

General Assembly Minutes

Thursday, 16 September 2021

14:00 - 18:00 CET

Zoom online meeting

Welcome from the Chair, Guus Pastoor

Adoption of draft agenda and minutes of last meeting (23.09.21): adopted

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

Work Programme of Year 6 (2021-2022)

- **Presentation of priorities and deliverables by Pedro Reis Santos, Secretary General**

The Secretary General explained that the draft Work Programme was prepared by the Executive Committee and was sent to the European Commission for comments. The Secretary General provided an overview of the priorities and deliverables, including outstanding work from Year 5, the Farm to Fork Strategy, trade agreement & trade instruments, the marketing standards framework, IUU fishing & global governance, EUMOFA, SFPAs, food information to consumers, technologies for the transmission of data in the supply chain, landing obligation, STECF, sanitary & hygiene rules, substantiating green claims, empowering the consumer for the green transition, and other work.

Pim Visser (VisNed) expressed concern about the influence of the Farm to Fork Strategy on the revision of the marketing standards framework.

The General Assembly approved the Work Programme for Year 6.

- **Presentation of budget by Panos Manias, Financial Officer**

The Financial Officer provided an overview of the draft budget. The Financial Officer explained that the budget was prepared under the assumption that the meetings will take place in person. In terms of income, no major changes are expected. There are five Member States that systematically contribute to the MAC. Based on the membership commitments, 54 members will continue in the MAC. The Commission's contribution remains at € 300.000. The expenses are distributed across six main categories: staff costs, participation to meetings, information & dissemination costs, operation costs, interpretation & translation, other contracts. There are no changes to the staff costs and



operating costs. Four batches of meetings are anticipated in January, March, May and September. The budget for interpretation and translation has been increased.

The General Assembly approved the budget for Year 6.

Common Fisheries Policy & Common Market Organisation

- **Presentation on review reports by Frangiscos Nikolian, Head of Unit, MARE A4 and Fleur Breuillin, Team Leader – Common Fisheries Policy, MARE D3**
- **Exchange of views**

Frangiscos Nikolian (DG MARE) recalled that, under the CMO Regulation, there is an obligation to report on the implementation of the regulation by the end of 2022. It will be an implementation report, not an evaluation report. The report will provide an overview of the progress and the challenges faced. There will be no legislative initiative following the report. Mr Nikolian explained that, in the context of the revision of the marketing standards framework, there might be a modification, in order to combine the three pieces of legislation under one regulation. An evaluation of the marketing standards framework took place in 2019. The Commission representative highlighted that the CMO implementation report will cover all the aspects of the regulation, including rules for Producer Organisations, consumer information, exceptions from competition rules, and market intelligence. At the beginning of October, there will be a targeted survey to stakeholders, in order to gather views. The MAC will be involved and consulted. There will be close cooperation with the relevant Commission services, including DG SANTE, DG TRADE, DG COMP, and DG AGRI. Member States will be consulted through the expert group on markets. The work on the CMO and CFP reports is taking place in parallel. In the upcoming period, there will be a seminar event on the CFP report, which will also include a section on the CMO Regulation.

Fleur Breuillin (DG MARE) explained that there is a legal obligation to report on the functioning of the CFP by the end of 2022. The aim is to report on the functioning, so not to evaluate or review. The scope will cover all provisions of the CFP Regulation with a specific focus on the social dimensions, climate change, and clean oceans. In terms of process, a targeted online consultation will be launched in the upcoming weeks. Dedicated meetings on the topic are expected, including a seminar event. Ms Breuillin drew attention to the action plan to conserve fisheries resources. A consultation will be launched on this initiative in the upcoming weeks.

Pierre Commère (ADEPALE) wanted to know more about the merger of the three existing regulations of the marketing standards framework.

Frangiscos Nikolian (DG MARE) confirmed that the merger of the regulations was under consideration. Under the REFIT initiative, the Commission aims to reduce the number of regulations.



