

Working Group 1: EU Production

Minutes

Wednesday, 3 April 2024 (09:30 – 13:00 CET)

Zoom

Interpretation in EN, ES, FR

Welcome from the Chair, Julien Lamothe

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

Adoption of the agenda and of the last meeting's minutes (31.01.24): adopted

Action points

- **State-of-play of the action points of the last meeting – information**
- Fishers of the Future:
 - At the next meeting, schedule an exchange of views concerning the survey prepared by the Commission's contractor
 - Exchange of views among the members scheduled, as there is lack of capacity from the Commission's contractor to participate in all Advisory Councils
- Sustainability Criteria for Fishery and Aquaculture Products:
 - Secretariat to invite the Chair of the STECF Expert Working Group for a presentation and exchange of views at the next meeting
 - Agenda item scheduled for this meeting
- European Market Observatory for Fisheries and Aquaculture (EUMOFA):
 - Draft advice on 2024 suggestions for the next work programme to be recirculated via written procedure to gather new suggestions, which will be considered at the next meeting
 - Draft advice recirculated to WG1: 8 – 23 February 2024
 - Consideration of the draft advice to be scheduled for June 2024 meeting
- Marine Action Plan:
 - Following the integration of the feedback received, draft advice to be put forward to the Executive Committee for consideration and potential approval via a one-week urgent written procedure
 - Advice adopted by the Executive Committee: 6 March 2024
- Energy Transition in EU Fisheries and Aquaculture:
 - Draft advice to be recirculated via written procedure to gather additional inputs, including examples from the aquaculture sector, to be considered at the next meeting



- Draft advice recirculated to WG1: 9 – 26 February 2024
- Agenda item scheduled for this meeting
- Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF):
 - Agreed draft advice on the Terms of Reference of the 2024 edition of the Annual Economic Report on the EU Fishing Fleet to be put forward to the Executive Committee for consideration and potential adoption
 - Advice adopted by the Executive Committee: 31 January 2024

Sustainability Criteria for Fishery and Aquaculture Products

- **Presentation on validation of selected sustainability indicators and underlying methodologies by Fabio Grati (STECF EWG Chair)**

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

Fabio Grati (STECF) presented the sustainability indicators for fisheries products marketed in the EU which were developed by the STECF. Mr Grati stated that, in order to promote food sustainability labelling and consumer information, the Commission tasked the STECF with developing indicators and grading methods for a number of key fisheries-specific sustainability aspects, with the goal of determining fisheries product grades. These indicators and grading methods apply to both EU products and imports.

Mr. Grati explained that the Expert Working Group (EWG) established to develop the indicators met three times. He highlighted that three of the nine previously identified indicators were chosen: impact on the seabed, fishing pressure, and sensitive species. To evaluate these indicators, a five-level scoring system was created, with 1 indicating very low impact and 5 indicating very high impact. This scoring system ensures transparent, comparable, and dependable communication with consumers, retailers, and producers. Mr. Grati explained that two levels of accuracy were developed for the scoring system, one relying solely on mandatory information under the Common Market Organisation (CMO) Regulation, such as the species name, catch area, and gear category (System 1) and the other requiring additional information, such as a more precise catch area and precise gear type (System 2).

To assess impact on the seabed, the EWG compared 1850 commercial species and their habitats to fishing gear. Both mandatory CMO gear categories (System 1) and voluntary gear types (System 2) were evaluated. Rock and biogenic habitats were the most heavily impacted (scoring 3). Dredges and trawls were the most impacting gear categories (scoring 3). Mr Grati explained that, across all species-gear combinations, the majority of species scored well, i.e. having a low impact on the seabed.

To assess fishing pressure, the EWG looked at the limit reference point for spawning stock biomass (Blim), the biomass reference point (MSY Btrigger), and fishing mortality for achieving MSY (Fmsy) based on validated stock assessments. For species without a stock assessment, the IUCN status or Sensitivity index were applied. Scoring ranged from A to E. Mr Grati highlighted that, using data on EU fleet landings from STECF's Annual Economic Report, most species received a C when compared



with catch area and a B when assessed on percentage of landings. Furthermore, analysing EUMOFA import data revealed that the majority of species received a B grade.

Regarding the sensitive species indicator, Mr Grati stated that it has not yet been fully implemented. A detailed implementation roadmap outlining data requirements and stakeholder feedback was presented. Nevertheless, he went into detail about how the indicator was developed. Mr Grati explained that bycatch risk was scored on a scale of 1 to 3 to assess the impact of fishing on sensitive species such as marine mammals, turtles, seabirds, and endangered and sensitive elasmobranchs. He emphasised that if a fishing activity affects more than one sensitive group, or if the assessment data is of poor quality, a potential downgrade is to be applied.

