

## Working Group 1: EU Production

### Draft Minutes

Thursday, 5 June 2025 (10:00 – 13:30 CET)

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

Interpretation in EN, ES, FR

#### Welcome from the acting Chair, Benoît Thomassen

#### Presentation

*In line with point 15 of the Rules of Procedure, as the Chair of Working Group 1, Julien Lamothe, was unable to attend, the Working Group agreed that Benoît Thomassen would be Chair of the meeting.*

**Adoption of the agenda and of the last meeting's minutes (27.03.25):** Adopted

#### Action points

- **State-of-play of the action points of the last meeting - information**
- **Producer Organisations:**
  - Agreed draft advice “Producer Organisations under the Common Market Organisation in Fishery and Aquaculture Products” to be put forward to the Executive Committee for consideration and potential approval.
    - Advice adopted on May 7 May 2025.
- **Common Fisheries Policy:**
  - Following informal exchanges with the most interested members to redraft pending points, draft advice on “Evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy (2014-2024)” to be considered via ordinary written procedure.
    - 1<sup>st</sup> written consultation of the Working Groups: 28 April – 13 May 2025.
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> written consultation of the Working Groups: 19 – 22 May 2025.

#### Sustainability Criteria for Fishery and Aquaculture Products

- **Update on the development of the sustainability criteria tool by Gerd Heinen (MARE A4)**

The Chair recalled that, at the request of DG MARE, STECF had been developing sustainability criteria and indicators for fishery and aquaculture products. DG MARE was preparing the launch of a voluntary tool on the sustainability of fishery products. A group was established by DG MARE to test the new tool. A call for



expressions of interest was circulated among the members of the MAC from 29 November to 13 December 2024. The Chair further recalled that, on 30 January 2025, the MAC adopted advice on the development of fishery sustainability indicators by STECF.

Gerd Heinen (DG MARE) explained that, in the context of the testing exercise, a large number of stakeholders expressed interest in participating, illustrating significant engagement. Mr Heinen thanked the MAC members for the feedback provided. As recommended by the MAC, DG MARE also invited members of the other Advisory Councils to participate in the testing of the tool. The testers included a broad range of stakeholders, including primary producers, processors, retailers, and NGOs. The majority of the participants came from the MAC's membership. Diverse feedback was received, which was welcomed by DG MARE. While there were supportive stakeholders, there were also other stakeholders that expressed scepticism or concerns.

Mr Heinen highlighted that a decision on the application of the tool had not yet been made by DG MARE. A longer testing period than originally planned would take place to ensure comprehensive feedback from all relevant units in DG MARE. A meeting with the senior management of DG MARE was scheduled for June 2025. On the potential launch of the tool, MARE A4 was considering also intermediary options. As the tool could have an impact on the market, it would be essential to ensure its robustness. The tool could be launched in a beta test phase to mitigate potential risks. This would also allow further engagement and feedback to improve the tool. The Commission representative emphasised that that DG MARE would continue to update the MAC and the other Advisory Councils.

- **Exchange of views**

Christine Absil (Good Fish Foundation) welcomed the update on the progress. Ms Absil argued that, in terms of implementation, it was necessary to consider how the tool could be used, including the impact on sourcing decisions. Ms Absil wanted to know, based on the tool, what kinds of claims operators would be able to make on the market. She exemplified that if a "traffic light" system was used, there would not be a chain of custody to verify the claim.

Gerd Heinen (DG MARE) responded that DG MARE was pursuing a voluntary information tool. Therefore, the tool would be insufficient for producers to make general sustainability claims on the market. It was thus unlikely that retailers would exclusively rely on the tool for their sourcing decisions. Concerning the claims, Mr Heinen emphasised that the upcoming Green Claims Directive would need to be considered, as, to prevent "greenwashing", it limited the possibilities of communication to consumers based on scoring. DG MARE would be further discussing the matter with DG ENV. In the case of marine fish products, the Product Environmental Footprint Category Rules could also be relevant to substantiate claims. He argued that, if a producer wished to make a sustainability claim, it would have to be substantiated more comprehensively than what the tool provides. In case of very specific claims related to the state of the stock, the tool could potentially assist in the substantiation. Nevertheless, such approach required further discussion with DG ENV, as the use for labelling purposes was not the primary objective of the information tool.



Pierre Commère (PACT'ALIM) recalled that he participated in the testing of the tool. Mr Commère expressed concerns about the maturity of the tool. He highlighted that it was possible to use the tool to generate outcomes for products that do not actually exist, which, in his view, undermined the credibility of the tool. He wanted to know whether the tool would evolve further.

