



Scientific Advice Mechanism

Food from the Ocean Stakeholder Meeting Report

**Stakeholder Meeting hosted by the High Level Group (HLG) of
Scientific Advisors of the European Commission's
Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM)**

(13 November 2017, Brussels)

Food from the Ocean

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13 November 2017, Centre Borschette, Brussels

MEETING REPORT¹

The purpose of this meeting was for SAM HLG to discuss the draft recommendations expected to form the basis of its Scientific Opinion on 'Food from the Ocean' with representatives of relevant interest groupings and some policy actors. The main findings of the scientific evidence review report prepared by SAPEA underpinning the Opinion were also presented and discussed.

Eighteen stakeholder representatives took part.

Following presentations by members of the SAM HLG and SAPEA representatives, the floor was opened to collect reactions, comments and questions from the stakeholders.

On the whole, the reactions and comments received largely supported the intention that the Opinion call for an increased focus on mariculture, sustainable capture and culture at lower trophic levels and for a more integrated, participative, knowledge- and systems-based approaches to policy and planning. In the area of wild-capture fisheries, there were some disagreements in particular on quota and subsidy issues. Many helpful suggestions and remarks were given including on how to reinforce or clarify specific points as well as helping to refine subtleties and accuracies in justifications, rationales and language or terminology used.

The main points which were raised in the discussion were as follows:

- As part of the overall positive reception, participants applauded the ambition of mainstreaming food from the ocean into an emerging broad food systems framework while acknowledging the difficulties involved in trying to bring this about.
- The scope of the Opinion was clarified as being global in terms of the science and the substance of the question addressed but directed at Europe in terms of potential policy action, noting that Europe acts also globally.
- The environmental impacts of increased seafood production need to be considered in the light of negative consequences of low production – e.g. in Europe, the latter leads inevitably to increased imports and thus higher environmental impacts elsewhere. In any case, higher production unavoidably means an increased human ecological foot print. The point is to ensure responsible behaviour of businesses and consumers so that the human footprint in the long run remains compatible with sustainable and productive ecosystems.

¹ See meeting agenda and list of participants at the end this document

- The call for a more food systems policy framework into which to mainstream food from the ocean considerations was welcome though considered to be difficult. Views were expressed that adding a consumer dimension to the current predominantly production focus of policies relevant to food could benefit from efforts to raise public awareness of related policy and well-being issues (food security, health, climate) - efforts in the area of ocean literacy were cited.
- The lack of a systems view to policy addressing mariculture development was acknowledged - as reflected in the fragmented policy and regulatory space impacting on this area. This constitutes a barrier to companies wishing to enter the field where more simplification in the interest of start-ups would be welcome.
- Even if European mariculture is not growing, there are many good practices which have emerged in some parts of the EU in recent decades which could be taken to a bigger scale – one example cited was a case of competitive organic mariculture resulting from good interaction between science, NGOs and regulation.
- In some areas of mariculture (molluscs), if social acceptability were to be secured production it was stated that it could increase by a factor of 10. Off-shore exploitation and expansion however requires feasibility and demonstration tests.
- The space constraint on mariculture is serious though it varies in degree between EU countries and between types of activity (e.g. a salmon farm's requirements are very different to those of algae culture).
- Marine spatial planning should preferably involve legally-binding decisions regarding the allocation of marine space to mariculture. It should also take into account the requirements for space on adjacent land. A suggestion was made that the Commission should produce specific guidance for taking mariculture into account in implementing the Maritime Spatial Planning directive to ensure that it is fully and appropriately addressed in the respective national plans due in 2021.
- Concern was voiced by some that extending the sustainable fisheries partnership agreements to mariculture – depending on what this entailed in practice – could lead to health risks for European mariculture stocks, though it was acknowledged that such a risk, if it exists, would depend on the specific nature of such an extension – e.g. a focus on technical cooperation would have no such concern.
- Differing unresolved views were expressed on the collective sectoral character of mariculture firms from: they constitute a highly integrated sector; to, this economic activity to be still emerging and so has not yet developed any real identity as an established sector.
- It was mentioned that the Aquaculture Advisory Council could be called upon for inputs in relation to some of the relevant parts of the Opinion. Another view was that the Opinion could be used to call for more dialogue between proponents of fisheries and those of mariculture and, more generally, for a periodic dialogue involving all CFP Advisory Councils. In the same vein, the Food 2030 process was pointed to as a vehicle for action and dialogue on the issues which this Opinion is considering to raise.
- The importance of technological innovation and research as an undercurrent to realising much of the ocean food potential and filling identified knowledge gaps was underlined noting that investment in ocean-based resources to date generally loses out to land-based resources.

