

English Aquaculture Consultation Group (EACG) Meeting Minutes	
Date:	14 th July 2015, 10:30am – 3:30pm
Location:	Wesley Hotel, 81-103 Euston St., London. NW1 2EZ
Attendees:	Chair: Lee Cocker / Helen Duggan - Seafish Shaun McLennan - Defra (afternoon only) Matt Sowery - Defra Keith Jeffery - Cefas David Jarrad / Sarah Horsfall – SAGB Oliver Robinson - BTA Piers Hart - WWF John Holmyard - Offshore Shellfish Andy Woolmer - Mumbles Oyster Company Ltd Martin Jaffa - Callander Mcdowell Beverley Perkins - SAGB Text Alert System Reviewer / Independent Neil Auchterlonie - Independent
Apologies:	Tom Pickerell - Seafish

MORNING SESSION

Introduction: Previous work of the EACG

HD summarised the previous work of the EACG:

At the last EACG meeting in July 2014 (the first meeting of the group held since November 2012) it was agreed that the original strategy document developed in 2012 remained a valid starting point for the English aquaculture sector to successfully pursue growth.

It was also proposed that the creation of an ‘English Aquaculture body’ (e.g. an IBO or PO structure) would be a valid model to establish ownership of this strategy and form a structure that could facilitate further development and implementation. The potential structure being discussed at that point was the EACG forming an IBO, and the Shellfish Association of Great Britain (SAGB) and British Trout Association (BTA) forming POs which would join the IBO.

Seafish’s commitment was to recruit a new full time Aquaculture Manager who, as part of his duties, could dedicate resource to help formulate this structure. Lee joined Seafish in Feb. 2015 and this work would fall within the remit of the Domestic Aquaculture Strategy work programme in Seafish’s 2015-18 Corporate Plan.

The main objective of today was to re-convene, and after 1 year since the last meeting bring members up to speed with how the situation have evolved, and agree the next steps in moving forward. In doing so the aim is to reach a point where action is being taken to

facilitate ownership, development and implementation of an English aquaculture strategy which will assist growth in the sector.

Review of recent and current developments in English aquaculture:

Key Points:

Seafish Update:

LC updated the group on the current work being undertaken within the new Seafish Domestic Aquaculture Programme - of particular relevance to England and this working group. Key points included:

- Several and Regulation Order (SRO) report – SAGB shared a concern that the report should be well balance, Seafish assured the group that any report created would be well balanced and not biased in any way
- Economics report – scope of works currently being developed with input from DEFRA and the Seafish Economics team.
 - Group discussion captured the need to ensure the report sufficiently captures the opportunity for growth and clarifies what the benefit for industry will be.
 - An English annual status report is published by CEFAS – it was noted that the data should continuously improve going forward.
 - JH raised a query around the data produced by the BIM Ireland and why can't Seafish create similar to this?
- ACTION
 - Copy of presentation to be circulated
 - LC to circulate 'Invitation to Quote' document to EACG members once and to capture any feedback

CEFAS Update:

KJ presented to the group a comprehensive update of Cefas aquaculture work.

Key points included:

- Cefas projects - both current and future - that have interest and relevance to the EAWG.
 - Some queries raised and discussed around future projects listed, and how these link in with what the English industry's needs? Scientific research is often at a high level, whereas it is applied science and monitoring that the industry needs - so how do we improve the funding for this?
 - Discussion on where is investment coming from to unlock English aquaculture growth? Growth must be economically viable and establish over time. Question raised – how do we improve the funding of non R&D? KJ raised the concept of an aquaculture 'hub' to encourage investment in SW England.

- A core issue for industry is encouraging investment and financing growth – re-iterating the need for a clear strategy, ownership and leadership of that, and the feeling that without it nothing will change
- Aquaculture Regulatory Toolbox.
 - CEFAS have developed a “Regulatory Toolbox” database and are working with Seafish in order for the information to be hosted on the Seafish website. The objective is to facilitate access to clear and concise regulatory information so industry can easily identify what they require.
 - Group discussion on the toolbox and its value adding potential:
 - Currently the regulatory scope does not include everything (e.g. FSA information), but the point was made that if a consistent approach could be adopted across all regulators there could be the possibility to create an intelligent search engine that is intuitive and very user-friendly.
 - If the proposal is to develop in to an interactive website/portal then this needs to be a portal that adds value – not just be another website. The development should be user-led ensuring industry input from the start, and the scope of regulation to be included in the medium to long-term needs to be determined.
 - JH made the point that regulation is potentially a barrier to entry for new businesses but it is not the biggest hurdle. This JH stated is water quality for inshore production, and infrastructure for off-shore operations.
- ACTION
 - Copy of presentation to be circulated

British Trout Association Update:

OR delivered a comprehensive update of the BTA’s

Key points included:

- The biggest challenges foreseen for BTA members include financial burdens of standards the supply chain demand to be met, and how consolidation of the different standards/auditing requirements would be most helpful
- Biggest threat is the Official Controls Review and cost recovery– point made by DJ that this could ‘wipe out’ any opportunity for shellfish growth. This is an EU change and is considered a major threat if autonomy to deal with this issue is taken out of UK hands. Support is required from DEFRA. The FSA is also working hard on this issue. Is there anything else that can be done to support industry regarding this issue?
- ACTION
 - Copy of presentation to be circulated

Shellfish Association of Great Britain (SAGB) Update:

DJ presented the SAGB update. He explained SAGB's overall structure and future plans are developing.