Mr Grati concluded his presentation by stating that the indicators for the impact on the seabed and fishing pressure had been finalised and were ready for operation. He reiterated that more work is needed for the sensitive species indicator to become operational. Mr Grati also stated that the EWG determined that the mandatory information outlined for producers in the CMO regulation lacks the precision required to develop scientifically sound sustainability indicators, and that this regulation should be revised.

- **Exchange of views**

Jennifer Reeves (MSC) stated that the MSC had been closely monitoring the development of the STECF indicators, noting that they overlap with the indicators that the MSC uses in their own sustainability assessments. She expressed concerns about the methodology followed by STECF and advocated for a whole systems approach, as a verification procedure was missing. Ms Reeves asked Mr Grati to elaborate on what stakeholders would be providing information into the system. She wondered whether there would be cross-checking of the system, particularly in the case of imports.

Fabio Grati (STECF) responded that “stakeholders” would mean anyone dealing with the scoring of the products. The database would never be “final”, as it would be open for studies and reports from stakeholders. This database would still be further developed.

Gerd Heinen (DG MARE) agreed with Ms. Reeves that a systemic approach was required. He explained that the Commission, in collaboration with the STECF, decided to develop a system based on traceable input data, in line with the information requirements of the CMO Regulation and of the revised Fisheries Control Regulation. Due to traceability requirements, national authorities are able to verify the species, fishing gear, and catch area. Mr Heinen stated that there was a reduction of the focus to three lead indicators, while originally STECF suggested eight potential indicators, some of them general rather than fisheries specific.

Jennifer Reeves (MSC) emphasised that traceability based on input data may be feasible for the EU fleet but more difficult for imported products, which meant an issue of validation. She explained that, while the output is traceable, it is only as reliable as the data provided. To account for this, she inquired whether cross-checks and validations would take place. Ms Reeves also asked how the Commission intends to address large FAO fishing areas where multiple stocks are present and may be impacted by fishing, for example in the Indian Ocean.



Gerd Heinen (DG MARE) responded that the aim was to develop a methodology and a simple tool that operators could use, while allowing for continuous improvements. The potential integration into a policy initiative, including verification procedures and control mechanisms, would depend on the next Commission. Concerning the large FAO areas, a precautionary approach is followed in case there are assessments for several stocks in the same area, meaning that the worst-case stock is considered, while allowing for operators to provide more detail.

Daniel Voces (Europêche) stated that the seabed impact indicator applies to all gears within a category, despite the fact that gears within a CMO category vary in impact. As a result, Mr Voces inquired as to how innovations are/were considered in the development of indicators. He also asked if scores could be upgraded or downgraded. Mr Voces also inquired about the assessment of fishing pressure for imports, questioning the reliability of the data provided, particularly in the case of large FAO areas. Mr Voces added that it too simplistic to develop only three indicators and base sustainability on these. He asked how frequently the indicators would be updated to ensure accurate and timely assessments of fishery health and sustainability.

Fabio Grati (STECF) stated that fishing mitigation measures were not considered in the analysis or development of indicators. In assessing fishing pressure for imports, he explained that the EWG relied on RFMO-validated stock assessments from around the world. Where no stock assessment is available, the IUCN status or Sensitivity index was used. Mr Grati also explained that updating indicators differed by indicator, with the seabed indicator not foreseen to be updated, fishing pressure to be updated on a regular basis, and the sensitive species indicator still being finalised.

Gerd Heinen (DG MARE) stated that mitigation measures were not considered, since these could not be based on traceable information, instead requiring third-party verification. He recognised that there may be fewer quantitative stock assessments for imported products than for EU products. Mr Heinen stated that the Commission would analyse how this is reflected in the final scoring. Regarding the indicators not covering all aspects, Mr Heinen stated that the goal was not to provide an overall sustainability grade, but rather a robust indication on crucial fisheries-specific sustainability aspects. He stated that it remains to be seen what happens with the tool and its outcomes for the next Commission. In terms of updating indicators, he agreed and explained that the frequency had yet to be determined (presumably annually), and that the indicators were planned to reflect average data over the last three years.

Paul Thomas (EAPO) asked whether the indicator analysis included processed products. He went on to inquire as to why pelagic trawls received a seabed impact score of 3 despite having little to no contact with the seabed. Furthermore, Mr Thomas asked how grey literature and stakeholder feedback would be incorporated into System 2, as well as who would be in charge of information validation. He stated that EAPO was looking forward to testing the new tool once it was fully implemented.

