

ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

19 October 2023, Vigo

Advisory Board representatives: Marzia Piron (MEDAC), Glenn Douglas (BSAC), Buhai Sidor Dragos, Mihaela Candea-Mirea (BISAC), Julien Daudu, Manuela Iglesias (LDAC), Kenn Skau Fischer, Tamara Talevska (NSAC), Mo Mathies, Irene Prieto (NWWAC), Daniela Costa (ORAC), Anne-Marie Kats (PELAC), Chloé Pocheau (SWWAC), Pedro Reis (MAC).

Administrative Board representatives: Paschal Hayes, Michael Finn (Ireland), Alexia Zarkada (Greece).

European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA): Susan Steele (ED), Pedro Galache (HoU 3), Mario Santos (HoU 2), Cristina Morgado (U2), Patricia Sánchez Abeal (HoS P&C), Miguel Nuevo (HoS JDPs & RC), Neill Ansell (Senior Officer International Dimension), Klara De Groot (Trainee).

1. Introduction and state of play

The EFCA Executive Director (ED) welcomed the Advisory Board representatives and noted that she had met some of them in different meetings lately. She also thanked the Administrative Board members present at the meeting.

Advisory Councils (ACs) state of play

The ED gave the floor to ACs representatives to present their activities since the last Advisory Board meeting in April 2023.

SWWAC highlighted five key topics. They have issued an advice on dolphin bycatch in the gulf of Biscay. In this same issue, they are participating in CIBBRINA project (Coordinated Development and Implementation of Best Practice in Bycatch Reduction in the North Atlantic, Baltic and Mediterranean Regions). They are as well closely following ICES and STECF advice on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs). Moreover, they are drafting advice on energy transition. Finally, they are taking part in the working groups on the Marine Action Plan and they are also active on ICCAT topics, especially on ALB advice.

LDAC thanked EFCA for its work in the international dimension of the CFP, including through the JDPs. They are focused right now in the upcoming Resolution of UN on fish stocks, and in the preparation for the ICCAT meeting. As regards their work during 2023 he highlighted the following items:

- NAFO Annual meeting
- Advise on China distant water fleet in cooperation with the MAC
- A joint advice with MAC focused in harmonized import controls in EU markets
- A letter to the Commission in support of the resolution of social partners against the forced labour

For the future, he indicated some areas of activities:

- Morocco: advice to propose cooperation to cooperate in fisheries, fight against driftnet fishing and fisheries control
- RFMOs: work in preparation of the ICCAT and WCPFC meetings
- International Ocean Governance Process, and the BBNJ Agreement
- Deep-sea mining and their influence in fisheries
- Preparations to maintain the external dimension of the CFP as a top priority for the next Commission
- Control regulation and the implementation of the concept of “beneficial ownership”

They will continue its cooperation with COMHAFAT and will be interested in the projects following the PESCAO project.

EFCA ED thanked the LDAC for the extensive list of activities and thanked also for the invitation for the meeting on 7 November and mentioned EFCA will be in the next LDAC executive meeting in March.

MAC presented their advices in areas of interest for EFCA during 2023:

- Joint advice with LDAC focused in harmonised import controls in EU markets that has been answered by DG MARE
- Improving the labelling legislation for plant based imitation of fisheries products
- Undertaking of measures by Producers Organisations
- Cell-based proteins of aquatic animals
- An advice on a EUMOFA study on tuna sector,

They are currently working on an initiative for impact of the slavery and force labour in the fisheries sector, and how to provide transparency in this process. A draft is in preparation for asking the EU to engage in the implementation of the ILO Convention 188, and updated availability of a data base on force labour and the classification following its severity under ILO.

Future priorities were mentioned: IUU fishing, Impact of Landing Obligation, Report of the STECF on fleets and Control regulation and the study on traceability.

EFCA ED thanked the MAC representative and highlighted the importance of the work of the MAC.

MEDAC maintained their interest and close working relationship with EFCA in the work of MEDAC both in their Executive Committee and relevant Working Groups. They appreciated and thanked the recent presentation and contribution by the EFCA representative in the Working Group 2 on Large Pelagic species on the 12 October covering the species of interest to MEDAC, namely Bluefin tuna and Mediterranean Albacore and Swordfish. In particular, they also appreciated and noted the importance of the control campaign for Bluefin tuna and contribution of the JDP including on collaboration and exchange of information.

