

Working Group 2: EU Markets

Minutes

Thursday, 11 June 2026 (09:30 -13:00 CEST)

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

Interpretation in EN, ES, FR

Welcome from the Chair, Stefan Meyer

[Presentation](#)

Adoption of the agenda and of the last meeting's minutes (23.03.26): Adopted

Action points

- **State-of-play of the action points of the last meeting - information**
- **AOB:**
 - Secretary General to coordinate with the Secretariat of the Pelagic Advisory Council concerning the proposal for joint advice on Russia.
 - Initiative suspended at the request of the Pelagic Advisory Council.

Trade Agreements & Trade Policy Instruments

- **Update on latest trade developments by Kinga Malinowska-Facci (MARE B3), including:**
 - **Australia (market access offers under the Free Trade Agreement)**

Paweł Szatkowski (DG MARE) recalled that negotiations of the EU-Australia Free Trade Agreement concluded in March 2026. The text had been published, but the tariff schedule was still subject to legal revision. Publication of the scheduled was planned for before August 2026. Internal procedures were ongoing in both the EU and Australia. The aim was to conclude the agreement by December 2026, but there could be a slight delay, since other Free Trade Agreements were being finalised in parallel. Mr Szatkowski recalled that the agreement would require signing by the Council and ratification by the European Parliament and Australia before entering into force. He highlighted that several factsheets on agricultural products had been made available by DG TRADE online.

The Chair asked whether factsheets for fishery and aquaculture products would also be published.

Paweł Szatkowski (DG MARE) responded that, within the Free Trade Agreement, agricultural products were a key priority. Other factsheets could potentially be published after the finalisation of the legal revision.

- **India (market access offers under the Free Trade Agreement)**

Kinga Malinowska-Facci (DG MARE) informed that limited developments took place since the update previously provided to the Working Group. While negotiations had concluded, there was still technical work



ongoing, including a legal revision. The tariff schedules had not been published yet. Ms Malinowska-Facci informed that, under the agreement, the EU would liberalise all fishery and aquaculture products under Chapter 03 of the Combined Nomenclature. In the case of some products, which amount to a major part of imports from India, such as shrimp, there would be transition periods. For sensitive products under Chapter 16 the status quo has been maintained. As for liberalisation of access to the Indian market, 90 tariff lines of Chapter 03 – not representing an EU export interest - were excluded from liberalisation. Other products under Chapter 03 will be liberalised. The Commission would aim for implementation of the agreement by the end of 2026. The exact timeline depends though on the Council and the European Parliament.

Daniel Voces (Europêche) expressed concern about the broader partnership with India, particularly in the context of the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and the World Trade Organisation's Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. Mr Voces requested more information on how tuna products would be covered under the agreement, including the applicable rules of origin. He recalled that, in the past, there had been issues with lack of compliance with EU sanitary rules by Indian products.

Kinga Malinowska-Facci (DG MARE) informed that there would be no liberalisation for processed tuna products, including loins. Status quo remains. As for rules of origin, Ms Malinowska-Facci explained that the standard EU rules of origin would apply, with some limited flexibility for shrimp (which was unlikely to be used, considering the Indian production levels), smoked salmon, that could benefit the EU exporters, as well as a chartering rule.

Iñigo Azqueta (ANFACO-CYTMA) requested more information about the rules of origin applicable to smoked salmon products.

Kinga Malinowska-Facci (DG MARE) informed that the agreement included a possibility for EU exports of smoked salmon to be based on imported raw material.

- **Indonesia (adoption of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement)**

Paweł Szatkowski (DG MARE) informed that the EU's internal procedures for the adoption of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement were ongoing. The legal review had been finalised in May 2026. In June, the Commission would proceed with the submission of the draft decisions, which included the text of the agreement, to the Council¹. The aim was for the agreement to be signed in the last quarter of 2026, in order to enter into force in early 2027. Mr Szatkowski recalled that, after the transmission to the Council, the timeline no longer depended on the Commission.

Daniel Voces (Europêche) recalled that, on 27 April 2026, the MAC sent a letter to DG MARE and to DG TRADE expressing concerns about the agreed liberalisation of access for tuna products. Mr Voces argued that Indonesia was unable to guarantee compliance with the EU's sanitary rules. There were also reports of IUU fishing practices and of forced labour in the Indonesian fleet. He called for safeguard clauses, in a similar manner to those applicable to the EU-Mercosur Free Trade Agreement.

Paweł Szatkowski (DG MARE) explained that the chapter on trade and sustainable development of the trade agreement included provisions on IUU fishing practices, in order to exclude products originating from IUU

¹ For reference, the Commission submitted the draft decisions to the Council on 29 June 2026.



fishing from the agreement. Mr Szatkowski highlighted that the agreement has no impact on the EU's sanitary and phytosanitary requirements that remain unchanged. He informed that a joint reply to the mentioned letter would soon be provided by DG MARE and DG TRADE.

The Chair wanted to know whether, in comparison with other Free Trade Agreements, there were any extraordinary provisions in relation to the issues raised by Mr Voces.

Pawel Szatkowski (DG MARE) responded that the provisions on IUU fishing included the possibility of bilateral exchanges on the matter.

The Chair asked whether support for the Port State Measures Agreement was covered in the agreement.

Pawel Szatkowski (DG MARE) informed that the free trade agreement included a reference to the Port State Measures Agreement. Bilateral exchanges between the EU and Indonesia were expected in the appropriate institutional framework.