The impact assessment on the review of the marketing standards is being finalised. The merger could be an option under the impact assessment.

EU Consumer Habits Regarding Fishery and Aquaculture Products

- **Presentation of Special Eurobarometer 515 Report by Laurène Jolly, MARE A4**

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

Laurène Jolly (DG MARE) explained that this is the third edition of the Eurobarometer on EU consumer habits regarding fishery and aquaculture products. The first one was in 2016 and the second one in 2018. There were some new questions on the impact of the COVID19 pandemic and about how consumers perceive their consumption over that period. The fieldwork was conducted between March and April 2021. It covered all Member States and the interviews took place physically and online. Consumers continue to eat fishery and aquaculture products quite regularly. It is a slight decrease compared to the last edition. 21% of EU citizens consume fisheries and aquaculture products at restaurants at least once per month. There was also a decrease given the closure of the HORECA sector during the pandemic. Respondents are more likely to eat fresh products, followed by frozen products and then tinned. The vast majority purchases products at the grocery store, supermarket or hypermarket.

According to a self-declaration on consumption, the COVID-19 pandemic largely unaffected habits. For consumers who decreased their consumption, the main reason was that these products have become more expensive, followed by changes to their financial circumstances, and then by replacing fishery products by other food products. Among consumers who increased their consumption, it was due being more health conscious, followed by diet changes, and finding products more widely available in stores. In terms of preferences regarding fisheries and aquaculture products, the most important aspects when buying is the appearance, the cost, and the origin. The importance of the last criteria increased significantly since the last edition. Most consumers prefer wild products or state that they do not have a preference. There is less and less consumers that have a specific preference. As for respondents who never or almost never eat consume fishery and aquaculture products, the main reason is that they do not like the taste/smell/appearance. Other reasons are that the products are too expensive or that they are not used to these products.

In relation to information on fishery and aquaculture products, the most important mandatory information for consumers of fresh, frozen and dried products is the “use by” and “best before” dates, the name of the product and species, and whether it is wild or farmed. For tinned and prepared products, the most important mandatory information is the species, whether it is wild or farmed, and the area of catch or production. In terms of voluntary information, consumers express interest in the date of catch or production and environmental information.



As for main findings, Ms Jolly highlighted that, in terms of consumption, there was a decrease at home and outside since 2018, but products are still consumed quite regularly. The appearance is the most important criteria when buying products, but also to not avoid. The price is an important purchasing factor. The importance of origin of the product is also increasing for consumers. There was a decrease in strong preferences for wild or farmed products. The survey confirms that consumers expect that prepared and preserved products be accompanied by sector-specific information. Interest in environmental information increase significantly. There is a growing interest in environmental, social, and ethic information, but these have limited weight in the purchasing decision. The COVID-19 crisis does not seem to have significantly affected the consumption habits. For those decreasing consumption, financial aspects were the main cause.

- **Exchange of views**

The Chair recognised that consumption decreased. In the view of his organisation, the change in perception between wild and farmed products is true. It would be relevant to know more about the negative perception on taste/smell/appearance, which decreased. It could be connected to more sales of prepacked and value-added products. Due to the costs, consumers will likely look for more value-added products.

Jean-Marie Robert (Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne), in relation to the consumers that decreased and increased their consumption, commented that it could be connected to perceptions about the state of fish stocks. The EU's fish stocks are improving, particularly in the North Atlantic waters. Mr Robert wondered if consumers could easily find information about stock status and MSY. Consumers should be aware of the positive developments in stocks.

Sean O'Donoghue (KFO) wanted to know the statistical sample size and the confidence limits. Mr O'Donoghue expressed concern about some of the trends in survey. If consumption continues to decrease, the sector will face a very difficult situation. There are some contradictory elements, since consumers do not care if a product is farmed or wild, but, at the same time, they want that information displayed on the packaging. The MAC should carefully review the survey. Mr O'Donoghue highlighted the importance of price in purchasing decisions. He was surprised that environmental concerns were not higher in the priorities.