Gerd Heinen (DG MARE) recognised that the issue described by Mr Commère did happen but added it did not pose a significant risk in his view. The tool would be used by consumers or by other stakeholders in relation to specific products and the mandatory information available on the product labels. Mr Heinen emphasised that the aim was to develop a comprehensive tool covering domestic and imported products. The removal of unrealistic combinations from the tool would require manual input. Since, during the testing phase, there were comments on various issues related to the calculations of scores, the tool would be further updated. Explanations on the expected uses would also be added to the tool itself.

Pierre Commère (PACT'ALIM) argued that, in line with the Food Information to Consumers Regulation, operators were required to provide information based on actual and verifiable information. Mr Commère expressed concern about communication campaigns by NGOs, for example on the status of the fish stocks, that were not subject to the same regulatory obligations on the accuracy of the information. Therefore, in his view, there was a risk that advocacy-focused NGOs could use the tool in a way that misrepresents the industry, including through the use of non-existing products.

Gert Heinen (DG MARE) expressed understanding for Mr Commère's argument. Mr Heinen recognised that, if the indicators were not robust enough, there would be risks. He emphasised that improvements to the tool could still take place, particularly in the context of the beta phase.

Patrick Murphy (IS&WFPO) wanted to know whether, in a case of misuse of the tool, the Commission would be willing to intervene to address reputational damages due to misinformation.

Gerd Heinen (DG MARE) stated that a response to Mr Murphy's hypothetical question would require speculation. Mr Heinen emphasised that the issue would have to be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Katarina Sipic (AIPCE-CEP) argued that, awaiting reactions on a case-by-case basis represented a significant risk of negative impacts. A single news article was sufficient to significantly impact market performance, including sharp drops in value. Ms Sipic agreed with Mr Murphy that DG MARE should consider potential scenarios of misinformation.

Gerd Heinen (DG MARE) expressed understanding for Ms Sipic's concerns and said that the that the potential approach to launch the tool in a (clearly highlighted) beta-test mode and the robustness of the indicators would minimise the risk of abuse. Mr Heinen underscored that the beta phase would contribute towards a more robust tool.



Pim Visser (NOVA) commented that operators and NGOs would understand the purpose of the tool. Nevertheless, in his view, there were risks related to activist journalists and to social media. Mr Visser exemplified that, in the Netherlands, there was a news article about PFAS and mercury in fish, which then was repeated on social media, significantly impacting operators. He argued that excessive information could also cause problems due to lack of understanding of the information.

Mr Visser wanted to know whether the tool would be applicable to imported products. He exemplified that EU retailers purchased Alaska pollock that came from broad FAO areas. He also expressed doubts about the traceability of products coming from Russia, particularly the reliability of the declared FAO area.

Gerd Heinen (DG MARE) acknowledged that there were challenges related to social media. In his view, if the tool was robust, there would be limited risks. The beta phase would serve to minimise those risks. On the issue of Alaska pollock and broad fishing areas, Mr Heinen explained that the tool aims at reflecting all stocks in a given area. In case of stocks with low performance, a precautionary approach was taken in the rating of the fishing area. If operators would prefer more assurance, then the producers would need to make more information available, including the provision of more specific fishing sub-areas. He added that the indication of several FAO areas under the same product was not compliant with the Common Market Organisation Regulation.

Fabian Schäfer (Fischverband) stated that he could imagine various potential cases of misuse. Mr Schäfer mentioned that there could be different ratings based on the sub-areas of fishing, for example for Alaska pollock, which could be misused in NGO campaigns. The campaigners could even claim that, based on the tool, the Commission believes that certain products are bad.

Gerd Heinen (DG MARE) responded that concrete feedback would be welcome. The beta phase could address several issues and lower the risk of misrepresentations.

Patrick Murphy (IS&WFPO) recalled that there was an international goal to set 30% of the ocean as Marine Protected Areas. Mr Murphy wondered about the impact of EU fishing vessels entering certain of those areas in UK waters, since there were already issues related to fishing in Marine Protected Areas.

Gerd Heinen (DG MARE) explained that the tool was based on stock assessments and did not specifically take into account Marine Protected Areas.

### Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries

- **Presentation of the 2024 edition of the Aquaculture Economic Report by Rasmus Nielsen (Chair, Expert Working Group)**

[Presentation](#)



The Chair recalled that, every two years, STECF publishes the economic report on the EU aquaculture sector, providing a comprehensive overview of the latest information available on the production, economic value, structure and competitive performance of the aquaculture sector at the national and EU levels. The Chair further recalled that, under the annual work programme, the MAC committed to providing advice on the Terms of Reference of the next edition of the report.