The Chair wondered about potential reporting and benchmarking. The Chair emphasised the importance of a strong collaboration to address risks of structural issues on sanitary requirements. He welcomed the inclusion of a reference to the Port State Measures Agreement.

- **USA (section 301 investigations, implementation of CATCH, retaliatory measures to the aluminium and steel tariffs)**

Kinga Malinowska-Facci (DG MARE) recalled that, under the deal reached with the USA, the USA was supposed to apply tariff rates with a maximum ceiling of 15%. The legal basis used for the mentioned tariffs was invalidated by the Supreme Court. The USA administration proceeded to apply a tariff rate of 10% based on a different legal basis, but that did not differentiate between products from the EU and from other countries. In general, the 10% tariff rate respected the previously agreed 15% ceiling, even though there were some exceptions, such as canned tuna. The new legal basis was scheduled to expire on 24 July 2026.

Ms Malinowska-Facci stated that, after 24 July 2026, the USA administration would likely extend the 10% tariff based on a different legal basis. The Commission representative explained that the section 301 investigations undertaken by the USA administration had concluded the previous week. The investigations determined the application of a 10% tariff rate to a number of US trade partners, including the EU based on allegations of insufficient fight against forced labour. The Commission disagreed with these allegations. The Commission representative recalled that the EU adopted a regulation banning products made with forced labour, which would apply from December 2027.

Ms Malinowska-Facci emphasised that, it was important to maintain the deal of 2025, in order to ensure predictability of trade conditions. The EU was finalising the legislative process related to its domestic implementation. There were two regulations of relevance for the fisheries and aquaculture sector: a regulation on liberalisation for industrial tariffs and fishery and aquaculture quotas, and a regulation on imports of lobster. Both regulations were in an advanced stage of the legislative process. A vote by the European Parliament was scheduled for 16 June 2026. From the perspective of the Trump administration, the provisions had to be in place by 4 July 2026.



Ms Malinowska-Facci recalled that the regulation on lobster imports corresponded to a prolongation of the rules applied from 2020 to 2025 setting a 0% Most Favourable Nation tariff (benefiting the USA, as Canada accesses already the EU market duty-free under the CETA agreement). In comparison with the previous version of the regulation, some processed lobster products would also be covered. No major impact is expected, given no major processing in the EU. As for the general tariff regulation, as a reminder, quotas will be created for a couple of fisheries products (covered mostly under the Autonomous Tariff Quotas Regulation, including salmon and Alaska pollock.

Poul Melgaard Jensen (Danish Seafood Association) requested more information on the applicable rules of origin, including about the possibility of some processing phases in third countries. Mr Melgaard Jensen wanted to know whether the Commission would be proposing a supplementary requirement of direct transport from the USA to the EU.

Kinga Malinowska-Facci (DG MARE) informed that the applicable rule would be direct transport without any processing in third countries.

Mike Turenhout (Visfederatie) requested more information about the quotas for fishery and aquaculture products, particularly whether, if the quotas under the Autonomous Tariff Quotas Regulation remained in place, the quotas for products from the USA, such as Alaska pollock, would double in practice.

Kinga Malinowska-Facci (DG MARE) recalled that there were only two possible supplying countries for Alaska pollock and that one was explicitly excluded from the Autonomous Tariff Quotas Regulation. The remaining quota remained available to the USA. Therefore, in practice, the new quota would not change the situation.

Iñigo Azqueta (ANFACO-CYTMA) argued against the allegations of forced labour practices in the EU. Mr Azqueta requested more information about the expected developments for after 24 July 2026, particularly whether a reestablishment of the previous 15% tariff rate was possible. He also wanted to know what was the situation as regards the EU rebalancing measures regarding the US tariffs, which had been suspended until this summer. He also mentioned the US measures on steel and aluminium, as currently excluding aluminium cans used for fisheries products but drew the Commission's attention to the fact that this could change and is an issue requiring monitoring.

Kinga Malinowska-Facci (DG MARE) responded that the Commission would remain vigilant in respect of any developments that could affect packaging for the sector. Ms Malinowska-Facci recalled that, the EU had adopted indeed in 2025 rebalancing measures for a list of products that could be subject to duties. Application of those measures had been suspended. She informed that, the previous week, Commissioner Šefčovič met with his counterpart and both parties expressed commitment to the tariff deal of 2025. Therefore, there was currently no plan to use the rebalancing list. While the existing suspension would expire in August 2026, there was a possibility of extending it.

Poul Melgaard Jensen (Danish Seafood Association) recalled that, due to a dispute in the World Trade Organisation between the EU and the USA concerning subsidies to civil aircraft companies, the USA had retaliated with the imposition of tariffs, including on fishery products.

Kinga Malinowska-Facci (DG MARE) emphasised that the Commission was aiming to maintain a stable basis for trade with the EU, while avoiding additional tensions.



The Chair highlighted that, at a recent meeting of the European Parliament's Committee on Fisheries, Ian Urbina, an American journalist, presented an investigation on forced labour. The same investigation was presented to the Senate of the USA. The Chair expressed concern that a certain negative narrative could be developing in the USA about the existence of forced labour in the EU sector. He called for a strong implementation of the Forced Labour Regulation in the 27 Member States and across the supply chain.

