

NWWAC Horizontal Working Group

11 March 2025

Paris and online

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed all participants, thanked the host CNPME and the Secretariat, including Iaria Bellomo attending her first live NWWAC meeting. Apologies were received in advance of the meeting by Gérald Hussenot (Blue Fish) and Geert Meun (VisNed). The agenda was adopted.

Action points the last meeting (virtual, 10 October 2024)

1	CFP evaluation: continue following this topic especially once we get more information on Joan on contractor
	Consultation has been launched and a draft NWWAC response is on the agenda today.
2	MIAC: Secretariat to share list of points and update explanatory paragraphs, take into account comments of HWG at MIAC 2025
	Completed and an interesting number of NWWAC questions were addressed at MIAC. Some MIAC and MIACO discussions are on the agenda.
3	Follow up on Damien's presentation in FG Spatial Dimension
	Action point to be addressed under the FG reporting on the agenda.
4	Organisation of control workshop – FG control to meet soon to review correlation table
	Control Workshop held 05 February 2025

2. Election of Working Group Chair

The Chair Emiel Brouckaert stated that, having chaired this Working Group since becoming Chair of the Advisory Council over eight years ago, he felt it was time to hand over the reins to someone new. In light of the anticipated appointment of the new NWWAC Chair the following day, he proposed that the new Chair also takes on this position. As a result, he would continue to chair the current meeting, but from the following day, the new Chair would automatically assume the role of Chair of this Working Group, subject to members' approval.

Members approved this proposal.

3. “Vision for Agriculture and Food” communication – Ricard Ramon, DG AGRI

The presentation can be found [here](#).

The Chair pointed out that on 19 February the European Commission published its Vision for Agriculture and Food by 2040. This Communication sets out a strategy that integrates sustainability, competitiveness, and resilience across the agri-food system. Fishers, like farmers, are portrayed as stewards of nature, essential to both food security and ecosystem resilience. He welcomed Ricard Ramon from DG AGRI who joined the meeting remotely to present the roadmap, focusing on the main issues.

Ramon outlined the EC vision for the future of agriculture and food, focusing on building a resilient, sustainable, and fair agri-food sector by 2040. It highlights key challenges, including structural issues such as generational renewal, increasingly extreme weather events, and growing geopolitical tensions that impact food security and trade.

The strategy is built on four main principles. It aims to create an attractive and predictable agri-food sector where farmers can thrive, ensuring fair incomes and drawing in future generations. Sustainability is a core objective, ensuring that food production operates within environmental limits. Competitiveness and resilience are also priorities, strengthening the sector against global challenges and external shocks. Finally, fairness is emphasised to create a well-functioning food system that values producers and fosters strong, connected rural and coastal communities.

To achieve these goals, several strategic priorities have been identified. Enhancing the attractiveness of the sector involves improving farmers' income through fairer food chain practices, strengthening the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) with more targeted and simplified support, and promoting alternative income sources such as the bioeconomy and carbon farming. Ensuring competitiveness and resilience requires reducing reliance on critical imports, strengthening trade fairness, and implementing risk management tools and climate adaptation strategies. Future-proofing the agri-food sector involves supporting sustainability initiatives, strengthening regulations on soil, water, and air quality, and encouraging the use of environmentally friendly technologies. The plan also emphasises valuing food and strengthening rural and coastal communities by promoting fair wages, improving working conditions, enhancing the role of women in farming, and reconnecting food production with regional traditions.

Research, innovation, and digitalisation play a crucial role in enabling this transformation. Investment in digital tools, smart farming technologies, and knowledge-sharing networks is expected to improve efficiency and competitiveness. Strengthening advisory services and promoting innovation are also central to modernising the sector.

Although the presentation primarily focuses on agriculture, its recognition of the importance of coastal areas and rural communities suggests a broader approach that includes fisheries. Ensuring fair working conditions, sustainable resource management, and resilient food supply chains applies to both agriculture and fisheries, reinforcing the need for an integrated food policy.