Rasmus Nielsen (STECF) emphasised that the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation aims to ensure that fisheries and aquaculture activities contribute to long-term environmental, economic and social sustainability. Mr Nielsen explained that the economic report draws from data collected under the Data Collection Framework. The data, which covers species and production techniques, is submitted by the Member States, who are also responsible of ensuring its accuracy. Harmonisation takes place through the Regional Coordination Group to ensure comparability. The datasets span from 2008 to 2022, available on website of the Joint Research Centre, and are supplemented with FAO and Eurostat data.

Mr Nielsen highlighted that the report provides a comprehensive overview of the latest information available on production volume, economic value, employment and competitive performance at the national and EU level for the years 2017 to 2022. Economic indicators include detailed sales volume, value, and costs for aquaculture firms. Social indicators cover socio-demographics on age, gender, education, and nationality. Environmental indicators are mentioned, but indicators on mortality and medicine use are not yet implemented. The EU overview chapter presents the current state of the EU aquaculture sector, while also presenting information by sectors, namely marine finfish (salmon, seabream/seabass, tuna and other species), shellfish (mussels, oysters, clams and other species), and freshwater (trout, carp and other species). As special topics, the report covered economic sustainability indicators as well as a nowcast estimation of the overall production value, volume, and employment of the sector for 2023.

Mr Nielsen provided an overview, for 2022, of the figures of the EU aquaculture sector. There were 14.000 enterprises, of which 80% are microenterprises, and 73.000 employees and 41.000 full-time employees. There were 1.2 million ton of production, valued at €4.8 billion, representing an increase of 5% in volume and of 24% in turnover compared to 2020. These represent an increase of 1% in volume and 15% in turnover when compared to 2021. He outlined the main species by weight and volume, and the main results for the marine fish sector, the shellfish sector, and the freshwater fish sector. According to the nowcast model, in 2023, the volume would decrease 2%, while sales value would remain stable.

Mr Nielsen explained that economic sustainability refers to the ability of an economy or a sector to support a defined level of economic production in the long-term. Long-term resilience requires that industries are able to continuously invest in new technology to stay competitive, and, at the same time, pay for negative externalities imposed on society or from the use of natural resources. Economic sustainability is closely linked to the other two pillars of sustainability, social and environmental. He outlined the variables selected for investigating economic sustainability: Gross Value Added, Earning Before Interest and Tax, Return on



Investment, future expectation, labour productivity, and capital productivity. According to the report, overall, the EU aquaculture sector seemed economically robust.

Mr Nielsen further highlighted that new insights on global aquaculture production using the aquaculture performance index show that, on average, aquaculture production is able to support all pillars of sustainability simultaneously, if managed properly. To this end, the European aquaculture sector (including the UK and Norway) is performing better in all dimensions compared to global averages. He drew attention to the views of the European Court of Auditors that indicated that more attention is needed on how subsidies are used, more research is needed on the positive effects of subsidies, and more research is needed to identify and remove barriers to growth in the EU.

Mr Nielsen stated that overall information on the EU sector has improved, as more freshwater aquaculture is covered, and the nowcast estimations and alternative data sources allow for the bridging of data gaps and present time trends. Nevertheless, there was a lack of data control before the Expert Working Group meetings. The lack of data experts and the correction of data during the meeting decreased the time available for economic analysis and, thereby, the quality of the report. On the collection of environmental variables, he wondered whether it would be more relevant to collect data on nitrogen and phosphorus instead. He argued that cooperation with stakeholders could be improved, including through the involvement of more experts and observers.

- **Exchange of views**

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) highlighted the high quality of the expertise in STECF but expressed concerns regarding the quality of the raw data transmitted by the Member States. While there was a legal obligation to collect data, some Member States failed to transmit the necessary data. Collected data could remain unused in isolated databases. Mr Ojeda wanted to know the origin for these difficulties in data flows, including whether it was impacted by the competences of regional authorities. He welcomed previous collaboration between the MAC and the Aquaculture Advisory Council to provide advice on the economic report. He added the European Court of Auditor's report on the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund did not include specific remarks on the data issue.

Rasmus Nielsen (STECF) responded that Member States deliver data, but there could be issues of quality. Mr Nielsen commented that, occasionally, the Expert Working Group had to ask Member States to correct data. While there were procedures to request the correction of the data, further pressure could be put on the Member States to ensure the quality of the transmitted data.