Vanya Vulperhorst (Oceana) informed that she took part in the same panel, adding that Mr Urbina presented investigations of the Outlaw Project, which were expected to be made available online in the near future, in a similar manner to previous investigations about forced labour by China. Ms Vulperhorst highlighted that, until the entry into force of the Forced Labour Regulation, there was a gap in the EU market. She encouraged EU suppliers to look into the investigation.

- **Way forward**

Daniel Voces (Europêche) expressed concerns regarding the modernised EU-Mexico free trade agreement, concluded in May 2026, particularly the liberalisation of access for tuna products. Mr Voces highlighted that the Mexico was a major producer.

Kinga Malinowska-Facci (DG MARE) explained that the new agreement aimed to liberalise the remaining trade with Mexico. Ms Malinowska-Facci clarified that for processed tuna products the liberalisation would be gradual, based on quotas increasing over time. Full liberalisation for canned tuna would take place after seven years. She recalled that, while the agreement was finalised in 2026, the negotiations on those aspects were concluded back in 2017.

Iñigo Azqueta (ANFACO-CYTMA) argued against the liberalisation of market access for tuna products from Mexico, as this country counted on both a strong fishing fleet and processing capacity. Mr Azqueta called for the introduction of controls and limitations to address potential disruptions in trade patterns.

Kinga Malinowska-Facci (DG MARE) emphasised that the Commission would be monitoring the trade flows. Trade defence measures remained available under the general trade policy tools.

Daniel Voces (Europêche) suggested that the Working Group should proceed with the development of advice concerning the modernised EU-Mexico free trade agreement.

The Chair expressed agreement with Mr Voces.

Autonomous Tariff Quotas

- **Update regarding the preparation of the next legislative proposal for fishery and aquaculture products, including planned improvement to the sustainability of imported products, by Pawel Szatkowski (MARE B3)**

Pawel Szatkowski (DG MARE) recalled that, the previous year, the European Commission held a consultation, which received many responses, including advice from the MAC. The Commission had been working on an evaluation of the current framework and an impact assessment on the next regulation in view of potential introduction of sustainability requirements. As internal process was still being finalised, the adoption of the new regulation would be postponed to 2027. In the meantime, the regulation currently in place would be



extended. The Commission would be proposing roll over mechanisms for a transitional period covering 2027, without opening discussions on specific quotas. Mr Szatkowski informed that the Commission was still evaluating the existing regime, which included analyses of the data related to past quotas. The Commission would assess the future policy options, including on sustainability, which requires a full impact assessment.

- **Exchange of views**

Emiel Brouckaert (EAPO) requested more information on the legislative proposal for the mentioned extension of the existing Autonomous Tariff Quotas Regulation.

Paweł Szatkowski (DG MARE) explained that the extension would follow the same legislative procedure as the original act. Adoption of the proposal by the Commission was planned for September 2026. The aim was to reach adoption by the Council by the end of 2026.

Vanya Vulperhorst (Oceana) expressed concern about the delay in the process. Ms Vulperhorst added that the issue was well-known and had been emphasised on multiple occasions by Commissioner Kadis and by Director-General Vitcheva. She recalled that several parts of the membership of the MAC were favourable to the introduction of social and environmental requirements under the Autonomous Tariff Quotas.

Paweł Szatkowski (DG MARE) explained that some confidentiality requirements applied to the contributions received under the public consultation, but that the Commission will publish a synopsis report together with the evaluation report.

Christine Absil (Good Fish) requested more details on the shaping of the sustainability criteria to be applied under the Autonomous Tariff Quotas Regulation. Ms Absil recalled that the STECF has been developing sustainability criteria for fishery products.

Paweł Szatkowski (DG MARE) responded that broadly speaking the three dimensions of sustainability, would likely be covered. Mr Szatkowski informed that, at that stage, he could not disclose the corresponding elements.

Katarina Šipić (Seafood Europe) wanted to know why disclosure on the sustainability criteria elements was not possible, adding that the existing criteria were generally known. Ms Šipić emphasised the continued significant uncertainty faced by market operators. Concerning the extension of the existing Autonomous Tariff Quotas Regulation for another year, she asked about the strategic reasoning that justified avoiding discussions on the volumes. In her view, the market realities had changed significantly in the previous three years. There were significant geopolitical implications.

Ms Šipić underscored the strategic importance of the Autonomous Tariff Quotas for the processing sector. She recalled that 70% of the costs of the processing industry related to the raw material. Therefore, in her view, the actions of DG MARE were difficult to understand, as these resulted in further uncertainty for the sector, without adapting to market developments. She called for increased engagement by DG MARE with the relevant stakeholders.

Paweł Szatkowski (DG MARE) replied that DG MARE remained available to meet and exchange bilaterally. At the same time, it was important to avoid providing any partial findings that could be misleading, as long as there is no clarity on the final direction to be taken regarding the sustainability conditions. Concerning the



quantities, he recalled that the original legislative proposal published in 2023 was supposed to cover a two-year period, but the Council extended the regulation to three years.

Mr Szatkowski recognised the need for certainty, as the sector usually works on the basis of long-term contracts. He added that the Commission was not fully opposed to a discussion on the quantities, since the outcomes of the recently concluded Free Trade Agreements should be taken into account. Nevertheless, DG MARE would prefer to wait for the following year, allowing the services to focus on the development of the sustainability criteria.

Katarina Šipić (Seafood Europe) underscored that developments in the international market did not wait for the EU's legislative processes. Ms Šipić drew attention to the losses faced by EU business operators.