The EC calls for continued stakeholder engagement to refine and implement these strategies, with a key event scheduled for 8 May to further develop the vision. The overall aim is to transform Europe's food system in a way that balances economic viability, environmental responsibility, and social equity, ensuring a thriving and sustainable sector for future generations.

The **Chair** thanked Ramon for his detailed presentation and opened the floor to questions.

Alexandra Philippe felt that a lot of measures in this vision could be applied to fisheries and aquaculture. She recalled that Commissioner Kadis mentioned that this vision included fisheries and aquaculture, but following this presentation felt that these have not been included. In her opinion this is a missed opportunity, as there is a strong link between food and fisheries. Despite the development of the Ocean Pact, there is yet no clear link with seafood. She referred to the annual food dialogue and promotion of food supply chain and other measures that concern trade measures where fisheries should be involved. She underlined that what has been proposed for the agriculture sector can be interesting also for the fisheries sector. She suggested that the AC should develop advice asking the Commission to not miss the next opportunity to create a link between sustainable food systems and fisheries.

Patrick Murphy commented that a level playing field is needed for food producers. He felt that fisheries seem not to have the same importance as agriculture. Referring to carbon credits given to agriculture producers for reducing their carbon footprint or improving their production methods he wondered if fishing vessels which reduce their carbon footprint would be able to access the same benefits.

The Chair agreed with the proposal to produce advice on this topic as he felt that the main actions of the EC Communication seem fitting for fisheries. He enquired if Ramon saw any opportunity for the fishing sector to get more involved in the discussion and road map.

Franck Le Barzic commented that fisheries have their own particularities and cannot always be put in the same line with agriculture (i.e. geographic indications). He felt it was important to make sure that imports entering the EU market should also follow the same rules.

Dimitri Rogoff felt that agriculture and fisheries should not be addressed in the same vision as there are a lot of differences. He explained that as there are a variety of marine proteins, and that it is important to inform consumers regarding the differences compared to agricultural products. He also commented that communication on traceability should be improved, for instance in restaurants.

Ramon replied that the Commission wants to be honest on what is put forward and not to create false expectations regarding ideas from the fisheries sector. He explained that this vision addresses agriculture and food. A specific vision for fisheries should be put in place. He felt it was useful to receive comments and criticism in order to identify with DG MARE on how to better articulate fisheries in the dialogue. He informed participants of an event taking place on 08 May which will also address food systems and could include discussions on fisheries.

Regarding decarbonisation Ramon felt that awareness was needed of the differences between fisheries and agriculture, as agriculture captures carbon, that is why there are support mechanisms for farmers. On imports and strategic autonomy, he felt that this was also important for fisheries as there is a need for greater independence. Ramon appreciated the discussion and offered to continue the dialogue in the future.

The Chair thanked Ramon for his participation and added that the AC would work further on this topic.

ACTION: NWWAC to develop advice on the “Vision for Agriculture and Food” roadmap.

4. CFP evaluation state of play – discussion of NWWAC advice

On 27 January the European Commission opened a public consultation to gather evidence, insights, concerns, ideas, and feedback on the effectiveness of the common fisheries policy (CFP) regulation from a range of stakeholder. Deadline for this exercise is 21 April, and the Secretariat has drafted a first response based on previous consensus advice from this AC. As this work falls under the remit of the Focus Group CFP, the Chair handed over proceedings to the FG Chair Alexandra Philippe.

Philippe recalled that the Secretariat circulated the very first draft advice ahead of this meeting. This was pulled together from previous NWWAC consensus advice fitting the questions in the Commission’s questionnaire. She opened the floor for questions and a first exchange of views on the topic.

Jean Marie Robert expressed his satisfaction regarding the comprehensiveness of the document and felt that all elements were well developed. He suggested the need to identify priority issues as the document is very long.

Philippe agreed pointing out that NWWAC advice usually starts with a section on key points, which will be replicated for this advice.

Manu Kelberine felt that there was a problem related to the methodology and referred to the consultation on the landing obligation. He added that this should be included in the main points.

Le Barzic agreed with the proposal to identify key priorities and queried the structure of the draft advice. **The Secretariat** explained that the response was drafted in the same format as the questionnaire provided by the Commission in the online public consultation.