Thibault Pivetta (EMPA) drew attention to the difficulties in obtaining long-term data, for example on the impact of climate change on mollusc production. While there was collection of historical data, the integration into the system was not always properly made. Mr Pivetta exemplified that, for recent years, a production decrease of 2% was foreseen, when, in reality, the decrease was of 8%. He argued that the data quality problems should be addressed as a matter of urgency. Although there were technical and research efforts at



the regional levels, these were not always properly consolidated, leading to data gaps in certain Member States. Therefore, the lack of data transfer remained a serious problem.

Rasmus Nielsen (STECF) agreed that better data would be welcome. Mr Nielsen argued that the Advisory Councils could assist in the prioritisation of data needs and corresponding updates, including on the impacts of climate change. Mr Nielsen encouraged stakeholders to participate, as observers, in the meetings of the Expert Working Group.

Thibault Pivetta (EMPA) expressed concern about the duplication of work for producers. Mr Pivetta exemplified that, in France, IFREMER collected data, but that there were also various regional observatories. He called on the Commission to look into the described matter.

Gerd Heinen (DG MARE) encouraged members to raise these issues in AAC meetings as well and responded that he would transmit Mr Pivetta's concerns to the colleagues responsible for aquaculture policy.

Rasmus Nielsen (STECF) commented that consolidating the various data collection exercises into one was rather challenging, as different ministerial departments were usually involved. In the case of Denmark, there were efforts to consolidate into a single system, but effective cooperation remained a challenge.

Patrick Murphy (IS&WFPO) welcomed the report but argued that the Terms of Reference could be further improved. In his view, it was important to forecast on aquaculture production while also accounting for evolving priorities. Mr Murphy exemplified that there were environmental impacts, such as carbon sequestration, and food security elements, such as number of meals, that could be considered. He also highlighted the relevance of the industry in rural areas, as it was very significant for employment, including to fixate young people.

Rasmus Nielsen (STECF) explained that the Terms of Reference were set by DG MARE. The Advisory Councils could send their feedback on the Terms of Reference to DG MARE. Suggestions for special chapters would be welcomed. He recalled that the focus needed to be on economic aspects.

Dominic Rihan (KFO) wanted to know what kind of expertise the Expert Working Group was lacking, specifically whether it was lack of aquaculture knowledge or of economic knowledge. Mr Rihan also wanted to know more about the role of observers.

Rasmus Nielsen (STECF) responded that the Expert Working Group included experts on data collection. Nevertheless, the experts did not necessarily have expertise in aquaculture policy, which could be a challenge for the interpretation of data, particularly for the forecasting. Mr Nielsen emphasised that STECF aimed for a balance in the expertise. More knowledge from producers could be useful, which was why it was beneficial to welcome observers.

- **Way forward**



The Chair proposed the circulation of a questionnaire by the Secretariat for the development of advice on the Terms of Reference of the next edition of the report. The future advice could also address issues of data collection and management.

The Secretary General recalled that, in line with the commitments made under the annual work programme, the advice should be adopted by the end of September 2025. The Secretary wanted to know whether the members would be interested in cooperating with the Aquaculture Advisory Council, in line with the previous advice on the topic.

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) expressed support for joint work with the Aquaculture Advisory Council.

Thibault Pivetta (EMPA) encouraged the Secretariat to coordinate with the Secretariat of the Aquaculture Advisory Council to ensure alignment in the consultation and approval timelines.

The Secretary General committed to coordinating with the Secretariat of the Aquaculture Advisory Council, while aiming for the consideration of the draft advice at the September 2025 meeting.

### European Market Observatory for Fisheries and Aquaculture (EUMOFA)

- **Consideration of draft advice with suggestions for the next work programme of EUMOFA**

The Chair recalled that, under the annual work programme, there was a commitment to provide advice to the European Commission with suggestions for the next work programme of EUMOFA. The Chair further recalled that a questionnaire was circulated from 23 April to 7 May 2025.

The Secretary General explained that the aim of the draft advice was to provide concrete suggestions of topics for the studies undertaken by EUMOFA, including price structure analyses, and thematic analysis. In line with the commitment made under the annual work programme, the advice should be adopted until the end of September 2025. Following the circulation of the questionnaire, feedback was provided by ALIF and by PO Friska Riba. ALIF called for price structures analysis on cod (Portugal, Spain) and on hake (Portugal, Spain, Italy), while PO Frisk Riba drew attention to the lack of first sales data from Croatia.

Janne Posti (Conxemar) called for a price structure analysis on squid and another one on shrimp/prawns, particularly focusing on Spain and Portugal. He committed to send more details in writing to the Secretariat.