The Chair wanted to know if the consumption was analysed in terms of value or volume. In value-added products, the quantity of fish is lower, but the value is higher.

José Beltrán (OPP Lugo) wanted to know the sample size. Preferences can change significantly across the geographical regions. It is quite relevant that price remains as a key criterion. Mr Beltrán wanted to know if consumers expressed preference between EU origin and others.



Frangiscos Nikolian (DG MARE) explained that the methodology of the survey is the same for all Eurobarometer surveys. The sample is above 26.000 people. It is a robust base to draw conclusions. In relation to Mr Robert's question about informing consumers on the improved status of the stocks, Mr Nikolian highlighted that the Commission is trying to achieve this, for example through the revision of the marketing standards framework. In terms of origin, consumers want to know if it is local or imported. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the local markets received significant support.

Laurène Jolly (DG MARE), in relation to origin, the 2018 survey showed that consumers prefer products from their own Member State. The responses vary between coastal States and landlocked States. The survey did not cover the issue of information about stock status. Nevertheless, there were questions about this in the public consultation on the revision of the marketing standards framework. The responses to the public consultation are publicly available. On the self-declare consumption, it will be important to look at the economic figures on actual consumption. It is important to look at the different socioeconomic characteristics and age groups. The largest consumers of fishery and aquaculture products are the oldest group. The database of the survey is publicly available. Price continues to be a very important element and fishery and aquaculture products continue to be perceived as expensive.

Matthias Keller (Bundesverband der deutschen Fischindustrie und des Fischgrosshandels e.V.) commented that, in 2020, in Germany, consumers bought significant amounts of canned and frozen fish, which has led to a decrease in purchases in 2021. Therefore, origin did not play a significant role in the purchasing decision. Consumers were more focused on availability of supply. The Commission should look more into the importance of the wild and farmed origin. An elasticity calculation on price and income would also be quite relevant.

The Chair commented that, in some species, it is possible to see the relationship between the price increase and the decrease in consumption. At the same time, there are limits to these studies, since supermarkets impose certain levels of prices per package.

Functioning of the Advisory Councils under the Common Fisheries Policy

- **Exchange of views on the draft Commission Delegated Regulation**

The Chair recalled that the draft Commission Delegated Regulation was the result of several discussions held in the Inter-AC meetings, previous experience, and internal discussions.

Secretary General explained that the aim of the draft regulation is to improve the functioning of the Advisory Councils. There was a feedback period from 19 July to 10 September 2021. The MAC did not contribute with feedback to the public consultation, but, in previous opportunities, the Executive Committee had already contributed with positions and documents. Therefore, DG MARE is aware of the MAC's views.



The Secretary General provided an overview of the main changes under the draft regulation. None of the changes are controversial to the MAC. In terms of structure and organisation, the Chair may originate from outside the membership. Even though the appointment of outside Chairs is not generalised, it is an established practice in some Advisory Councils, so the Commission is recognising the legality of this practice. The Chair and Vice-Chair shall be designated from different categories. This is already established practice in the MAC. Where possible, the Chair and Vice-Chair of working groups should be designated from different categories. This is also practice in the MAC. A performance review must take place every five years. The MAC is already undertaking a performance review. The draft delegated act provides criteria to assist in the classification of the members. The MAC has not faced problems in the classification of members. There is a new section on the classification of associations linked to the use of the marine environment and maritime space, which could prove controversial in some Advisory Councils, but it is unlikely to be the case in the MAC.