Throughout 2023 their main ongoing work includes amongst other areas discussing and formulating advice on the following:

- Indicators socio-economic and compliance indicators in the Multiannual Plans
- Contribution to the Marine Action Plan
- Contribution to the Ecosystem approach in the Adriatic Sea
- Invasive species and related GFCM proposal
- Establishment and implementation on Fisheries Restricted Areas (FRAs)

- Proposal for EFCA to have a heightened involvement and mandate in the fight against IUU in particular in the enforcement and control of ICCAT and GFCM conservation and management measures by third countries and contribution to a level playing field in the Mediterranean.
- An opinion on the ongoing practice of bluefin discards from the live fisheries being caught in semi-industrial trawl nets in southern Spain and Balearic Islands.

They thanked again the efforts and contribution of EFCA and looked forward to a close collaboration, both in forthcoming RFMO meetings namely GFCM and ICCAT, and throughout 2024.

NSAC thanked EFCA for participating in meetings of the NSAC in 2023 and for the openness of EFCA to take part in the discussions. They informed of the upcoming Ex Com and General Assembly meetings in Hamburg. They also organised a workshop on the functioning of the Landing Obligation (LO) in January in Brussels and the webinar on climate change.

He also indicated they had produced 17 pieces of advice so far in 2023. Following the EC fisheries package, developments in UK waters of the NS, and NO hearings. This is generating a lot of work for the NSAC. They have been following up the setting of fisheries opportunities: bilaterals EU-UK and EU-NO, and trilateral EU-UK-NO.

He expressed their concern on how quotas are set in relation to ICES advice for some stocks (i.e. cod) and impact on the LO. They have attended the EC hearing on multiannual plan with the advice on stock setting for next year. They are following the setting up of MPAs and other protected areas. In addition, they are working with Scheveningen Group on the new discard plans. They would not change a lot, still some exemptions to the LO for demersal fisheries. Still, some LO challenges remain.

Finally, REM is also causing great concern to them. They hope that work on electronic monitoring and reporting starts as rules should be clear as soon as possible. The NSAC hopes to participate in the definition of the implementing rules.

NWWAC thanked EFCA for the participation and presentation in the Executive Committee meeting of the NWWAC in Santiago de Compostela on 15 March 2023, and hoped EFCA continue participating in the NWWAC meetings. Letters sent to EFCA on the LO compliance evaluation were mentioned.

They updated on the organisation of the focus group on LO working on choke prediction tool, expanded in past 1-2 years and the focus group on control, enforcement and compliance looking at the new control regulation. Some cooperation with EFCA is envisaged. They highlighted that Article 27 of technical measures has continued to be highlighted to EC but no solution has been provided.

They are also following up UK's public consultation on REM and involved in the CIBBRINA project. They are concerned also on the VMEs issue.

Currently they have several pieces of advice in development:

- Irish Sea ecological sensibility.
- Energy transition.
- CFP communication.

- LO choke risks.
- Social aspects on fisheries (with NSAC).
- Protected areas (with PELAC).
- Questionnaire from COM on technical measures.

MWWAC reminded that the georeferenced tool for fisheries management in NWW (GIS tool) was delivered during the meeting in Santiago and is available. Finally, regarding the joint workshop on the LO being prepared, it was suggested to add the technical measures issues to the agenda.

EFCA ED thanked the NWWAC. She mentioned she has found the GIS fishing management tool very useful and interesting. EFCA remarked the cooperation with the NWW CEG regarding a joint workshop on the LO and appreciated the cooperation with the NWWAC.

CCRUP thanked EFCA ED for EFCA's presence in the General Assembly. They are focused in the cooperation with EFCA and also with ECOFISH in the Indian Ocean, and are expecting support from EFCA in the new JDP in the area.

She mentioned a draft advise in preparation in the AC on IUU fisheries in outermost regions. This is constructed with the opinion of the fishermen in the different areas. The paper was first presented in the last IUU WG, but still is in discussion, hopefully will be adopted soon. She also mentioned a recommendation on the need for fleet renewal in the Outermost regions.