Daniel Voces (Europêche) recalled that President von der Leyen previously underscored, as a political priority, that farmers and fishers were vulnerable to high costs and unfair practices. Mr Voces highlighted that the Commission continuously pursued liberalisation in trade policy, but that under the Autonomous Tariff Quotas Regulation there was no enforcement of sustainability requirements. He wanted to know when the independent study commissioned by DG MARE on the sustainability element would be published. He argued that the Commission's proposal for the Autonomous Tariff Quotas Regulation should be adjusted to reflect the free trade agreements recently concluded. In his view, the Regulation should not continue to apply in a "first come, first served" basis. He further argued that Norway increasingly blocked the activities of the EU fleets, while benefiting from trade preferences to access the EU market.

Paweł Szatkowski (DG MARE) confirmed that two supporting studies were undertaken in 2022 and in 2025. Mr Szatkowski informed that the supporting studies would be published together with the legislative proposal and the corresponding Staff Working Document. Adjustments to reflect the recent free trade agreements would be considered under the following legislative proposal. He added that the system was designed on "first come, first served" basis, even though changes could be considered in the future.

- **Way forward**

The Chair expressed availability, on behalf of the Working Group, to provide advice on the different options to integrate sustainability in the Autonomous Tariff Quotas Regulation. The aim should be to contribute to an improvement of the future legislation, without prejudging the final text.

Paweł Szatkowski (DG MARE) responded that DG MARE undertook a significant amount of work on the initiative and remained committed to the development of meaningful legislation. Mr Szatkowski highlighted that, while DG MARE remained available to new suggestions, his Unit was fully aware of the advice previously adopted by the MAC. Until the publication of the proposal, he would be unable to share further information. He added that the Commission remained committed to the corresponding deadline.

The Chair encouraged the members to share their views on the appropriate way forward, including the potential relevance of developing new advice or monitoring developments.

Christine Absil (Good Fish) emphasised the expertise available across the membership, which could be beneficial to DG MARE. Ms Absil argued that the MAC could provide advice on which sustainability criteria could be applied.



Julien Lamothe (ANOP) agreed that it would be relevant to work on the topic. Mr Lamothe recalled that, at the 10th anniversary conference, the Assistant Director General of the FAO encouraged the sector to take charge of the narrative on sustainability. He also recalled previous exchanges under Working Group 1 on the concept of sustainability, while recognising the challenges of translating sustainability concepts into operational and regulatory criteria for both EU and imported products. He suggested the establishment of a platform across the Working Groups to develop recommendations to the Commission.

The Chair acknowledged the importance of addressing sustainability criteria and their practical use across different contexts, including in the EU market and in international trade.

Julien Lamothe (ANOP) emphasised the importance of a transversal reflection on the operational implementation of the sustainability criteria.

Emiel Brouckaert (EAPO) expressed agreement with Mr Lamothe's suggestion.

The Chair proposed to proceed with the development of Terms of Reference for the mentioned structure, which should allow members to identify and map key elements. The output could be a toolbox or guidance document, not necessarily advice.

Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing

- **Overview of existing procedures and dialogues with third countries by Desiree Kjolsen and Elliott Valverde (MARE B4)**

Desiree Kjolsen (DG MARE), on Senegal, recalled that, in May 2024, the country was pre-identified under the IUU Regulation. Previously, in 2020, the European Commission gathered substantial evidence of illegal activities by the fishing fleet as well as severe flaws in port controls in Dakar. Senegal showed no significant willingness to cooperate bilaterally or in the context of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas. In October 2024, a mission to the country confirmed deficiencies as a flag and port State, as implementation of catch documentation remained unreliable. Despite the recommendations provided by the Commission, no action was taken by Senegal. As dialogue remained unfruitful, the Commission was considering the possibility of further measures.

Elliott Valverde (DG MARE), on Cameroon, recalled that the country was pre-identified in 2023. An action plan was shared with the authorities, but progress remained slow. In December 2024, Cameroon adopted a new legal framework, which was followed by, in March 2026, implementing legislation. In the view of DG MARE, the new legislative framework was not satisfactory, since the sanctions regime was not in line with international standards. The adoption of subsequent legislative decrees will also be instrumental in completing the overall quality of Cameroon's legal framework. Cooperating remained challenging. Therefore, further progress on implementation and cooperation was needed.

Desiree Kjolsen (DG MARE), on Ghana, recalled that the country was pre-identified in 2021 for a second time. The legislation of Ghana was not adequately aligned with international standards. Illegal transshipment of juvenile fish was taking place. There were insufficient monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) of the Ghanaian fleet. The sanctions were not efficient, nor deterrent. While there was some progress, shortcomings remained. A mission undertaken by DG MARE in October 2025 demonstrated difficulties with the implementation of control rules. Cooperation continued to take place.



Elliott Valverde (DG MARE) recalled that, based on sightings of the French authorities, there were known cases of the fishing fleets of Suriname, Guyana, Venezuela and Brazil operating illegally in the waters of French Guyana. DG MARE undertook missions to Suriname in April 2025 and in February 2026, which focused on MCS practices, controls of Suriname as a port, flag and coastal State, the revision of the legal framework and the cooperation with France regarding illegal fishing in French Guyana waters. Despite the political willingness to cooperate, and some first progress, there were still challenges related to the lack of resources. DG MARE remained in close contact with the authorities of Suriname. A comprehensive progress report will be submitted to the Commission in the coming months. .