Dominic Rihan expressed his view that the questionnaire was not a valuable use of time, as the Commission will probably use AI to report answers. He felt the AC should concentrate on what is important for its members and focus on a few priorities as otherwise everybody will have their own comments.

Pauline Stephan suggested to provide practical examples to support certain facts and make the response more impactful.

Following a brief discussion **Philippe** suggested that the advice could include individual responses to each question. In addition, the AC could ask members to submit 3-5 topics for prioritisation, for example regionalisation, Brexit, role of the AC, which could be addressed in a strategic two-page preface to the questionnaire response. For the latter it would be useful to add practical examples. Finally, for questions where members do not agree, it could be noted that the AC does not have no position.

ACTION: Secretariat to circulate draft CFP response and ask for additional input on strategic topics. Next meeting of FG CFP to be organised for end of March to continue advice drafting.

5. MIAC/MIACO follow up

Slides can be found [here](#).

The Chair explained that this year's MIAC and MIACO meetings covered numerous important aspects which would benefit from a closer evaluation by the members of this AC. While the report from the MIAC meeting has already been circulated by the Secretariat and is also available online in the Members Area, the MIACO report is not yet available. A discussion followed on key aspects.

- Stability and consistency of advice, multi-annual advice discussion in MIRIA subgroup after March ACOM

The NWWAC asked what efforts ICES is currently making to improve the stability of scientific advice and incorporate innovative methodologies, such as genetics to strengthen data on poorly documented stocks and can aspects other than management be considered obtained to obtain more stability. At the MIAC meeting, ICES responded that during MIRIA a mechanism was discussed to get in touch with stakeholders sooner. Regarding the stability clause for category 1 and 2 stocks, these are mainly based on available MSY data, and it was felt that there is no logic to have a stability clause. In addition, in ICES' view stability is also the responsibility of managers. It was also noted the WKLIFE is working on improving data limited methods which are mainly focused on the category 5 and 6 stocks for which it is currently very difficult to develop proper advice.

Rihan felt that it was important for this AC to keep pressure on ICES regarding their work on cat. 5 and 6 stocks as what is being produced now is not proper advice.

Le Barzic recalled that when there is no sufficient data, it would be better not to move the stock from different categories. For example, he felt that the transfer of category for pollock was not beneficial.

Olivier Lepretre commented that the ICES Methodology should be reconsidered, involve more fishers to be more consistent with the reality on the ground and include more accurate data.

- (Fishers) data inclusion in assessment of during data compilation workshops
 - Several WG addressing this issue and an example of ICES following up is the results of WKIRISH working on F_{eco}
 - Stakeholders have the possibility to contribute via the Data Compilation Workshops for benchmarks as pointed out in WKAFPA.
 - Missing data overview on the ICES website: “issue list” is available and stakeholders have the possibility to add comments which are only seen by the Stock Assessor.
- ICES mixed stock guidelines
 - At MIACO, the Chair request input for ACOM discussions in March.
 - Meeting reactions: mixed stocks advice should start with mixed stocks assessments; mixed stocks management should be considered by managers and not based on ICED headline advice; ICES advice sheets useful, managers should consider more than headline advice; mixed stocks fished by mixed type of vessels/gears.
- Stakeholder engagement strategy – WKENGAGE

ICES Working Group on Stakeholder Engagement (WGENGAGE) is organised for 25-27 March 2025, Chairs: Marta Ballesteros (Spain) and Hannah Harrison (Canada)

Goals:

- To build relationships and coordinate efforts across people interested in stake and Rightsholder participation in research and decision-making.
 - To increase our knowledge about stake and Rightsholder needs, interests, and roads to inclusion.
 - To explore the ToR, get aligned on priorities and actions, and identify a research and work agenda for WGENGAGE to pursue.
 - Changes to fishing opportunities advice framework in 2025
 - ICES overviews planning, next generation Ecosystem overviews and integrating overviews.
- Changes to advice framework

ICES Presentation – ACOM discussions on:

- Transition rules
- Advice rules category 2 and 3
- Advice rules for stocks under Blim

Consideration of NWWAC written question (awaiting reply) asking for multiple stock assessors from different institutes for each stock

- ICES Overviews - background

The purpose of the Overviews is to provide the context for EBM of human activities affecting the marine environment and marine living resources. For the end of 2025, ICES will publish three overviews on: Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Coast, Celtic Seas, Faroes, Greater North Sea and Norwegian Sea ecoregions,

6. Focus Groups update

Slides can be found [here](#).