Fabio Grati (STECF) explained that the indicator analysis took into account all species, including those that are processed. He went on to assure Mr Thomas that any gear that did not touch the seabed, including pelagic trawls, was given a score of 0. Mr Grati also stated that System 1 is based on



mandatory information, whereas System 2 is based on voluntary information and can provide a more accurate picture of impacts.

Gerd Heinen (DG MARE) further explained that, in principle, the tool could work for processed products but that these products are currently not yet subject to traceability requirements. He stated that the Commission will soon conduct a study on extending traceability requirements to processed products under the revised Fisheries Control Regulation. In response to Mr Thomas' question on the sensitive species indicator, he explained that the Commission and STECF were still considering how grey literature could be incorporated into the sensitive species indicator.

Vanya Vulperhorst (Oceana) stated that Oceana supports increasing transparency for consumers to assist them in making more informed decisions, and expressed gratitude for the EWG indicator work done so far. She went on to say that some Member States indicate the use of multiple gears in the fleet register and asked whether the STECF chose the first gear on the list or took a different approach when selecting gear. She also inquired about how the STECF verified the use of the gear listed in the fleet register and when the report would be published.

Fabio Grati (STECF) outlined that the gear type chosen for the analysis was based on the gear indicated by the producer, while recognising that the mandatory gear categories were not always useful, as the seven mandatory categories were rather wide. As for fishing pressure, the stock assessment was taken into account.

Janne Post (Conxemar) wanted to know how the species that do not have MSY/stock assessment data available were covered.

Fabio Grati (STECF EWG Chair) stated that if no stock assessment data is available, the EWG used the IUCN status or Sensitivity index.

Nicolás Fernández (OPP72) inquired whether indicators were developed to account for impacts other than fishing pressure, seabed impact, and sensitive species. He inquired as to whether any indicators had been developed to assess sector-specific efforts to improve sustainability. Mr Fernández stated that, in his opinion, the Commission appeared to be generalising, which was affecting segments of the EU fleet that were attempting to improve their sustainability. He also asked if the STECF or the Commission were taking into account various studies being conducted in collaboration with the sector, particularly those involving sensitive species, for example on interactions with seabirds, pointing out that these studies showed that the impacts of interactions between fishers and sensitive species are not as bad as is commonly assumed. He expressed concern that all of the negative pressure placed on the industry may introduce bias into the Commission's assessment. Mr Fernández also wanted to know whether imported products were also considered in the EWG assessments, arguing that all products commercialised in the EU need to be considered, as the Commission continuously increases pressure on EU production.

Fabio Grati (STECF) explained that the EWG identified nine indicators, but they were not further developed because the Commission wanted to focus on indicators that administrators could verify using mandatory CMO data. Additional indicators could be developed in the future. Regarding the



inclusion of studies on sensitive species, Mr Grati assured Mr Fernández that hundreds of papers had been reviewed, including those conducted with the sector. He mentioned that, in the future, the EWG would try to take into account the sector's efforts to innovate and improve sustainability. Mr Grati added that the EWG incorporated imports into all three indicator assessments.

Gerd Heinen (DG MARE) confirmed that the methodology must include imported products. Mr Heinen stated that, for sensitive species, the Commission wishes to keep the indicator flexible enough to allow for stakeholder input in terms of additional studies / assessments.

Pim Visser (VisNed) emphasised the great economic importance of the initiative for fishers. Mr Visser stated that the presentation indicated that all bottom contacting gears received a 3 for seabed impact. He thus questioned whether all bottom-contacting gears fishing sustainable stocks would always score low. He asked when it would become mandatory for retailers and operators to show the indicators on products. In line with this, he inquired whether the EU-developed indicators, which may not be the most robust, would be viewed as such by the general public.

Fabio Grati (STECF) explained that Mr Visser was mixing together two indicators (seabed impact and fishing pressure) and emphasised that they cannot be combined, implying that bottom-contacting gears may score low on seabed impact but high on fishing pressure.

Gerd Heinen (DG MARE) stated that the decision on whether and how the indicators could feed into product labelling was entirely open and would be taken by the next Commission. In case the indicators were going to be used for labelling, other aspects would need to be decided, e.g. general vs. fisheries-specific labelling or mandatory vs voluntary approach. He recognised certain shortcomings in the methodology but emphasised that an optimal approach does not exist. The Commission does not want the selected indicators on stock and seabed to be perceived as an overall sustainability scoring.

Jennifer Reeves (MSC) expressed agreement with the concerns expressed by Mr Visser, adding that there was a risk of “institutional greenwashing” due to the use of immature and unverifiable EU indicators.