Concerning Brazil, Mr Valverde informed that formal letters were exchanged between the EU and the national authorities regarding the suspected IUU fishing activities in French waters at the beginning of 2026. In April 2026, a meeting took place between DG MARE representatives and the Brazilian authorities. While there was willingness to cooperate, Brazil also framed the issue as a limited local Amazonian problem, with a fragmented institutional set-up and a difficult-to-control mostly small-scale fleet. The issue would continue to be addressed with Brazil. DG MARE was waiting for a follow-up by Brazil.

Concerning Guyana, Mr Valverde informed that, in December 2024, a formal letter was sent to the national authorities. A technical exchange via videoconference took place in March 2026. The recommendations provided by DG MARE were broadly reflected in the new draft fisheries legislation put forward by Guyana. DG MARE was waiting for the legislative developments to proceed.

Concerning Venezuela, Mr Valverde informed that, in April 2024, DG MARE sent a questionnaire on IUU fishing practices. A response was provided at the end of 2024. The situation remained complex, as various weaknesses were identified. DG MARE was now ready to follow up with an extensive written document and propose an online meeting. Due to security reasons, a field mission was not possible. Dialogue was ongoing.

Desiree Kjolsen (DG MARE), on Ecuador, recalled that the country was pre-identified due to deficiencies in control and enforcement, particularly in relation to fishing vessels operating in the waters of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations. There was also a lack of controls on processing plants, which undermined traceability. In 2020, Ecuador adopted new fisheries legislation, which was followed by, in 2022, the adoption of new implementing legislation. Cooperation was ongoing. In a meeting undertaken in 2025, the responsible minister demonstrated political willingness for the removal of the pre-identification. A progress report was received in September 2025. Afterwards, an Ecuadorian delegation held a two-day exchange with the Commission in Brussels. The absence of field missions limited the ability to verify progress on the ground, particularly regarding control of the distant-water fleet. Further exchanges with the Ecuadorian authorities on implementation would be needed.

Ms Kjolsen, on Panama, recalled that the country was pre-identified six years prior due to repeated shortcomings. In the view of DG MARE, there was a need for more efficient controls on ports as well as of better traceability controls, including of processing plants. Sanctions were not dissuasive enough, leading fishing fleet to repeatedly disconnect from the Vessel Monitoring System. In July 2025, the Commission held exchanges with the Panamanian authorities via videoconference, which was followed by a meeting in person in October 2025. Despite the political commitment and the legislative developments, insufficient progress remained at the technical level. The scheduling of the next field mission remained pending.



Elliott Valverde (DG MARE), on the Philippines, informed that, even though the pre-identification was lifted in 2015, close cooperation continued via informal dialogues. The Philippines committed to proceed with the installation of Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) in all commercial fishing vessels (above 30GT). In February 2023, DG MARE undertook a field mission which raised strong concerns about the situation, including regarding the VMS deployment across the fleet. The latest progress report from March 2026 confirmed these concerns with a rollback on the implementation of the VMS. There is also resistance from some operators. A decision of the Supreme Court of the Philippines regarding the implementation of the rules on VMS is still pending. Mr Valverde added that the Philippines was at risk of being pre-identified again.

Mr Valverde, on Thailand, informed that the 8th standing IUU Working Group between DG MARE and Thai representatives took place in September 2025. DG MARE had been monitoring the legislative revision of the Thai fisheries framework. DG MARE expressed concerns about the legislative developments, particularly the sanctions regime and warned the Thai authorities about the possible new risks of IUU fishing induced by this revision. Therefore, the developments would continue to be closely monitored.

Desiree Kjolsen (DG MARE), on Vietnam, recalled that the country was pre-identified in 2017. The central government expressed commitment to the fight against IUU fishing, but deficiencies remained in the implementation by the provinces. The number of “blue boats” operating in the waters of third countries decreased, but remained a problem. A mission undertaken by DG MARE in March 2026 showed some progress, but also revealed serious shortcomings on traceability. Cooperation was ongoing.

Ms Kjolsen, on Sri Lanka, recalled that the country was identified in 2015. In the following year, Sri Lanka was delisted following several commitments. There were now recurring cases of Sri Lankan fishing vessels operating in the waters of third countries without licenses. Sri Lanka was working with the FAO to revise the legislative framework, including of implementing legislation. A mission undertaken by DG MARE in April 2026 showed several deficiencies, which undermined compliance with the measures of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission and the Port State Measures Agreement. While the responsible authorities showed willingness, further efforts were needed. DG MARE remained concerned about the monitoring and control capacities. Information on the vessels authorised to operate in the waters of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission needed to be updated. In the view of DG MARE, new legislation on Vessel Monitoring Systems was needed.

Ms Kjolsen, on China, informed that bilateral cooperation was ongoing under an IUU Working Group, which met once per year. The latest meeting took place in January 2026. The overall dialogue remained positive. In the context of the dialogue, the Commission called for concrete measures for a zero-tolerance approach towards IUU fishing. China had recently adopted new fisheries legislation, which covered international commitments, including under the Port State Measures Agreement, on which the Commission provided feedback. Following repeated calls from the Commission, China published the list of designated fishing ports. The Commission drew attention to discrepancies between the official FAO vessel lists and the official Chinese vessel lists. As a result, China had provided updated data on the long-distance fleet. China undertook work on traceability. Following the use of fraudulent certificates, exports by 14 Chinese enterprises were suspended.