Key points included:

- The conclusion of the SAGB report 'SAGB A future role' undertaken in Nov. 2014 recommended the SAGB initially establish a Shellfish Alliance (with a future recommendation of taking an IBO structure). The proposed next step is a phased 12 month project and funding is currently being sought (with the IBO structure possibly coming into existence in month 8/9 after the project). SAGB themselves will fund a small element, with Fishmongers' Company willing to match fund a value being sought from the Seafish Strategic Investment Fund (SIF). SAGB should know if their application has been successful during September.
- SAGB will continue to operate as usual throughout this period – with the structural change that may be proposed in addition to the core SAGB work. Discussion around how to increase membership was had, and how to avoid many in industry getting a "free ride". A mandate to protect the existence of SAGB has been considered and the Crown Estate approached – the recommendation at this time is that it is not felt that a mandate would be appropriate as there is currently no legal route to achieve this.
- ACTION
 - Copy of presentation to be circulated

Defra EMFF Update:

MS gave an update on the EMFF and presented on 'POs – Common Market Organisations and the EMFF'

Key points on the EMFF included:

- Operational Programme has been submitted and feedback is due from the European Commission by the end July [since received]. Next step will be to resolve any issues raised and re-submit (target 4-6 weeks but obviously depends on comments raised, and holiday season timing – this is ongoing). The scheme will definitely be open this calendar year, quoting the latest time scale target as autumn.
- A more strategic approach for EMFF would be taken compared to the previous EFF scheme, with targeted interventions, specific time scales and geographic focus (MS commented on how concepts such as aquaculture 'hubs' raised by KJ would be interesting to Defra, and ensure a geographical focus in any upcoming EMFF applications).
- MS asked how can EACG add value, and could the EACG and Government become an industry-led partnership?

- The “paperwork” element of the EMFF application process has been reviewed. MS said there has been a significant cut in the length of the online application form compared to the paper version, although applications would still have to be robust – looking to develop online options to aid efficiency.
- MMO operational problems discussed by the group – comments raised highlighted that it is not the application process that has been the main problem historically; it is the processing of applications and distributing of funding due to the MMO ‘barrier’.
- **ACTION**
 - o Copy of presentation to be circulated

AFTERNOON SESSION

English Aquaculture PO/IBO Concept Discussion

Specific expertise gathered around the table in terms of PO/IBO issues, and who shed light on this matter included BP and MS.

Key points included:

- DEFRA keenly supports this in principle – would provide a very positive opportunity by having a single point of contact that clearly represents the English aquaculture industry.
- The EMFF will support initial start-up costs for new POs, this will probably be for a 3 year period, with the levels of support decreasing over that period.
- The level of EMFF and government matched financial support will be capped so a level of private support will be required.
- €2-3 million has been earmarked for PO/IBO creation.
- Defra officials are finalising these details and the overall criteria for new POs (i.e. POs must be ‘sufficiently economically active in their area’) with the MMO and will publish these shortly.
- Vital that an industry-led, coordinated and strategic approach is taken, and is facilitated by groups such as the EACG to ensure access to these funds.
- Suggestion to consult the Regulation (EU) 1379/2013 on the Common Organisation of the Markets of Fishery and Aquaculture Products (CMO) which sets out the regulatory requirements around setting up IBO’s & PO’s
- KJ suggested contact with Courtney Hough (EATIP) who could possibly offer expertise, and insight on trade association in other countries and how an English body might work.
- BP stated that the EACG need to carefully consider the model the ‘body’ takes, and the financial and legal structural requirements of any new ‘body’. There are alternatives to the PO and IBO models

- Suggestion that a PO/IBO may have to be geographical? BP explained that there is a need to consider this carefully - could there be a future requirement to include Wales for example? Belief that an IBO can be pan-UK.
- Clear agreement that a structure needs to be established for someone to own the strategy – as if no-one owns the strategy to develop English aquaculture, no-one is leading the development or implementation. This would be the key objective of any structure that is formed.
- BP commented that other sources are available and it would be wise not to just concentrate on EMFF funding.
- Need to ensure whatever structure established is financially sustainable – even if funding is applied for to support set-up costs
- Could a targeted questionnaire to key stakeholders help to inform our thinking as to what industry needs such a body to cover?
- **ACTION**
 - KJ to contact Courtney Hough
 - LC to co-ordinate the creation of a brief summary paper capturing the aims and objectives of the organization, and outlining the available options which could be fit for purpose. Members of the group will be engaged in due course to input into content and, once finalized, the paper will inform our agreement on next steps. Target circulation – Autumn 2015

EAWG Group Membership

The group took the opportunity to quickly review membership of the current group - there is an appropriate cross-section of key stakeholders represented.

- Retail was noted as a potential omission, though not with any suggestion that they should be directly invited.
- BP confirmed her involvement in a range of organisations could position her to represent this tier of the supply chain.
- No other suggestions to expand the EACG were agreed upon.

Next EACG meeting

Members of the EACG will be contacted in the coming months in regards to the next EACG meeting. As the most recent event was in July the next meeting is envisaged to be early in the New Year.