

## Aquaculture Leadership Group Meeting Minutes – 15 July 2020

### In Attendance

James Fox Davies, Fowey Shellfish Co, ALG Chair (JFD)	Roger Covey, Natural England (RC)
Kim Cullen, SF2040 (KC)	Ruth Allin, Defra (RA)
Michael Gubbins, Cefas (MG)	Kelsey Thompson, Morecambe Bay Oysters (KT)
David Jarrad, Shellfish Association of GB (DJ)	Dr Stuart McLanaghan, Seafish (SMcL)
Dr Christopher Sweeting, MMO (CS)	Martin Syvret, AquaSolutions (MS)
John Holmyard, Offshore Shellfish (JH)	

### Guests

Tim Huntington, Poseidon (TH)	Neil Auchterlonie, SF2040 (NA)
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### Apologies

Sara Catahan, Defra (SC)	Dr Lewis Le Vay, Bangor University (LLV)
Oliver Robinson, British Trout Association (OR)	Rob Whiteley, Natural England (RW)

## Meeting Minutes

### Agenda #1

#### Welcome

### Agenda #2

#### 10 June 2020 Minutes

- Tabled and accepted

### Agenda #3

#### Hello from the new SF2040 Chair

NA discussed his goals for SF2040

- He started in May and has had a good experience so far
- SF2040 supports positive change and has a huge opportunity – brings many parties together across the supply chain
- Stakeholder engagement and collaboration is a positive element of SF2040
  - One thing that SF2040 can do is facilitate direct interaction with government – to provide a platform
- The recommendation refresh is key
- SF2040 is meeting with the Minister so this is an indication of top level interest
  - SF2040 will communicate that shellfish is going through a tough time
  - TH will be there to discuss the Strategy

## Discussion

- Some ALG members voiced concerns that aquaculture is a sector in crisis and what could ALG do
  - Funding continues to be an issue during COVID-19
  - There is also the concern that the future HMPAs will wipe out 50% of shellfish aquaculture
- What are the opportunities and actions to support the sector at this time
  - SF2040 is not a strategy this sits on the shelf. The programme is positioned to engage with government and industry. Within ALG there is an opportunity to highlight how these issues are impacting on the sector particularly as COVID-19 has underlined the importance of supply chain resilience and food security
  - Shellfish ticks numerous boxes within SF2040, and the programme (Secretariat, SILG and ALG) is engaging with the policymakers to make changes over time
  - There will be increasing drivers for shellfish production such as low carbon emissions and high nutrition
  - The list of HMPAs are suggestions from a Call to Evidence and the government has not responded yet
    - How can ALG be part of the HMPA review and discussion?

## **Agenda #4**

### **Seafish Update**

SMcL updated ALG on Seafish aquaculture activities

- ‘Size of the Prize’ report
  - Since the last ALG meeting, Seafish has reviewed the two reports submitted by the consultant.
    - Their review included ALG’s comments as well
  - Discussions are underway with the consultant regarding the project
  - Unfortunately due to timelines, the report will not be able to underpin the English Aquaculture Strategy

## **Agenda #5**

### **Defra Update**

RA updated ALG on Defra aquaculture business

- Fisheries Response fund
  - There are a number of appeals and decisions are due end of July; for more info: gov.uk
- Pacific oysters
  - Held a meeting with stakeholders (15 July) to share Natural England’s views on Pacific oysters
  - Defra is committed to continuing that dialog with industry
- Minister Prentis did a virtual tour of a trout farm with Oliver Robinson
  - This was an efficient way to immerse her
  - The virtual tour was positively received by both parties (Defra and OR)
  - As a result, RA asked ALG to let her know of other virtual tour opportunities

- The consultation on the EMFF replacement scheme has re-started. Stakeholders will be contacted. Finfish and shellfish aquaculture will be represented
  - OR and DJ are on the stakeholder panel to represent aquaculture
- The regulatory framework review has paused until September
  - Industry stakeholder engagement will now run in the autumn – to gather ideas for streamlining the regulation framework
    - SF2040 will support this engagement
- Defra aquaculture team has members on Special Leave through August. Team will be back to full strength in late September