- **Exchange of views**

Dominic Rihan (KFO) asked whether the EU was addressing IUU-related matters with Russia. Mr Rihan highlighted that Russia was undertaking fishing operations, including transshipments, in international waters



without the due reporting. He added that similar allegations had been made regarding Russian vessels fishing cod and blue whiting.

Desiree Kjolsen (DG MARE) responded that cooperation with Russia was limited. While allegations of IUU fishing practices were known, concrete evidence was lacking to justify action under the IUU Regulation.

Matthew Gréant (EJF) wanted to know whether an active dialogue with Malaysia was taking place. Mr Gréant requested more information about how the Commission was encouraging the Member States to act against imports of illegal products, particularly as, in his view, fisheries from pre-identified countries should be flagged as “at risk”.

Desiree Kjolsen (DG MARE) responded that there was no active dialogue with Malaysia. Ms Kjolsen informed that fishery products from pre-identified countries is a risk criterion (in accordance with Article 31(d) of Regulation 1010/2009).

Vanya Vulperhorst (Oceana) requested more information about dialogue with Morocco, particularly concerning the alleged use of illegal driftnets in the Mediterranean Sea. In her view, in the context of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, structural solutions were lacking. Several warnings had been put forward by Spanish operators and by NGOs. Ms Vulperhorst also requested information about cooperation with Member States to address the behaviour of Panama as a flag of convenience, including the potential reactivation of the Working Group on Nationals.

Desiree Kjolsen (DG MARE) informed that the IUU unit did not have an informal dialogue with Morocco. Ms Kjolsen recalled that the Spanish authorities could apply the existing criteria to products imported from Morocco. She added that the Working Group on Nationals had not been reactivated.

Pim Visser (NOVA) wondered about the potentially disproportionated way that DG MARE addressed the cooperation on IUU fishing practices with third countries. Suriname, a small developing country with limited capacity, could be treated in a more stringent manner than China, a country with a large fishing fleet that faced human rights and labour issues.

Desiree Kjolsen (DG MARE) highlighted that cooperation with China had resulted in significant improvements and political commitments. In the case of smaller countries, such as Suriname, meaningful results could be achieved with limited resources. While smaller countries could show political willingness, there could also be issues of lack of capacity. In those cases, DG MARE aimed to assist and provide tools. She underscored that the fight against IUU fishing must take place across the globe, providing benefits to the third countries.

Daniel Voces (Europêche) wanted to know whether the revised Regulation on Non-Sustainable Fishing fell under the remit of MARE B4. Mr Voces also wanted to know whether the regulation would only be applied to the North East Atlantic Ocean.

Desiree Kjolsen (DG MARE) informed that the mentioned regulation was under the remit of MARE C5, but that the regulation did not have a specific geographical scope, so it could be applied to other regions.

CATCH

- **Update on the implementation**



Desiree Kjolsen (DG MARE) recalled that the CATCH system launched in January 2026. At the beginning of the implementation, there were some technical issues, but the Commission continuously addressed these. CATCH was continuously updated based on feedback from the users. No major blocking points had been identified. Over 58,000 importer declarations had been processed. Six countries, namely the UK, Norway, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland, and New Zealand, had already established interoperability. DG MARE continued to encourage the establishment of interoperability as well as direct use by third countries. In that context, DG MARE held several regional seminars, including in West Africa. Cooperation with Morocco on interoperability was ongoing. Interoperability with the Japanese system was expected in January 2027.

Ms Kjolsen informed that the flexibility for all countries to adapt to the three new data fields under the new catch certificate template had been prolonged until 10 October 2026. The Commission would continue to take a flexible approach to the countries that previously had administrative arrangements, namely Canada, Norway, New Zealand, the Faroe Islands, and South Africa and the US, until 10 July 2026. The US was expected to make use of the flexibility. Canada was expected to use the flexibility for some fisheries, such as lobster. DG MARE would continue to encourage the use of the new template.

Katarina Šipić (Seafood Europe) underscored that CATCH was significantly impacting the market. Ms Šipić asked DG MARE to share information with EU stakeholders in a prompter manner, as, in some cases, partners in third countries were aware of developments beforehand. She expressed availability from her organisation to assist in the dissemination efforts. She called on DG MARE to consider the human element of the implementation of the new system, as operational challenges were faced by the sector.

Desiree Kjolsen (DG MARE) responded that she would share Ms Šipić's concerns internally.

Pablo Cadarso (Conxemar) welcomed the efforts to establish interoperability with third countries, recalling that Spain cooperated with multiple countries in the Southern hemisphere. Mr Cadarso warned that CATCH was already impacting trade flows. Several international suppliers were avoiding the EU market due to the administrative constraints. There were cases of Canadian suppliers of wild Alaska salmon refusing to sell to EU companies. There were also cases of suppliers of squid preferring to sell to China and to South America instead of the EU.

Mr Cadarso took the opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of the Spanish administration to implement the new system and to face the increased administrative burden, including through staff reinforcements, but added that implementation remained challenging. He highlighted that the implementation of the new system was impacting labour conditions. Staff, across companies, customs and national administration, was suffering from anxiety, resulting in an increase in sick leaves. In his view, the current approach was unsustainable for both companies and workers.

Mr Cadarso, regarding the number of processed import declarations, requested information on the number of declarations for the same period in the previous year.