- **Way forward**

The Chair highlighted that the sustainability indicators were being developed based on the information requirements foreseen by the CMO Regulation, but it was necessary to reflect on other initiatives affecting fishery and aquaculture products, such as life cycle assessments and environmental declarations (green claims). Initially, STECF proposed nine indicators, including social indicators, but these were set aside for traceability reasons. The issue should be further discussed by the Executive Committee in order to have a transversal view on sustainability for fishery and aquacultures products. For Working Group 1, the Chair proposed that, following the publication of the report by STECF, feedback from the members should be collected, to be considered at the next meeting.

Fishers of the Future



- **Exchange of views about the survey on challenges and drivers, profiles of today's fishers, and scenario planning workshops**

The Chair reminded members that a workshop to discuss the “Fishers of the Future” project was held on 19 March 2024. He stated that most stakeholders at the workshop were surprised that work had already begun, as they had not been consulted prior to the project's start. The Chair stated that the meeting, along with its associated stakeholder survey, aimed to assess potential conflicts and drivers that fishers in the EU face today. Stakeholders identified market-related issues, environmental pressures, food security, coastal community pressure, and generational renewal as challenges. The Chair explained that, prior to the workshop, interviews were conducted with various fishers from different Member States. Based on these interviews, 12 profiles of today's fishers were developed. These profiles, as well as stakeholder feedback, were presented during the workshop.

The Chair stated that additional workshops were planned but were postponed, in part due to feedback from stakeholders at the first meeting. He stated that the North Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC) intends to draft an advice on the “Fishers of the Future” project, highlighting issues with the project's methodology and the role of Advisory Councils in it.

The Secretary General informed that during the workshop, stakeholders were divided into groups to discuss the various fisher profiles, their future identities, and their roles in society. He stated that the second workshop had been rescheduled for 4 April 2024, and the third workshop had been postponed. The Secretary General informed that, while the in-person participants did not express major issues, the online group expressed significant questions about the procedures and the methodology followed. There were questions about the selection of the relevant ports for the undertaking of the interviews and the creation of the profiles.

Pim Visser (VisNed) echoed the Secretary General's remarks about online participation at the workshop, stating that it was a dissatisfying experience. Mr Visser stated that the project appeared to be focused on non-impact, non-industrial, and small-scale fisheries. He emphasised that this is not an accurate representation of the “Fishers of the Future” that the industry seeks, and that a large number of sector actors are excluded from this scope. Mr Visser also expressed disappointment with the profile selection process, claiming that the project appears to be focused solely on Baltic and Black Sea fishers, with fleets in the North Sea and Atlantic excluded. He informed that a meeting between social scientists and the Commission services about the methodology would be taking place soon.

Nicolás Fernández (OPP72) agreed with Mr Vissers' comments on the project. He criticised the Commission for organising workshops that are not inclusive, noting that no other language was supported aside from English. At the workshop, it appeared that the project was considered complete and that nothing would change going forward. Mr Fernández also stated that small-scale producers were not consulted, and that only specific fleets were considered in the project analysis. He concluded that the Commission was attempting to appear to be working with the sector while failing to consider the industry's concerns. He stated that this is not the way forward and demonstrates a complete lack of respect. He informed that the issue would also be covered by the South Western Waters Advisory Council.



Daniel Voces (Europêche) agreed with the previous comments and expressed doubts over the profiles created by the consultants as well as the methodology used. He stated that Europêche would support any Advisory Council in drafting advice on the subject. Mr Voces stated that, in his view, the Commission was talking about the fishers of 2050 without addressing the challenges the sector is facing today, as the fleet is continuously disappearing. With Commissioner Sinkevičius's recent announcement of a possible reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, Mr. Voces emphasised the importance of incorporating the needs and challenges of future fishers. He informed that, the following week, the Social Partners in the Sea Fisheries Sector would be sending a letter to the Commission on the project.

Dominic Rihan (KFO) expressed agreement with the previous interventions.

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) stated that he had low expectations for aquaculture to be included in "Fishers of the Future" or any other initiatives. He emphasised the MAC's mandate in addressing the issue, stating that input should elaborate on what might happen to the EU market if EU fishers disappear. He wondered if the continent would import more or invest more in aquaculture and whether consumers would be in agreement. There were important political questions on EU production and sovereignty that the Commission was not answering.

Sergio López García (OPP Burela) shared the concerns of other members regarding the project. The project did not address the current challenges that fishers face and was looking too far ahead with its scope for 2050. In his view, if current issues are not addressed, EU fishers will no longer be around by 2050. He expressed an interest in taking a critical stance on what has not been done correctly and what needs to be changed in by next Commission. Mr López García agreed with Mr Guillaumie that the MAC should focus on market issues and coordinate with other Advisory Councils.