- **Inter-AC Brexit Forum (Chair)**

The Inter-AC Brexit Forum was established between PelAC, NWWAC, NSAC, LDAC and CCRUP. The first meeting in Year 20 was held last 4 February and chaired by the PelAC. The next meeting will be organised by the LDAC, no date available yet.

Topics at SCF: King Scallops multi-year strategy; Celtic Sea: FMP; Roadmaps for certain stocks, incl. sole 7h,j,k; rockall cod, plaice 7f,g; Spurdog; Benchmark on pollack; MPAs; Seabass; Technical measures; TCA Review 2026.

Rihan noted that the REM issue was missing from the list. He also expressed his disappointment regarding the lack of updates on the TCA review 2026.

Lepretre highlighted that it would be important for future negotiations to be informed and to know how to better intervene and be prepared.

- **CFP (Alexandra Philippe)**

Next steps on the NWWAC advice on CFP evaluation have been agreed under point 4 of the agenda.

- **Landing Obligation (Chair)**

The last meeting was held on 22 November 2024. The NWWAC provided advice addressing choke risks in NWW after exemptions published on 13 January 2025.

During the meeting, the Secretariat has received an email from the Commission with some updates on LO study, which should be published by the end of the month. *“The exercise is close to end; the final report of the study is expected to be submitted by the contractors still this month (by the end of March 2025) and we will publish it as soon as the administrative steps of*

the contract would be finalized by CINEA colleagues (namely, approval of the final deliverable and payment), hopefully between April and May 2025.”

Next tasks: Follow-up on EFCA report on evaluation of compliance with the LO

- **Climate & Environment (Alexandra Philippe)**

The last meeting was held on 26 September 2024. Work planned on:

- EU Oceans Pact – deadline mid-March for AC response
- Nature Restoration Law
- MSFD – Seabed Thresholds – prepare advice on stakeholders’ engagement
- New funding programme for options for energy technology/alternative fuels supports. The next focus group could be focused on present opportunities.
- Roadmap on funding opportunities: remain attentive to forthcoming processes.

- **Joint NWWAC/NSAC Focus Group Skates & Rays (John Lynch)**

- NWWAC/NSAC response to the UK Consultation on the proposed Southern North Sea and Channel Skates and Rays Fisheries Management Plan submitted on 08 January 2025
- Participation in ICES WSKATE2, 01 – 04 April 2025
- Development of joint NWWAC/NSAC workshop in May/June 2025

- **Seabass (Secretariat)**

- Last meeting: 28 October 2024 chaired by Pauline Stephan with vice-chair Manu Kelberine
- NWWAC advice on management measures for seabass for 2025 submitted 21 November 2024, awaiting response
- Next meeting: tba

- **Scallops (Secretariat)**

- Last meeting 25 November 2024
- Update on second round of Irish trials carried out by Bord Iascaigh Mhara
- Discussion of management considerations following DG MARE – UK workshop in September 2024
- Additional work needed on harmonisation of potential management proposals
- Next meeting: tba

- **Control and Compliance (Patrick Murphy)**

- Last meeting on 31 October 2024 in preparation for Multi-AC workshop on the Control Regulation (05 February, Brussels)