Desiree Kjolsen (DG MARE) responded that the corresponding figure for import declarations for 2025 was not available, since CATCH did not exist then. Usually, the catch certificates processed per year were around 200,000. Ms Kjolsen expressed understanding for the challenges faced by operators and administrations, as the initial implementation of a new system could be particularly challenging.

Pablo Cadarso (Conxemar) expressed availability to share additional data with DG MARE.

Desiree Kjolsen (DG MARE) expressed availability to receive suggestions of improvements, so that the use of the CATCH system could improve.

Katarina Šipić (Seafood Europe) recalled that the EU economy was mainly composed of SMEs. Ms Šipić warned that, in the next years, the EU economy would likely lose many of these SMEs due to the burden of overregulation. She expressed availability from her organisation to hold a bilateral meeting, as the implementation of the CATCH system should be improved.

- **Presentation on the practical experiences of operators by Jacobien Hoefnagel (Umios Food Europe)**

Presentation

Jacobien Hoefnagel (Umios Food Europe) provided an overview of her organisation, which operates internationally, including offices in Vietnam and the Netherlands, with global sourcing and distribution activities. Ms Hoefnagel explained that Umios Food imports fishery products from a wide range of countries, including Peru, South Africa, Alaska and Australia, with approximately 45% of volumes coming from wild catch and Rotterdam being the main entry point.

Ms Hoefnagel explained that her company received information about the new system from the Dutch authorities. In the view of the company, the requirements would result in a complex implementation, meaning more staff, working hours, and costs. Umios Food considered different options to their suppliers, but these would require the sharing of confidential business information. Therefore, the company decided instead to delegate the data entry of catch certificates via TRACES to their Vietnamese office.

Ms Hoefnagel outlined the operational and financial impacts of the new system. The company faced significant costs from containers held at ports for extra time and other expenses. Validation processes could take up to three days. The new system resulted in very significant expenses for the importers related to terminal costs. By May 2026, her company was still facing increased costs, while requests remained pending due to errors and divergent interpretations.

Ms Hoefnagel drew attention to differences of interpretation and processing times across Member States, which resulted in inconsistencies and additional complexity for operators. She provided an example of a catch certificate submitted into TRACES by an Italian importer that the Dutch authorities refused due to errors, even though containers from the same shipment had been accepted by the French, Italian, and Portuguese authorities. She also provided an example of an import declaration that the Italian authorities considered to be sufficient, while the Dutch authorities considered that validation was lacking. Other Member States, such as Portugal and Belgium, had also demanded validation.



Ms Hoefnagel emphasised that technical issues with TRACES were a major bottleneck, particularly when errors occurred. As an example, the system was not allowing the transshipment data to be the same as the fishing date. Following contacts with the Dutch authorities and DG MARE, additional lines were added to the system to allow the introduction of the mentioned data. In her view, the templates should be improved, so that companies can make the necessary amendments. In that case, it took several hours for her company to redo the template, as the Dutch authorities were unable to allow them to amend the template.

Ms Hoefnagel acknowledged that, in the long-term, when fully implemented, CATCH could provide benefits, but that was still far away. She called for the use of artificial intelligence to improve data processing, while also calling for an increase in the submission of data by third countries. In her view, the suggested improvements would reduce the costs and staff hours of importers.

- **Exchange of views**

Desiree Kjolsen (DG MARE) informed that due note was taken of the points raised by Ms Hoefnagel, adding that some of the issues, such as the registering of the transshipment date, were already being addressed. Ms Kjolsen recalled that CATCH was part of TRACES. In that context, DG MARE had raised the potential use of artificial intelligence, but exchanges were still ongoing. The introduction of data relied significantly on handwritten documents. Even if the use of artificial intelligence was introduced, it would still be necessary for someone to verify the data.

Jacobien Hoefnagel (Umios Food Europe) expressed availability to engage with DG MARE.

Desiree Kjolsen (DG MARE) encouraged operators to engage with their national authorities. Ms Kjolsen highlighted that DG MARE was monitoring implementation by the Member States, including on the validation of catch certificates. The Commission remained available to assist with the implementation. DG MARE would continue to encourage suppliers to use the system directly and third countries to establish interoperability.

Jacobien Hoefnagel (Umios Food Europe) cautioned that suppliers generally preferred for the introduction of data to be done by the importers, in order to avoid the administrative cost.

Poul Melgaard Jensen (Danish Seafood Association) requested more information on the calculation of the costs related to delays, since the presentation focused on the terminal expenses. Mr Melgaard Jensen highlighted that Danish operators faced several other costs, including due to failed contractual obligations.

Jacobien Hoefnagel (Umios Food Europe) confirmed that her presentation focused on the terminal costs linked to delays, but that there many other costs.

Sergio López García (OPP Puerto de Burela) emphasised that fishing operators faced many challenges. In his view, there were issues in the communication between the Commission and the Member States, which resulted in a lack of clear replies. Mr López called for a stronger coordination.

Desiree Kjolsen (DG MARE) informed that the Commission shared the same guidelines with all the Member States, but acknowledged that there could be differences of interpretation at the national level.

Adrien Simonnet (UMF) highlighted that, in the cases of exports of EU products, there were similar issues related to the different interpretations across the Member States. Mr Simonnet drew attention to the lack of



a contact point for French operators. He called for more support and guidance for operators engaged in export activities.