Paul Thomas (EAPO) agreed with Mr López García and Mr Guillaumie's interventions. He emphasised the importance of considering market implications if the sector's future is uncertain. Mr Thomas also stated that EAPO is finalising a letter to the Commission outlining flaws in the project's methodology.

- **Way forward**

The Chair recognised the strong concerns from the fishery producers about the project. The Chair proposed to join the draft letter to be developed by the NWWAC. The MAC would contribute with market elements, including on EU policy coherence and the long-term strategic vision for the sector.

Energy Transition in EU Fisheries and Aquaculture

- **Consideration of draft advice on energy transition in EU fisheries and aquaculture**

The Chair recalled that the draft advice was previously circulated for the January 2024 meeting. Significant feedback was received, and the draft advice was recirculated. Comments were sent by Oceana, EAPO, EuroCommerce, ClientEarth, and EuroCommerce. There were several pending questions, including on fossil fuels, clear targets, and fishing allocations. The Chair emphasised the importance of maintaining the advice focused on market issues.



Vanya Vulperhorst (Oceana), on the point on workable solutions in section 2 “Launch of the initiative and of the Energy Transition Partnership”, commented that the draft text suggested that the sector would prefer to pursue workable transition solutions before setting emission targets. She stated that Oceana believes that it should be the other way around, with objectives established first and solutions tailored to these objectives found later. A continuous postponement of targets should be avoided.

Quentin Marchais (ClientEarth) proposed amending the text to “*workable solutions must be developed in parallel to the setting of objectives and targets*”. He emphasised that omitting this point fully would dilute the message of the advice. Mr Marchais expressed support for the setting of mandatory targets to meet decarbonisation objectives.

Daniel Voces (Europêche) highlighted the importance of differentiating the objectives being discussed. He mentioned that there are already large-scale objectives at the EU Level, such as the European Green Deal. Mr Voces expressed that it came across in the draft advice that members want to introduce additional objectives/milestones. He stated that the industry was sceptical of the introduction of additional binding objectives and thus did not agree with the inclusion of the text in the advice. He also expressed opposition to the introduction of taxation schemes. Mr Voces added that he expected the MAC to provide more advice across the value chain, including processing and post-harvest issues. In his opinion, the advice was too focused on the production side, and it was critical to shift away from this one-dimensional approach in the MAC. According to the data of UNCTAD, the EU fishing fleet already significantly reduced emissions and improved its environmental performance.

The Chair agreed with Mr Voces' point about the scope of the advice and the need to focus more on the post-harvest stages of the supply chain.

Paul Thomas (EAPO) agreed that the objectives were already in place for 2030 and later. In terms of existing solutions, there was still significant uncertainty about how the fishing sector could transition away from fossil fuels. The Commission will implement a pilot project, but the transition remains unclear in terms of implementation.

Quentin Marchais (ClientEarth) agreed that the entire supply chain should be covered. Nevertheless, the fishing sector should not be excluded from the advice, as these were the main users of fossil fuels.

The Chair emphasised that it was not about excluding certain segments of the industry, but about ensuring that a better balance in the coverage of the supply chain.

Nicolás Fernández (OPP72) commented that the objective seemed to be to end fishing in the EU and to further import for consumption.

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) informed that his organisation did not provide input for the draft advice, as the initiative was mainly relevant for the fisheries sector. Mr Guillaumie drew attention to several ongoing pilot projects to reduce emissions in aquaculture production, even though there were issues related to safety and battery life. In his view, the draft advice was too general, impacting the relevancy of the recommendations for the European Commission.



Vanya Vulperhorst (Oceana) agreed that the industry needed guidance and workable solutions to transition, but she also stressed the importance of milestones and objectives, particularly for tracking implementation progress.

Daniel Voces (Europêche) stated that he disagreed with the inclusion of the word “taxes” in the draft, claiming that it was too ambiguous. Mr Voces informed that the issue was also being addressed under the ongoing revision of the Energy Taxation Directive.

The Chair expressed agreement with Mr Voces.

The Secretary General proposed that NGO members write a minority opinion paragraph focusing on taxes and subsidies. He suggested that, because industry members had differing perspectives on the issue, they also write a paragraph outlining their viewpoint.

Vanya Vulperhorst (Oceana) agreed with the way forward proposed by the Secretary General. Ms Vulperhorst emphasised that a significant part of the emissions came from fishing.

Quentin Marchais (ClientEarth) also agreed with the proposed way forward.

The Chair expressed regret that no agreement could be reached on the issue, emphasising that this should be the primary goal when drafting advice.