- Debrief meeting following workshop to contribute to joint NWWAC – PelAC – NSAC advice
 - Submission of Multi-AC queries to DG MARE following workshop on 20 February, awaiting response
 - Next steps: Contribute to joint NWWAC – PelAC – NSAC advice on the Control Regulation, where queries remained with no answers will be added as an Annex.
- **Joint NWWAC/PelAC Focus Group Spatial Dimension (Secretariat)**
 - Last meeting 10 January
 - NWWAC/PelAC submission on the Ecological Sensitivity Analysis of the Celtic Sea to inform future designation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) Report – 06 December 2024
 - Joint NWWAC/PelAC letter on Seafood/ORE group participation submitted to DECC 10 January 2025
 - Joint NWWAC/PelAC advice to the NWW Member States on renewable energy developments in the marine space submitted to Spanish presidency of NWW MSG 17 February 2025
 - Joint NWWAC/PelAC webinar on EU fisheries and ORE developments 25 February – report and advice drafting in progress
 - Next meeting: end of April
 - **Joint NSAC/NWWAC Focus Group Social Aspects (Tamara Talevska)**
 - Latest advice and responses: Generational Renewal and Recreational Fisheries
 - Last meeting on 17 January 2025:
 - Marta Ballesteros presented on the STECF-24-05 report on social data in fisheries
 - Also discussed were: Vademecum on the allocation process of fishing opportunities and Fishers of the Future project
 - Report on NSAC/NWWAC websites.
 - Next meeting: 04 April - Proposed topics: FEGAPESCA work on health and safety in the fishing sector
 - Draft NWWAC/NSAC advice on STECF social dimension report

Rogoff commented that the remit of the Focus Group Social Aspects is too broad, and that it would be useful to create “sub focus group” to take into account different aspects. He referred to certain social difficulties concerning Marine Spatial Planning, and the Secretariat suggested to investigate these in the Focus Group Spatial Dimension.

Murphy suggested that an analysis could be carried out on the fishers’ earnings throughout the last years.

6. AOB – none

7. Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

1	NWWAC to develop advice on the “Vision for Agriculture and Food” roadmap.
2	Secretariat to circulate draft CFP response and ask for additional input on strategic topics. Next meeting of FG CFP to be organised for end of March to continue advice drafting.
3	Secretariat to circulate invitation for ICES WGENGAGE.
4	Secretariat to share ICES documentation from MIAC/MIACO in NWWAC Members Area. AC to keep pressure on addressing categories 5 & 6 stocks and follow up in HWG topics from MIAC and MIACO possibly for July meetings.
5	Secretariat to contact LDAC regarding next meeting of Inter-AC Brexit Forum and emphasise the importance of including detailed update on TCA review 2026. Possibility to formulate request to Commission regarding increased AC involvement on this topic.
6	FG Climate & Environment to meet and prepare advice on Energy Transition Partnership.
7	Secretariat to contact UK Seabass group again for AC inclusion in work. Secretariat to organise next meeting once benchmark results are available.
8	Proposal to the joint FG Social Aspects to include in ToR a case study of area 7d.

The Chair concluded the meeting, thanking members, speakers, CNPMM, interpreters and the Secretariat.

Participants

NWWAC members		
José	Beltran	OPP-7 BURELA
Emiel	Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
Kenatea	Chavez-Hey	ANOP
Manu	Kelberine	CRPMM de Bretagne
Franck	Le Barzic	OP COBRENORD
Olivier	Lepretre	CRPMM HDF
John	Lynch	Irish South & East Fish Producers Organisation Ltd
Patrick	Murphy	Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation
Aodh	O'Donnell	Irish Fish Producers Organisation (IFPO)
Alexandra	Philippe	EBCD
Corentine	Piton	France Pêche Durable et Responsable
Irene	Prieto	OPPF4
Erwan	Quemeneur	CDPMM 29
Dominic	Rihan	KFO
Jean-Marie	Robert	Pêcheurs de Bretagne PO
Dimitri	Rogoff	CRPMM HDF
Pauline	Stephan	CNPMM
Xavier	Tetard	Regional Committee for Maritime Fisheries and Marine Farming of Normandy
Arthur	Yon	FROM Nord



Experts & Observers		
Tetyana	Albers	France - DGAMPA
Noelia	Cuervo Álvarez	MAPA-Spain
Vincent	Dauchy	DGAMPA
Julien	Lamothe	ANOP
Suso	Lourido	Puerto de Celeiro SA OPP 77
Llibori	Martinez Latorre	IFSUA
Laurène	Jolly	DG MARE
NWWAC Secretariat		
Ilaria	Bellomo	
Mo	Mathies	