Desiree Kjolsen (DG MARE) confirmed that exports also required catch certificates. Depending on the requirements of the third country, the certificates could be provided in a paper format or via CATCH. Ms Kjolsen expressed acknowledgement for the challenges, adding that there should be a French contact point.

Mike Turenhout (Visfederatie) underscored the increasing costs and learning curves, as the sudden implementation of CATCH resulted in significant administrative burdens and costs for companies. Mr Turenhout highlighted that, for some fisheries, there could be particular challenges related to the number of fishing vessels involved. In many cases, the higher costs related to fisheries with a low risk of IUU practices. He asked about the possibility of establishing a risk-based approach, to reduce administrative requirements and costs in relation to fisheries with low risk of IUU fishing practices.

Desiree Kjolsen (DG MARE) responded that such an approach was not under discussion. In 2008, similar suggestions were made, but such an approach increased the risk of false labelling. The current framework was designated to apply across all fisheries.

AOB

None.



Summary of action items

- Trade Agreements & Trade Policy Instruments
 - Working Group to consider draft advice on the modernised EU-Mexico Free Trade Agreement via a written procedure.
- Autonomous Tariff Quotas
 - Secretariat to prepare, in coordination with the Chair of Working Group 1 and the Chair of Working Group 2, draft Terms of Reference for the establishment of a Focus Group to analyse the potential applicability of sustainability elements.



Attendance List

Representative	Organisation	Role
Adrien Simonnet	UMF	Member
Alen Lovrinov	PRODUCER ORGANIZATION OMEGA 3	Member
Alexandre Bonneau	SNCE	Member
Amandine Menu	PACT'ALIM	Member
Anna Rokicka	POLISH ASSOCIATION OF FISH PROCESSERS	Member
Anne-France Mattlet	EUROPECHE	Member
Aodh O Domhnaill	IRISH FISH PRODUCERS' ORGANISATION	Member
Arthur Yon	FROM NORD	Member
Bertrand Charron	AQUACULTURE STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL (ASC)	Member
Christine Absil	GOOD FISH	Member
Corine Vroom	VISFEDERATIE	Member
Cristina Borges	PORTUGAL	Observer
Daniel Voces De Onaindi	EUROPECHE	Member
Desiree Kjolsen	EUROPEAN COMMISSION	Expert
Dominic Rihan	KFO	Member
Eliott Valverde	EUROPEAN COMMISSION	Expert
Emiel Brouckaert	EAP0	Member
Gerd Heinen	EUROPEAN COMMISSION	Expert
Grace Howe	THE NATURE CONSERVANCY (TNC)	Member
Hommel Kassa	SNCE	Member
Iñigo Azqueta	ANFACO-CYTMA	Member
India Kennedy	IFPO	Member
Ingrid Morvan	COLEAD	Observer



Representative	Organisation	Role
Isabel Alonso Cabezas	SPAIN	Observer
Jacobien Hoefnagel	UMIOS FOOD EUROPE	Expert
Javier Ojeda	FEAP	Member
Jean-Marie Robert	LES PÊCHEURS DE BRETAGNE	Member
Jens Høj Mathiesen	DANISH SEAFOOD ASSOCIATION	Member
João Pereira	FRUCOM	Member
John Lynch	ISEFPO (IRISH SOUTH & EAST FISH PRODUCER ORGANISATION)	Member
José Carlos Escalera Aguilar	FECOPESCA	Member
Jose Basilio Otero Rodriguez	FEDERACION NACIONAL DE COFRADIAS DE PESCADORES	Member
Jules Danto	EAPO	Member
Julien Daudu	EJF	Member
Julien Lamothe	ANOP	Member
Karol Rzęsiewicz	EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT	Observer
Katarina Sipic	SEAFOOD EUROPE	Member
Kinga Malinowska-Facci	EUROPEAN COMMISSION	Expert
Linda Zanki Duvnjak	RZ FRISKA RIBA P.O.	Member
Linne Verhoeven	SEAFOOD EUROPE	Member
Luís Sousa	ALIF	Member
María Luisa Álvarez Blanco	FEDEPESCA	Member
Mariano García García	FEDERACION ANDALUZA DE COFRADIAS DE PESCADORES	Member
Matthew Gréant	ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOUNDATION	Member
Mike Turenhout	VISFEDERATIE	Member
Monika Kołodziejczyk	POLAND	Observer



Representative	Organisation	Role
Nicolás Fernández Muñoz	OPP72	Member
Pablo Cadarso Rebolledo	CONXEMAR	Member
Patrick Murphy	IRISH SOUTH & WEST FISH PRODUCERS ORGANISATION	Member
Pawel Szatkowski	EUROPEAN COMMISSION	Expert
Pedro Luis Casado Lopez	OPP80	Member
Pedro Reis Santos	MARKET ADVISORY COUNCIL	Secretariat
Pim Visser	NOVA DUTCH FISH AUCTIONS	Member
Poul Melgaard Jensen	DANISH SEAFOOD ASSOCIATION	Member
Sarah Hautier	EUROCOMMERCE	Member
Sergio Lopez Garcia	OPP PUERTO DE BURELA	Member
Stefan Meyer	SEAFOOD EUROPE	Chair
Thomas Kruse	DANISH PELAGIC PRODUCER ORGANISATION	Member
Violaine De Neef	MARKET ADVISORY COUNCIL	Secretariat
Yobana Bermúdez Rodríguez	SEAFOOD EUROPE	Member