PELAC informed about the adopted recommendations on the EC CFP package. They have provided an advice on MS implementation of bycatch quotas for western horse mackerel. There are different MS interpretations. They have also adopted TAC recommendations for 2024 and followed up benchmarks on horse mackerel for 2024.

PELAC is working with other ACs on the Control Regulation and looking closely at the impact on pelagics. They are also looking also at climate change impact especially on MAC. They are also cooperating with NWWAC on marine spatial planning

On the LO compliance evaluation report, MAC expressed the predisposition to discuss with EFCA and CEGs even if report is not finally published. They are also looking at control and enforcement measures of UK and how they would impact pelagic fisheries. Stressed the importance to ensure compatibility of measures taken by EU and UK. Finally, MAC appreciated the participation of EFCA in the meetings of PELAC and hoped this cooperation will continue.

EFCA further explained that the updated LO compliance evaluation is concluded and agreed with the MS regional groups. EFCA further explained that a joint workshop will be organised to present and discuss the results.

BSAC thanked EFCA for hosting the BSAC Ex Com meeting in the headquarters in Vigo in June 2023 and wished for good cooperation to continue. They are working on advice for:

- Trawl gear.
- Cod spawning area closures.
- Closed areas.

- Sorting requirements on pelagic (MS different approaches).

They have worked on the technical measures consultation from the EC and now preparing the work on control regulation.

They are looking forward to discussing the LO compliance evaluation in spring 2024 and the joint workshop BSAC-EFCA-BALTFIH-COM. They mentioned the possible visit to EFCA OPV during a port call in the Baltic Sea.

EFCA ED thanked him warmly and stated she was looking forward to the upcoming meetings with BSAC. Regarding the proposed visit to an EFCA OPV she indicated that the invitation is being prepared for a port call in Gdynia on 29 November.

BISAC thanked EFCA ED for her presence in the dedicated meeting in Tulcea in June. It was a good initiative to exchange with their members and the National authorities, mostly regarding the fisheries rules outside 12 miles of territorial sea. This is facilitating the debate between the two National agencies and fishermen to find a common approach.

They are focused in the interaction between windfarm and fisheries activities, the selectivity of fishing gears and a study on the impact of the war and the noise in the biodiversity in the Black sea. In the next months they will dedicate to analyse the modernization of the fishing fleet and decarbonization and the ghost fish mitigation.

2. The draft Single Programming document: Multiannual work programme 2024-2028 and Annual work programme 2024

EFCA presented the SPD 2024 that covers a 5-year period and the new organisation of EFCA for 2024, introducing the Heads of Unit (HoU) and acting HoU of the new structure.

Some exchange of views took place:

NSAC commented on the use of aircrafts and requested better communication with MS as he said it is causing some concern and uncertainty regarding how the data is going to be used. Regarding the presentation of inspections and infringement of 2023 (and 2022), he also asked also if long term trends of infringements are available, and if serious infringements could be singled out. This could be useful for educating people.

EFCA ED took note of the point on the better communication on aircrafts activities. She noted that during the FWA deployment in the NS and BS, EFCA was working with DK officials at EFCA and that JDP implementation groups were well informed (and participating). She also mentioned that long term trends of infringements are available in the EFCA annual reports.

CCRUP asked if they should send future communications to new HoUs. EFCA ED replied that a communication on handover rules will be circulated in due time.

3. Rotation of the Advisory Board representative in the EFCA Administrative Board

The current Advisory Board representative is the LDAC and the alternate, the CCRUP until 1 March 2024. From 2 March 2024 until 1 March 2025, the representative will be the CCRUP, and the alternate, the NSAC. The ACs endorsed the EFCA proposal.

4. AOB

Following the results of EFCA survey circulated amongst the Advisory Board members on the modality of the meetings in the future, it was decided that for 2024, there will be one presential meeting in Spring and one online meeting in the Autumn 2024. This way, it will follow the same modality as the Administrative Board.

EFCA ED thanked everyone for their participation and hard work and said she was looking forward to receiving them in Vigo next Spring.

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