Update on the work done per Working Group

- **Reporting by Sean O'Donoghue, Chair of Working Group 1**

Sean O'Donoghue (KFO) expressed satisfaction with the level of productivity of Working Group 1. Mr O'Donoghue emphasised the relevance of the advice on the impact and mitigation of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the engagement with DG MARE. The recommendations were generally taken on board by the Commission. Several pieces of advice were developed on the marketing standards framework and another draft is under consideration. The Chair of Working Group 1 highlighted the importance of the advice on the Biodiversity Strategy. There were useful interactions with STECF, including participation in the Annual Economic Report meetings. For Year 6, he drew attention to the EMFAF, EUMOFA, and marketing standards framework priorities.

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

Pierre Commère (ADEPALE), in relation to IUU fishing, highlighted the exchange of views, at the January meeting, with the Commission on carding system. Advice on the import of IUU fishing products from Ghana was adopted. Working Group 2 agreed on the text for advice on flags of convenience, which was sent to LDAC for a potential joint adoption. Mr Commère drew attention to the work on Brexit, including adoption of advice on the impact on the market. A letter was sent to FAO on social responsibility. Working Group 2 addressed the topic of food supply contingency plan. In relation to SFPAs, a questionnaire was prepared, followed by the adoption of advice and an exchange of views with the Commission. A study by EUMOFA on the impact of imports on the small-scale fleet was also presented. In terms of trade, there were exchanges of views about the EU-USA trade dispute, rules of origin of Cape Verde, and the renegotiation of the EEA Agreement. The Initial Focus Group on Trade was established and an update will take place at the next meeting.



- **Reporting by Benoît Thomassen, Chair of Working Group 3**

Benoît Thomassen (FEAP) explained that, since the last General Assembly meeting, there were five meetings of Working Group 3. The working group prepared a significant number of advices, including on the EU promotion programme for agricultural and food products, plastics, voluntary sustainability claims, caviar labelling, Nutri-score labelling, food information to consumers, food contact materials, plant-based imitation seafood, BCPs in fish oil, and the health and environmental value of seafood.

Work Programme of Year 5 (2020-2021)

- **Update on priorities and deliverables by Pedro Reis Santos, Secretary General**

The Secretary General provided an overview of the priorities and deliverables of Year 5. The Secretary General highlighted the high level of productivity. Since the MAC was established, Year 5 was the operational year with the highest number of advices adopted. The Secretary General thanked the Chairs and the members for the productivity.

The Chair praised the number of advices and the work of the Secretariat. The Chair noted that the use of online meetings proved to be fruitful.

- **Update on the accounts by Panos Manias, Financial Officer**

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

The Financial Officer presented the balance sheet and income statement of Year 4. These were prepared in collaboration with the external accountants and were audited. Additionally, these were reconciled with a report sent to the Commission. In Year 4, the operating charges were € 287.365,61 and the income received was € 292.325,00. There was an operating profit of €4.959,39, which will remain in the bank account as a reserve.

Pierre Commère (ADEPALE) wondered, since the MAC is a not-for-profit organisation, whether the expression “operating profit” was appropriate.

The Financial Officer explained that a template developed by national authorities for all organisations in Belgium is used. The amount will not be distributed and will remain as a reserve.

Nicolás Fernández Muñoz (OPP72) highlighted that it is normal for not-for-profit organisations to maintain some income. This will allow further opportunities to improve the work of the MAC.

Sean O’Donoghue (KFO) highlighted that strict accounting standards are used among OECD countries.



The General Assembly approved the balance sheet and income statement of Year 4.

The Financial Officer provided an update on the accounts of Year 5. There was an amendment to the budget. Since the meetings took place online, the costs with their organisation decreased. The costs for interpretation and translation. There were also decisions to update the website and to undertake an external performance review. For groups A “staff”, D “operating costs” and E “interpretation & translation”, the actual expenses are close to the budgeted ones. For Group F “other contracts”, there will be further expenses due to the website, the performance review, and the external audit. No further expenses are expected for groups B “participation in meetings” and C “information & preparation for meetings”. Therefore, the MAC will not receive the entire financial support provided by the Commission. The Financial Officer provided an overview of the income from members and Member States. There was increase in membership fees and a decrease in financial support from Member States.