Daniel Voces (Europêche) agreed with the Chair. In the context of temporary State aid, the aid provided to the fishing sector was much smaller than for other sectors. In his view, when discussing taxation, there should also be discussion about the energy used for transport and packaging.

Paul Thomas (EAPO) suggested that the text could be redrafted to go broader than fishing gear. Mr Thomas expressed availability to draft a paragraph with the views of the industry, if the minority position of the NGOs was to be maintained. He requested the deletion of the explicit mention of small-scale and low-impact fishers from the text.

Vanya Vulperhorst (Oceana) highlighted that solutions to reduce the climate impact of fishing already existed. Ms Vulperhorst stated that the emphasis on the taxation of vessels in the draft advice was due in part to the fact that they, along with airplanes, are explicitly exempted under the EU's Energy Taxation Directive. She added that she would not oppose the deletions requested by Mr Thomas.

Quentin Marchais (ClientEarth) agreed with Ms Vulperhorst. Mr Marchais argued that it was necessary to modify the type of support given to the sector, as a way to avoid the continuation of the dependency on fossil fuels.

Daniel Voces (Europêche) highlighted that, according to the European Commission, as defended by the EU delegation during the WTO negotiations on fisheries subsidies, tax exemptions are not industry subsidies.



The Chair proposed the deletion of the last paragraph of section 3 “coordination and cooperation between stakeholders”, which was originally based in input from ClientEarth. The Chair also proposed the deletion of the final paragraph of section 4 “knowledge and technology gaps”, as it was overly focused on fishing producers. Concerning section 6 “business environment and financing opportunities”, the Chair expressed agreement with the deletion of the explicit reference to EMFAF, as suggested by Europêche prior to the meeting.

Quentin Marchais (ClientEarth) suggested for a general mention of EU funds to be maintained, while the explicit reference to the EMFAF could be removed.

Paul Thomas (EAPO) suggested replacing the term “gears” with “energy systems”.

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) recalled that the EMFAF was implemented by the Member States, not the European Commission, to whom the advice was mostly addressed.

Vanya Vulperhorst (Oceana) suggested including a reference to "ring-fenced EMFAF funding," which could serve as an incentive for the Commission to advocate for funds to be used in a specific manner.

Daniel Voces (Europêche) proposed removing a paragraph on financing from banks. He expressed support for rewriting the section in a more general manner, eliminating references to banks. Mr Voces stated that a presentation given by the European Investment Bank at the Energy Transition Partnership revealed how difficult it was for fishers to obtain funding from them.

The Chair proposed the deletion of a paragraph on taxonomy. The Chair proceeded to section 7 “EU market of fishery and aquaculture products”, suggesting a reformulation of the text to refer to the entire value chain rather than singling out primary production.

Paul Thomas (EAPO) expressed agreement with the suggestion of the Chair.

The Chair suggested the deletion of a reference to supporting consumers of fishery and aquaculture in transitioning to products sourced using lower carbon fishing techniques.

Vanya Vulperhorst (Oceana) argued that fishing products would have a good scoring when compared to other food products. The reference would be positive for most fishing gears.

The Chair highlighted that there would be issues with distinguishing fishing gears due to the homogenisation of information. There would also be issues with imported products.

Daniel Voces (Europêche) argued that such a reference would be negative to certain fleets and gears. Changes to the CMO Regulation and to the level-playing-field would be needed for better informed choices. In his view, the shift to low impact fishing gear is difficult. Therefore, he expressed support for more information and choices for consumers but disagreed with the draft text.

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) commented that a distinction of fish products under the Product Environmental Footprint method was possible. It was important to educate consumers about the



Product Environmental Footprint Category Rules process. Mr Guillaumie suggested to include a reference to the advice previously adopted on the matter.

The Chair, on section 8 “recommendations”, recalled that there had been requests to delete the references to objectives and milestones.

Vanya Vulperhorst (Oceana) argued that there was agreement to follow the general objectives.

The Secretary General informed that, due to the lack of consensus, the point would be removed from the recommendations. Nevertheless, it would be covered by the specific views of the NGO members expressed in section 3 of the advice.

The Chair recalled the request to delete the recommendation on subsidies and taxation.

The Secretary General informed that, due to the lack of consensus, the point would be removed from the recommendations. Nevertheless, it would be covered by the specific views of the NGO members expressed in section 2 of the advice.

Quentin Marchais (ClientEarth) argued that, if the recommendations included specific references to post-harvest emissions, there should also be references to fisheries and aquaculture production.

The Chair agreed that the references to fishing and aquaculture production should be included again. The Chair suggested the removal of the recommendation on improving information to consumers on better understanding of the carbon footprint of fishery and aquaculture products.