Jules Danto (EAPO) argued that the price structure analysis on squid should cover France, Germany and the Netherlands. Mr Danto called for a price structure analysis on octopus in France, Ireland, and Spain.

Patrick Murphy (IS&WFPO) argued for the inclusion of Ireland under the price structure analysis on hake.

Sergio López García (OPP7 Burela) argued that, for Spain, both from production and marketing perspectives, cod was not particularly relevant. Therefore, Spain could be removed from the price structure analysis on cod. Mr López drew attention to the importance of hake, sardines, and mackerel in the Spanish market.



Adrien Simonnet (UMF) called for the inclusion of France under the price structure analysis on hake.

Sergio López García (OPP7 Burela) commented that, according to previous exchanges with the Commission in 2023 and 2024, an update to a previous study on fresh hake in Spain was expected. Mr López asked for information on the expected timing of publication.

Christophe Vande Weyer (DG MARE) committed to looking into the matter raised by Mr López.

Jules Danto (EAPO) called for a price structure analysis on octopus.

The Secretary General, regarding the suggested thematic analysis on the evolution of the Croatian market, explained that, under the questionnaire, OP Friska Riba signalled the lack of comparison in EUMOFA of fish price trends in Croatia with other Member States. As a follow up, the Secretariat asked MARE A4 about the lack of data for Croatia. MARE A4 confirmed that first sales for Croatia were not yet available on EUMOFA. The Croatian administration was not yet ready to provide data in accordance with the EUMOFA's standards on quality and frequency. While the historical datasets (2017-2023) had been finalised, that was not yet the case for the most recent data, as the weekly transmission of first sales data by the national administration was not yet in place. The work was in progress, but the pace depended on the national administration.

The Secretary General further explained that the aim of the suggested thematic analysis was to cover the evolution of the Croatian market since the acceding to the EU, comparing the evolution of the prices with the rest of the EU, particularly focusing on anchovy, sardine, and hake. It was also an opportunity to call on the Commission and the Croatian authorities to strengthen their cooperation, so that the periodical transmission of quality data on first sales and prices would start as soon as possible.

Christophe Vande Weyer (DG MARE) confirmed that efforts would be made to integrate the suggestions of the MAC into the work programme of EUMOFA. Mr Vande Weyer explained that EUMOFA required periodical transmissions of data from each Member State, which could be challenging for the smaller ones. The Commission representative expressed confidence that, through the new provisions on electronic transmission of data following the revision of the Fisheries Control Regulation, the transmission of first sales data would be further facilitated.

Adrien Simonnet (UMF) called for a thematic analysis on the impact of Brexit on the market, including the impact of fleet decommissioning schemes. The analysis could be particularly relevant for France and Ireland.

Christophe Vande Weyer (EUMOFA) clarified that EUMOFA already analysed the evolution of the EU and the UK market. Nevertheless, a thematic analysis on the impacts of Brexit would also be possible. Mr Vande Weyer encouraged the members to indicate the species and Member States of particularly relevance.

Thibault Pivetta (EMPA) argued that the focus should not only be on trade, but also production.

Christophe Vande Weyer (EUMOFA) responded that EUMOFA provided information on the market impacts.



Dominic Rihan (KFO) expressed support for Mr Simonet's suggestion.

Sylvie Beaus (VVV) also expressed support and called for the inclusion of Belgium.

- **Way forward**

The Secretary General informed that the draft advice would be updated to reflect the suggestions made, which would be followed by a written procedure for consideration and potential adoption. He encouraged the members to provide, via email message, a paragraph substantiating their suggestions.

### Common Fisheries Policy

- **Update on the draft advice on the evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy (2014-2024)**

The Secretary General recalled that the Commission's public consultation took place from 27 January to 21 April 2025 and that DG MARE encouraged the Advisory Councils to submit their advice by the end of May 2025. The structure of the draft advice followed the structure of the mentioned public consultation. While the draft advice was considered at the March 2025 meetings of Working Group 1 and Working Group 3 and via a written procedure from 28 April to 13 May 2025, several issues remained pending. He proceeded to outline the amendments suggested under the written procedure.

Daniel Voces (Europêche), regarding the reference to the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund under the point on "economic sustainability" of part II "effectiveness", argued for a clearer differentiation between the role of the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation and of the mentioned fund.

The Secretary General highlighted that, under the "fisheries catching sector" point, NGO representatives expressed lack of support for the sentence on administrative burden. WWF had explicitly opposed the sentence. Therefore, the sentence was redrafted to be attributed to EAPO. The Secretary General also highlighted, in relation to the reference to underutilisation of fishing quotas, that Oceana had asked about potential alternative reports for substantiation. There were also doubts on the purpose of the reference.