## Agenda #6

### **Review of Growth Aspirations in the Strategy**

TH updated ALG on the English Aquaculture Strategy

- Current progress
  - Stakeholder consultation going well
    - 31 people consulted across finfish, shellfish, macroalgae, government and regulatory bodies
  - Growth modelling exercise almost complete
  - Strategy development is ongoing
    - Policy will be underpinned by environment and climate change, blue economy, food security, and consumer health
- Growth aspirations
  - Approach and methodology were explained to ALG
    - Based on the 10 June ALG meeting, we are adopting the following approach:
      - Rather than ‘targets’, we will use the term ‘aspirations’
      - These will be at five year intervals up to 2040
      - They will be based on production, but we can link these to value, employment and possibly economic contribution (using agreed metrics)
      - These are independent of the Size of the Prize results, so suggest that only a single set of figures is provided (e.g. not the BAU, Intermediate & Best)
    - Preliminary results
      - ALG will meet in sub-groups (e.g. shellfish, finfish, government) with Tim to discuss weightings and growth aspirations

## Discussion

- Preliminary production figures seem conservative
  - TH agreed that the aspirations need to be tweaked which is why he will be meeting with ALG sub-groups. Predictions should be evidence-based
  - Production figures will be based on full strategy implementation
- TH will review the preliminary shellfish production figures specifically clam, oyster and mussel trestles/bag culture vs rope/line culture

- Some ALG members have increasing concerns about IFCA's aquaculture remit and understanding of the sector
  - TH has consulted with 4 IFCA's to discuss the EAS. The four groups he consulted have an interest in mariculture and therefore consider aquaculture development within their remit. With the IFCA's he spoke with, TH noted a desire for a balanced approach between fisheries and aquaculture
- Current shellfish aquaculture meets export demands not domestic demands because there isn't a strong domestic demand
  - England's food security includes both domestic and export demands
- Interest in seaweed farms and salmon land-based farms is growing in England. These will be part of the EAS. The Strategy will also include govt policy, regional management, innovation in technology, job creation, co-existence with wind farming and catch fisheries, RAS, marine finfish growth in offshore systems, aquaculture hubs, and the public perception of aquaculture production in terms of tonnes and products themselves
- The Strategy will be realistic and ambitious. It will demonstrate what the potential is for a reasonable level of sustainable growth and how to get there. It will be clear that the aspirations can only be fully realized if the constraints are gradually addressed
- What do we mean by aspirations? Is it a target based on consumption or something else and then working out how we can achieve that target? Or are we basing the aspirations on what could be produced if the strategy is implemented fully and the issues sorted out progressively over time?
  - The answer is the latter. The aspirations need to be evidence-based, achievable, and set at a reasonable level. They will be reviewed in 2-3 years' time as will the EAS as a whole
- SF2040 ambitions are to increase seafood consumption and support export growth. Both have a place in the EAS
  - Aquaculture plays an important role in the increase of seafood consumption as wild catch is a finite resource and won't be able to reach that ambition alone. The EAS will demonstrate what contribution aquaculture can make; this is the offering to govt – the aspirations, barriers, and roadmap
  - The driver is the doubling of seafood consumption and what contribution can aquaculture make. And alongside that is food security, low carbon emissions, climate change, and biodiversity commitments, etc.

**ALG agreed to use the current model as it is and develop reasonable aspirations that align with the full implementation of the strategy.**

**The strategy will link consumption, jobs, economic activity and exports to the four elements:**

- 1. Environment and Climate Change**
- 2. Food Security**
- 3. Consumer Health**
- 4. Blue Economy**

## Agenda #7

### 10 minute break

- There was no break due to lack of time remaining

## Agenda #8

### SF2040 Update

KC provided an update on two completed SF2040 research projects

- Recommendation 6 research results
  - *The estimated socioeconomic impacts of increased seafood consumption on Government budgets and population health*
    - The research is complete and the key findings (how much govt can save on ill-health if England increases its seafood consumption from 1 portion to 2) are impressive but need to be carefully worded
    - SF2040 Secretariat is working with SILG to determine next steps
- Recommendation 16 research results
  - *The challenges facing the England aquaculture sector in skills, training, recruitment & retention*
    - The research is complete and included aquaculture
    - ALG received the aquaculture section on the challenges they face in skills, training, recruitment and retention in the paper provided a week before the meeting

## Discussion

### Rec 6:

- Important for this research to reach govt economists as they are keen on the bottom line. Also this research supports the case for aquaculture growth
- This research also needs to reach regional govt (local authorities)

### Rec 16:

- There is a lack of aquaculture training and apprenticeships because it a small sector
- The Dorset Aquaculture Strategy has a goal to link students with the business
- The Seafish Annual Plan for 2021 recognises the need for health and safety training in the aquaculture sector

## Agenda #9

### Review of Recommendations 13 & 14

- ALG ran out of time to review Recommendations 13 and 14

## Agenda #10

### AOB

- ALG voted not to meet in August. The next meeting will be in late September or early October