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA), concerning the recommendation on monitoring the carbon footprint of fishing activities as well as fishery and aquaculture products, suggested including the term “harmonised and standardised”.

Daniel Voces (Europêche) argued that it was unclear what kind of data was required in that recommendation. There was a mixing of fishing activities and products. In his view, the recommendation should be about the supply chain activities.

Arielle Sutherland (Oceana) agreed that the recommendation should refer generally to the entire fishery and aquaculture value chain.

The Chair suggested deleting the recommendation, as it was outside the scope of the advice.

Daniel Voces (Europêche) expressed agreement with the Chair.

Paul Thomas (EAPO) also expressed agreement.

- **Way forward**

The Chair proposed that, as agreement was reached in principle on the text, the Secretary General would informally exchange with the interested members to finalise the pending paragraphs.



Afterward, the Secretariat would proceed with a one-week urgent written procedure for consideration and adoption by the Executive Committee.

Social Data in Fisheries

- **Consideration of draft advice on the development of social indicators and a vademecum on the allocation of fishing opportunities**

The Chair recalled that the European Commission sent out a letter and a questionnaire on the development of social indicators and a vademecum on the allocation of fishing opportunities. Prior to the meeting, ANOP was the only member that provided feedback. Therefore, he asked members about the relevancy of proceeding with advice.

Paul Thomas (EAPO) stated that providing an EU fisheries perspective and reaching consensus among members had proven difficult. As a result, EAPO did not provide comments.

Nicolás Fernández (OPP72) emphasised the importance of fully implementing Article 17 of the Common Fisheries Policy to ensure a more transparent and equitable allocation of fishing opportunities. Mr Fernández stated that Member States frequently fail to report on Article 17 in a consistent manner and emphasised the importance of the Commission ensuring that the measure was being complied with. In his view, the issue of commercialisation was very important and could negatively impact small-scale fishers.

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) pointed out that the STECF's annual economic fleet report could serve as a platform for reporting on social indicators. He explained that the report is drafted in accordance with the Commission's Terms of Reference, which did not include social data as of 2020. In 2022, however, social data was added. Mr Guillaumie commented that, for 2024, it was unclear whether social data would be included in the Terms of Reference again. He proposed that the MAC provide guidance on making the collection and analysis of social data mandatory for Member States.

The Chair agreed with Mr Fernández's comments on Article 17. The Chair emphasised the importance of incorporating social indicators in the STECF's reports on a regular basis. He recalled that the Commission was producing factsheets about the Member States, so it was important to include social data in these. He argued that it was difficult to compare indicators across fishing segments.

- **Way forward**

The Chair proposed that an email message would be sent to DG MARE informing that the MAC would not be providing advice on the matter, while mentioning the issues raised by the members at the meeting, including the importance of developing social indicators.

European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)

- **Consideration of draft advice on the mid-term evaluation of the fund**



The Chair recalled that a questionnaire was sent to the Advisory Councils by an external consultant of the European Commission on the mid-term evaluation of the EMFAF. The Chair informed that, prior to the meeting, the Secretariat only received input from APROMAR and Conxemar. Therefore, in his view, it would be difficult to prepare advice on behalf of the MAC. He suggested that members could submit individual responses to the external consultant.

Paul Thomas (EAPO) stated that EAPO was not able to provide feedback in time but was interested in providing an opinion. Mr Thomas agreed with proceeding with individual responses.

Bruno Guillaumie (EMPA) highlighted that, in some Member States, concerning aquaculture production, there was almost no implementation of the fund.

Nicolás Fernández (OPP72) argued that the consultant's questionnaire was not a true mid-term evaluation, since the funds had only recently started to be released to operators, meaning that implementation had just began. While implementation varies by Member State, implementation in Spain only started the previous year. Therefore, as the impact of the funds on the operators was still unknown, Spanish members were unable to complete the questionnaire. Even inside a Member State, there could be disparities in the implementation at the regional level. Mr Fernández further argued that the Commission should consider resending the questionnaire at the end of 2024, when operators will have more information on how the funds are spent.

- **Way forward**

Paul Thomas (EAPO) suggested that, instead of a formal reply, the Secretary General could send an email message to the external consultant emphasising that the implementation of the EMFAF was still in its early stages in several Member States, so more time was required to fully understand the impact of the fund.

The Chair agreed with the approach suggested by Mr Thomas.

AOB

None.