- One view expressed was that the potential increases from wild-capture are higher than what the reported evidence suggests and that advocating a more flexible approach to 'maximum sustainable yield' could result in higher outtake including in terms of the time over which to implement options. It was pointed out that in the Mediterranean the recovery of tuna stocks seems to have had a knock-on depletion impact on stocks of other species.
- Divergent views were expressed on the scientific character and quality of advice produced as part of and input to the political process of fixing fishing quotas. While the divergent views were not reconciled, there did seem to be a general acknowledgement of the importance of science for decisions, notwithstanding uncertainties, sampling limitations, distortions, etc.
- In terms of having a complete picture (data-wise) on fishing activity and outtakes, it was pointed out that recreational catch volumes/ tonnage are as important to take into account in some cases as professional amounts. In France the volume of recreational and professional mollusc capture are the same.
- The intended points in the Opinion on landing obligation/ discard ban were applauded but also acknowledged as problematic and costly for fishermen. The focus in technical regulations on precisely what means (gear) fishermen should use and not use was considered to contribute to the difficulty of complying with this landing obligation. It was stated that if the fishermen were given the freedom to choose the means (gear) they would come up with a more efficient and effective way of meeting the specified outcome.
- The discussion of fishing subsidies also revealed a quite polarised set of views in terms of their impact - fishery representatives vigorously disputed the views derived from the scientific evidence and literature.
- In terms of regulatory enforcement and legality issues, reference was made to the EU's 2016 ocean governance communication as a reference for new enforcement approaches. It was also pointed out that work in this area by NGOs have shown the power of dig data mining etc. as a means to identify illegal activity.
- On the point of labelling and certification, some support and some reserve was expressed given that some such ecolabeling activities do not, in some cases, represent any added value beyond what is required in mainstream regulatory compliance. In global terms, where only 15-20% of produce can be certified, the importance to the consumer of traceability, etc. comes to the fore. More views seemed to be calling for a more regulated and EU-controlled approach to certification including indications of geographical origin than other more commercial schemes.

The HLG members took note of the points and answered queries and questions of clarification raised by the participants with the support of the SAPEA experts saying that all points raised would be given due consideration in finalising the Opinion by the end of November 2017.

AGENDA

Date: 13 November 2017, 11:00-17:00

Place: Centre Borschette, 5th Floor, Rue Froissart 36, 1000 Brussels

Meeting Chair: Prof. Carina Keskitalo,
Chair of the Food from the Ocean Coordination Group, Umeå University, Sweden

10:00 Welcome coffee

Part I – General discussion

11:00 Introduction to the High Level Group (HLG) and the Scientific Advice Mechanism
Prof. Janusz Bujnicki, International Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology in Warsaw, and Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland

11:10 Presentation of SAPEA
Prof. Ole Petersen, SAPEA, Vice-President Academia Europaea, Cardiff University

11:15 Overview of the draft advice under consideration by the HLG
Prof. Carina Keskitalo, Chair of the Food from the Ocean Coordination Group, Umeå University, Sweden

11:30 SAPEA Evidence Review Report (Natural Sciences)
Prof. Dag Aksnes, Chair of SAPEA Working Group 1, University of Bergen, Norway

11:45 SAPEA Evidence Review Report (Social Sciences and Humanities)
Prof. Poul Holm, Chair of SAPEA Working Group 2, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

12:00 General remarks and questions

12:30 Lunch

Part II – Detailed discussion

13:30 Point-by-point comments / reactions to the draft advice

15:00 Coffee break

15:30 Point-by-point comments / reactions to the draft advice (ctd.)

16:45 Wrap-up of the meeting

17:00 End of meeting

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AND OTHER ATTENDEES

| Business and Civil Society | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--|-------------|
| Robben | Geert | Aquaculture Stewardship Council | Netherlands |
| Andersen | Michael | Danish Fishermen PO | Denmark |
| Guillaumie | Bruno | EMPA | France |
| Cury | Philippe | EuroMarine | France |
| Larkin | Kate | European Marine Board | Belgium |
| Moalla | Nadia | Europeche | Spain |
| Treinyte | Skirmanta | Good Fish Foundation | Netherlands |
| Vazquez Lion | Monica | IOFAMP | Spain |
| Wood | Jacqueline | JPI Oceans | Belgium |
| Fournier | Nicolas | Oceana | Belgium |
| Kalesi | Kalliopi | Seafood Innovation Cluster | Norway |
| Buckhout | Marc-Philip | Seas at Risk | Belgium |
| Pastoor | Guus | Market Advisory Council | Belgium |
| Charvoz Lienhart | Sylvie | The Mediterranean Sea Advisory Council | Italy |
| Katarina | Sipic | CONXEMAR | Belgium |
| Prent | Paulien | Visfederatie | Netherlands |
| Policy stakeholders and Agencies | | | |
| Denis | Isabelle | FAO | Belgium |
| Quintas | Mafalda | COST | Belgium |
| Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM) | | | |
| Keskitalo | Carina | SAM HLG | |
| Bujnicki | Janusz | SAM HLG | |
| Petersen | Ole | SAPEA & Cardiff University | UK |
| Lorents Aksnes | Dag | SAPEA & University of Bergen | Norway |
| Holm | Poul | SAPEA & Trinity College Dublin | Ireland |
| Edwards | Louise | SAPEA | UK |
| Klumpers | Johannes | DG RTD -SAM Unit | |
| Gavigan | James | DG RTD -SAM Unit | |
| Contor | Laura | DG RTD -SAM Unit | |
| Ferraro | Gianluca | DG RTD -SAM Unit | |
| EC Observers | | | |
| Shepherd | Iain | DG MARE | |
| Mac Aoidh | Eoin | DG MARE | |
| Hoermandinger | Guenter | DG ENV | |
| Zampoukas | Nikolaas | DG RTD | |