Janne Posti (Conxemar) underscored that the underutilisation of fishing stocks was demonstrated by various verifiable sources.

Katarina Sipic (AIPCE-CEP) emphasised that the "EU Seafood Supply Synopsis" report produced by her organisation was based on identified data sources, including Eurostat data. Ms Sipic recalled that the report was previously presented to the MAC and was even compared to the "EU Fish Market" report of EUMOFA. She argued that, if studies undertaken by NGOs were referenced in the draft advice, then reports from AIPCE-CEP should also be accepted.



Vanya Vulperhorst (Oceana) responded that she valued the annual report of AIPCE-CEP. Ms Vulperhorst explained that Oceana aimed for more clarity on the affected stocks, for example through the provision of examples.

The Secretary General drew attention to a comment previously submitted by Marine Cusa (Oceana) that called for examples of the affected stocks and that ask for more detail on the relevance.

Katarina Sipic (AIPCE-CEP) responded that information on the affected species was publicly available. Ms Sipic welcomed the constructive information previously shared by the Good Fish Foundation, which provided examples of underutilisation due to low market interest for North Sea whiting as well as the difficulties in catching plaice due to the specie moving.

The Secretary General recalled that it would be possible to attribute the text to AIPCE-CEP, instead of presenting it as consensual position.

Janne Posti (Conxemar) argued that the issue of underutilisation was not a matter of opinion.

Sergio López García (OPP7 Burela) emphasised that the focus should be on the evolution of market situation, which did show various problems. Mr López argued that there was indeed underutilisation of fish quotas, as shown by minimum historical rates of production from certain fleets. He called for a focus on major issues, such as excessive administrative burden.

Daniel Voces (Europêche) agreed with Mr López, emphasising the occurrence of underutilisation, as there were various issues both in EU waters and in the context of Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements. Mr Voces disagreed with the reference to tensions between the EU catching sector and the EU processing sector.

Janne Posti (Conxemar) agreed with Mr Voces that it could be more appropriate to refer to the “lack of raw materials” as the cause of the tensions.

The Secretary General explained that VVV, NOVA and FEDEPESCA introduced text to emphasise the importance of fish auctions.

María Luisa Álvarez Blanco (FEDEPESCA), concerning the “fish auctions” point, suggested the inclusion of a reference to the marketing sector.

The Secretary General explained that, concerning the “fisheries processing sector” point, there was general agreement on the text, except the reference to a weakening of competitiveness. The Good Fish Foundation had previously called for substantiation. As this was not provided, he suggested to delete the reference. Concerning the “fisheries marketing sector” point, FEDEPESCA and CONXEMAR suggested clearer references of rising fish prices and inflation.

Dominic Rihan (KFO) expressed agreement with referencing inflation.



María Luisa Álvarez Blanco (FEDEPESCA) added that the increase in fish prices was linked to various factors.

The Secretary General, to account for feedback previously provided by Oceana, concerning the examples of loss of employment in the Spanish and French marketing sectors, suggested to move the examples to a footnote, while referring merely to losses in “several Member States” in the main text. The Secretary General explained that, in the point on “fisheries catching sector” in the subsection 2 “modernisation and innovation”, Oceana had introduced a reference to investments growing by 176,3%. EAPO had called for the deletion of this reference due to the lack of source.

Vanya Vulperhorst (Oceana) expressed availability to indicate the source.

Pim Visser (NOVA) expressed preference for deletion, since the investments were not going towards an increase in capacity.

Vanya Vulperhorst (Oceana) responded that she would not oppose the deletion.

Felicidad Fernández Alonso (ANFACO-CECOPECA), on the “fisheries processing sector” point, suggested the addition of text on financial support for biotechnology and valorisation of byproducts.

The Secretary General, on the “fisheries marketing sector” point, explained that the Good Fish Foundation expressed doubts about the possibility of the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund being used to finance private certification.

Christine Absil (Good Fish Foundation) argued that the public funds could be used for fisheries improvement projects, which could assist in reaching certification, but that these could not be used for certification directly.

Janne Posti (Conxemar) exemplified that, under the previous funding period, financing was made available for MSC and ASC certification in Finland. Therefore, Member States were able to set what to finance.

Sergio López García (OPP7 Burela) exemplified that, in Spain, private certification processes were financed through the Producer Organisations. While the initial certification could be covered by the public funds, the continuous updates and revisions could not.

Dominic Rihan (KFO) stated that financing of private certification trajectories was allowed in Ireland.