Summary of action items

- Sustainability Criteria for Fishery and Aquaculture Products
 - Following the publication of the report of the STECF EWG, feedback from the members to be collected on the development of the three fisheries-specific indicators, to be considered at the next meeting.
- Fishers of the Future
 - Following the integration of market elements, signing of the joint letter drafted by the NWWAC on the methodology of the foresight project would be proposed to the Executive Committee.
- Energy Transition in EU Fisheries and Aquaculture
 - Secretary General to informally exchange with the interested members on the pending text.
 - Afterward, draft advice to be put forward to the Executive Committee for consideration and potential approval via a one-week urgent written procedure.
- Social Data in Fisheries
 - Email message to be sent to DG MARE informing that no formal reply to the questionnaires on social indicators and a vademecum on the allocation of fishing opportunities would be sent, while mentioning the issues raised by the members at the meeting, including the importance of developing social indicators.
- European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)
 - Email message to be sent to the European Commission's external consultant informing that no formal reply to the questionnaire on the mid-term evaluation of the EMFAF would be sent, while mentioning the issues raised by the members at the meeting, including that the implementation was still in the early stages in many Member States.



Attendance List

Representative	Organisation	Role
Adrien Simonnet	Union du Mareyage Français (UMF)	Member
Adryan Rademakers	Good Fish Foundation	Member
Aitana López Baquero	Spain	Observer
Alexandre Rodríguez	Long Distance Advisory Council (LDAC)	Observer
Almudena del Burgo Ramírez	Spain	Observer
Amélie Laurent	Oceana	Member
Anna Rokicka	Polish Association of Fish Processors (PSPR)	Member
Anne-France Mattlet	Europêche	Member
Ariele Sutherland Sherriff	Oceana	Member
Arthur Yon	FROM Nord	Member
Bruno Guillaumie	European Molluscs' Producers Association (EMPA)	Member
Christine Absil	Good Fish	Member
Cristina Borges	Portugal	Observer
Daniel Voces de Onáindi	Europêche	Member
Dominic Rihan	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation (KFO)	Member
Elena García Caballero	Spain	Observer
Emiel Brouckaert	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO)	Member
Fabio Grati	Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF)	Expert
Falke De Sager	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO)	Member
Felicidad Fernández	ANFACO-CECOPECA	Member
Gaëtane Le Breuil	European Fishmeal	Member
Iñigo Azqueta	ANFACO-CECOPECA	Member
Janne Posti	Conxemar	Member
Jarosław Zieliński	Polish Fish Producers Association (PFPA)	Member
Javier Ojeda	Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP)	Member



Representative	Organisation	Role
Jean-Marie Robert	Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne	Member
Jennifer Reeves	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)	Member
Jens Høj Mathiesen	Danish Seafood Association	Member
Jérémie Souben	FEDOPA	Member
John Lynch	Irish South and East Fish Producers Organisation (ISEFPO)	Member
José Basilio Otero Rodríguez	Federación Nacional de Cofradías de Pescadores (FNCP)	Member
José Carlos Escalera	Federación de Cofradías de Pescadores de Cádiz (FECOPESCA)	Member
Josip Furčić	Croatia	Observer
Julien Lamothe	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO)	Chair
Laure Guillevic	WWF	Member
Linda Zanki Duvnjak	Ribarska Zadruga Friška Riba	Member
Malgorzata Kieliszewska	Poland	Observer
María Luisa Álvarez	FEDEPESCA	Member
Martina Marcakova	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)	Member
Massimo Bellavista	COPA COGECA	Member
Maximilian Schwarz	Market Advisory Council (MAC)	Secretariat
Mirta Novak	Croatia	Observer
Myfanwy Cortis	Malta	Observer
Nicolás Fernández	Organización Productores Pesqueros Artesanales Lonja de Conil (OPP72)	Member
Owen Zammit	Malta	Observer
Patrick Murphy	Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation (IS&WFPO)	Member
Paul Thomas	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO)	Member
Pedro Luis Casado López	Asociación de Armadores Punta del Moral (OPP80)	Member
Pedro Reis Santos	Market Advisory Council (MAC)	Secretariat
Pierre Commère	Association Des Entreprises de Produits Alimentaires Élaborés (ADEPALE)	Member





Market Advisory Council

Representative	Organisation	Role
Pim Visser	VisNed	Member
Poul Melgaard	Danish Seafood Association	Member
Quentin Marchais	ClientEarth	Member
Rosalie Tukker	Europêche	Member
Sergio López García	OPP Burela	Member
Solène Chambard	ADEPALE	Member
Stephanie Cassar	Malta	Observer
Thomas Kruse	Danish Fishers PO / Danish Pelagic Producer Organisation	Member
Vanya Vulperhorst	Oceana	Member
Yobana Bermúdez Rodríguez	EU Fish Processors and Traders Association (AIPCE)	Member

