and that ICES would write a summary report on the MIACO meeting, so these reports could be circulated, if of interest to the members.

AOB



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

The Secretary General informed that the three Working Groups had agreed, via written procedure, on the joint draft advice on proliferation of invasive algae in the Outermost Regions.

The Executive Committee approved on proliferation of invasive algae in the Outermost Regions.

Summary of action points

- Membership of the General Assembly
 - Secretary General to contact associations representing HoReCa and consumer interests as well as NGOs about their potential interest in becoming members.
- Financial Reserves
 - Finance Officer to proceed with a six-month investment of 100,000 euros in ING.
- European Maritime Day
 - Secretary General to proceed with the co-organisation of the joint workshop, including potential coverage of the participation costs of one of the speakers.



Attendance List

Representative	Organisation	Role
Amelie Laurent	Oceana	Member
Anna Rokicka	Polish Association of Fish Processors (PSPR)	Observer
Bruno Guillaumie	European Molluscs' Producers Association (EMPA)	Member
Christine Absil	Good Fish	Member
Dawlat Bik	Market Advisory Council (MAC)	Secretariat
Felicidad Fernández Alonso	ANFACO-CECOPECA	Member
Gaëtane Le Breuil	European Fishmeal	Member
Guus Pastoor	EU Fish Processors and Traders Association (AIPCE)	Member
Janne Posti	Conxemar	Member
Jean-Marie Robert	Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne	Member
Julien Daudu	Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF)	Member
Julien Lamothe	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO)	Member
Katarina Sipic	EU Fish Processors and Traders Association (AIPCE) / European Federation of National Organizations of Importers and Exporters of Fish (CEP)	Member
Laure Guillevic	WWF	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
Quentin Marchais	ClientEarth	Member
Rosalie Tukker	Europêche	Member
Vanya Vulperhorst	Oceana	Member
Yobana Bermúdez	EU Fish Processors and Traders Association (AIPCE)	Chair