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) stated that, in Spain, the annual audits in the context of private certification could not be covered. Therefore, there were likely differences across the Member States.



Gerd Heinen (DG MARE) offered to check the matter internally<sup>1</sup>. Mr Heinen highlighted that Member States had some discretion in the setting of the measures funded.

Javier Ojeda (FEAP), on the “supplying aquatic food to processors and consumers with adequate level of information” point under section 3 “functioning of the market”, asked to include his organisation among those supporting the revision of the Common Market Organisation Regulation.

Felicidad Fernández Alonso (ANFACO-CECOPESCA) asked for the addition of ANFACO-CECOPESCA and of FEICOPESCA to the list of members opposition an expansion of the scope of the Common Market Organisation Regulation. The same should be reflected in section 4 “consumer information / labelling rules” of part III “efficiency” of the draft advice. She added that ANCIT would likely also support those positions.

The Secretary General explained that section 1 “landing obligation” of part III “efficiency” had been simplified. The originally proposed text was essentially a summary of previous advice. Nevertheless, WWF had requested the inclusion of additional points that EAPO opposed. Therefore, as a compromise, the section would be replaced with a reference to the previous advice. Regarding section 3 “marketing standards”, the Secretary General explained that Oceana and WWF called for coherence to protect juvenile fish to allow stock regeneration, but that EAPO was opposed.

Pim Vasser (NOVA) argued that the minimum conservation reference sizes were separate from the marketing standards, as the latter served commercial purposes. Mr Visser expressed opposition to the views introduced by Oceana and WWF.

- **Way forward**

The Secretary General proposed to proceed with an urgent written procedure to finalise the consideration of the draft advice and potential adoption. The Secretary General recalled the importance of providing advice to the European Commission in a timely manner.

#### AOB

- **European Food Forum**

#### Presentation

The Secretary General informed that, at their invitation, he previously had an informal meeting with representatives of the European Food Forum. While the forum was meant to cover food policy in general, until then, the focus was primarily on agriculture production. Considering their efforts to better integrate

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<sup>1</sup> After the meeting, via email message, Mr Heinen confirmed that financial support for third-party certification (as well as other eco-labelling and quality schemes) is possible under the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund.



fisheries and aquaculture policy in the forum, he believed that it was relevant to hold a presentation and discuss potential cooperation.

Luisella Ciani (European Food Forum) explained that, in the context of the European Parliament, the European Food Forum was a structure similar to an intergroup, bringing together MEPs and stakeholders. The forum was founded in 2019 by five MEPs from three political groups. The aim was to bring together all actors in the food supply chain, including civil society, researchers, and public administration, to foster inclusive and meaningful dialogue. The Committee of the Regions was also involved. She emphasised that, while politically led, the forum was independent and non-partisan, functioning as a multi-stakeholder platform. The membership structure included business representatives, public institutions, civil society organisations, special members, international organisations, and third countries.

Ms Ciani informed that, over its first five years, the forum organised 43 events with 349 speakers and held 96 hours of open debate. At that time, the membership included 39 MEPs from 12 Member States and five political groups, 34 business members, 26 representatives from public institutions and civil society, and two special members—EIT Food and the European Committee of the Regions. Ms Ciani encouraged the MAC to join the forum as a special member. She provided an overview of the activities of the forum, including their regular activities, communities, and educational programme.

Ms Ciani provided an overview of the internal functioning, including programming committee, organising committee, and membership fees. She emphasised that the forum aimed to include MEPs of all nationalities, cover all relevant topics and Committees of the European Parliament, and foster high-level global discussions on agrifood policy with the collaboration of all the different stakeholders.

- **Exchange of views**

Pim Visser (NOVA) asked about the potential benefits for the MAC from becoming a member.

Luisella Ciani (European Food Forum) responded that it would facilitate exchanges with stakeholders and politicians that the MAC is usually not in contact with. The MAC would participate in dialogues covering the entire food value chain.

Pim Visser (NOVA) asked about the classification of the MAC amongst the membership of the forum.

Luisella Ciani (European Food Forum) responded that the MAC would be classified as “special member”, which would also mean there would be an exemption from membership fees.

The Secretary General recalled that, under the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation, the advice of the Advisory Councils was addressed to the European Commission and the Member States. Therefore, if members were in favour of the MAC joining the forum, he would contact DG MARE beforehand.

Javier Ojeda (FEAP) drew attention to the MAC’s limited resources and time constraints.



Luisella Ciani (European Food Forum) recognised that, while as a special member, the MAC would be exempt from the membership fees, there would be the expectation of participation in meetings.

Patrick Murphy (IS&WFPO) asked for more information on the expected role of the MAC in the forum.