Sean O’Donoghue (KFO) wondered about the Member States that did not provide financial support, particularly whether contact was maintained.

The Secretary General responded that the Secretariat was in touch with the Member States, but that the Member States are not obliged to provide financial contributions. The situation varies much with the national authority of the Member State. The Secretary General encouraged members to enter into contact with their financial authorities and emphasise the importance of supporting the MAC and other Advisory Councils.

Matthias Keller (Bundesverband der deutschen Fischindustrie und des Fischgrosshandels e.V.) emphasised the importance of members contacting their national authorities to request financial support for the MAC.

MAC Performance Review

- **Presentation of the external review by Benoît Guerin, BG Sea Consulting**
- **Way forward**

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

Benoît Guerin (BG Sea Consulting) explained his professional experience with the Advisory Councils. Between 2007 and 2013, he was Executive Secretary for the SWWAC. Afterwards, he was a member of the Executive Committee of MEDAC. In 2019-2020, he carried out a performance review for the LDAC. Mr Guerin highlighted the importance of these performance reviews for the Commission. The objective is to perform an external and objective assessment of the functioning of the internal bodies of the MAC and the performance of the MAC as an advisory body in its institutional environment, plus to identify examples of good practices and shortcomings.



Mr Guerin further explained that terms of reference were adopted by the Executive Committee, which cover the functioning of the MAC's bodies, the decision-making process, the representation of different interests, the performance of the chairs and secretariat, relationship with the Commission, Member States, and other Advisory Councils, transparency, and communication and public relations. In terms of methodology, there will be an analysis of available information, analysis of meetings, semi-directed interviews, online surveys, semi-directed interviews with partners and observers. There will be interim conclusions in January 2022 and the final report with recommendations and priority actions will be concluded in March 2022.

AOB

None.



List of attendees

Representative	Organisation
Agnieszka Korbel	WWF
Anna Boulova	FRUCOM
Benoît Guerin	BG Sea Consulting
Benoît Thomassen	FEAP
Bruno Guillaumie	EMPA
Catherine Pons	FEAP
Christine Absil	Good Fish Foundation
Daniel Voces de Onáindi	Europêche
Daniel Weber	European Fishmeal
Diego Garrido	CONXEMAR
Emma Soto	European Parliament
Emiel Brouckaert	EAPO
Felicidad Fernández Alonso	ANFACO-CECOPECA
Fleur Breuillin	European Commission
Frangiscos Nikolian	European Commission
Georg Werner	Environmental Justice Foundation
Guus Pastoor (Chair)	Visfederatie
Javier Ojeda	FEAP
Jean-Marie Robert	Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne
Jennifer Reeves	MSC
Jérémie Souben	FEDOPA
José Basilio Otero Rodríguez	FNCP
Juan Manuel Fernández Beltrán	OPP Lugo
Juan Manuel Trujillo Castillo	ETF
Katarina Sipic	AIPCE-CEP



Representative	Organisation
Laurène Jolly	European Commission
María Luisa Álvarez Blanco	FEDEPESCA
Massimo Bellavista	COPA COGECA
Matthias Keller	Bundesverband der deutschen Fischindustrie und des Fischgrosshandels e.V.
Nicolás Fernández Muñoz	OPP72
Panos Manias	Market Advisory Council
Patrick Murphy	IS&WFPO
Pedro Reis Santos	Market Advisory Council
Pierre Commère	ADEPALE
Pim Visser	VisNed
Purificación Fernández	OPPC-3
Quentin Marchais	ClientEarth
Roberto Carlos Alonso	ANFACO-CECOPECA
Rosalie Tukker	Europêche
Santiago Folgar Gutiérrez	AVOCANO
Sean O'Donoghue	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation Ltd
Stavroula Kremmydiotou	Market Advisory Council
Vanya Vulperhorst	Oceana
Yannis Pelekanakis	FEAP
Zarah Bellefroid	EAPO