Luisella Ciani (European Food Forum) exemplified that that forum was planning an event on the blue economy with MEP Carmen Crespo, Chair of the Committee on Fisheries. In the case of such events, the MAC would be able to provide suggestions of speakers and topics.

Janne Posti (Conxemar) argued that, due to the consensus approach of the MAC, it would be difficult for the Secretariat to be fully involved in the forum.

Paulien Prent (Visfederatie) argued that it would be more relevant for individual organisations to become members of the forum, as it would be challenging for the Secretariat to take positions on behalf of the entire membership.

Patrick Murphy (IS&WFPO) wanted to know, if individual member organisations joined the forum, whether they would also benefit from the fee exemption.

Luisella Ciani (European Food Forum) informed that individual organisations would be expected to pay the standard membership fees.

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### Summary of action items

- Common Fisheries Policy:
  - o Updated version of the draft advice “Evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy (2014-2024)” to be considered via urgent written procedure
- European Market Observatory for Fisheries and Aquaculture (EUMOFA):
  - o Updated version of the draft “European Market Observatory for Fisheries and Aquaculture (EUMOFA): Suggestions of studies to be integrated in the Work Programme (2025)” to be considered via written procedure

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## Attendance List

Representative	Organisation	Role
Adrien Simonnet	Union du Mareyage Français (UMF)	Member
Alen Lovrinov	Producer Organisation Omega 3	Member
Alessandro Manghisi	Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC)	Member
Anna Rokicka	Polish Association of Fish Processors (PSPR)	Member
Aodh O'Donnell	Irish Fish Producers Organisation	Member
Arthur Yon	FROM Nord	Member
Benoît Thomassen	Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP)	Chair
Bertrand Charron	Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC)	Member
Camille Maisonneuve	Market Advisory Council (MAC)	Secretariat
Caroline Gamblin	PACT'ALIM	Member
Christine Absil	Good Fish Foundation	Member
Christophe Vande Weyer	European Commission	Expert
Dominic Rihan	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation (KFO)	Member
Fabian Schäfer	Bundesverband der deutschen Fischindustrie und des Fischgrosshandels e.V.	Member
Gerd Heinen	European Commission	Expert
Giuseppe Scordella	COPA-COGECA	Member
Iñigo Azqueta Ruiz-Gallardón	ANFACO-CECOPECA	Member
Isabel Alonzo Cabezas	Spain	Observer
Janne Posti	Conxemar	Member
Javier Ojeda	Federation of European Aquaculture Producers (FEAP)	Member
Jean-Marie Robert	Les Pêcheurs de Bretagne	Member
Jennifer Reeves	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)	Member
Jérémie Souben	FEDOPA	Member
João Pereira	FRUCOM	Member
John Lynch	Irish South and East Fish Producers Organisation (ISEFPO)	Member



Representative	Organisation	Role
Juana Parada	OR.PA.GU.	Member
Jules Danto	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations (EAPO)	Member
Julien Daudu	Environmental Justice Foundation	Member
Katarina Sipic	EU Fish Processors and Traders Association (AIPCE) / European Federation of National Organizations of Importers and Exporters of Fish (CEP)	Member
Laure Guillevic	WWF	Member
Luisella Ciani	European Food Forum	Expert
María Luisa Álvarez Blanco	FEDEPESCA	Member
Mariano García García	FACOPE	Member
Mikel Ortiz	OPPAO	Member
Patrick Murphy	Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation	Member
Pedro Luis Casado López	OPP80	Member
Pedro Reis Santos	Market Advisory Council (MAC)	Secretariat
Pierre Commère	PACT'ALIM / Eurothon	Member
Pim Visser	NOVA	Member
Rasmus Nielsen	Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF)	Expert
Rézi Rác	European Food Forum	Expert
Sarah Hautier	EuroCommerce	Member
Tamas Eisenbeck	EU Fish Processors and Traders Association (AIPCE) / European Federation of National Organizations of Importers and Exporters of Fish (CEP)	Member
Sergio López García	OPP7 Burela	Member
Sylvie Beaus	Vereniging Vlaamse Visveilingen (VVV)	Member
Szilvia Mihalfy	FEAP	Member
Thibault Pivetta	European Molluscs' Producers Association (EMPA)	Member
Thomas Kruse	Danish Fishermen P.O. / Danish Pelagic Producers Organisation (DPPO)	Member
Vanya Vulperhorst	Oceana	Member
Wiebe Kolkman	Visfederatie	Member



Representative	Organisation	Role
Xavier Pires	ALIF	Member

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