

Aquaculture Leadership Group Meeting Minutes – 12 February 2020

In Attendance

James Fowey, ALG Chair

Kim Cullen, SF2040

Beccy Redrup, Defra

Dr Lewis Le Vay, Bangor University

David Jarrad, Shellfish Association of GB

Dr Stuart McLanaghan, Seafish

Roger Covey, Natural England

Ruth Allin, Defra

Kelsey Thompson, Morecambe Bay Oysters

Oliver Robinson, British Trout Association

Michael Gubbins, Cefas

Dr Christopher Sweeting, MMO

Guests

Keith Jeffrey, Cefas

Dr Angus Garrett, Seafish

Robert Whiteley, Natural England

Catherine Miller, Food Standards Agency

Apologies

Martin Syvret, AquaSolutions

John Holmyard, Offshore Shellfish

Meeting Minutes

Agenda #1

Welcome & Introductions

Agenda #2

15 Oct 2019 Minutes

- ALG accepted the 15 Oct 2019 Minutes

Agenda #3

Seafish Update

Dr Stuart McLanaghan submitted three papers for discussion:

1. Seafish Aquaculture Update
2. 'Size of the Prize' Report: Consultant Updates
3. Analysis of the Growth Potential of the UK Aquaculture Sector: Method Statement

General Comments

- 'Size of the Prize' project began Dec 2019 - the method statement and first monthly progress report was circulated to ALG with the papers. The report is due to be finalised by end of Jun 2020 and as previously agreed by ALG, the English Aquaculture Strategy's development is to be phased to draw on the MRAG report's key findings
- Discussion included the importance for MRAG to be able to access and make use of the latest aggregated production data (CEFAS) and at the same time, the importance to protect commercially sensitive data

- The Seafish 'Review of Practical, Operational Aquaculture Training Across the UK' is now available online.

<https://seafish.org/media/FINAL - Review of Practical, Operational Aquaculture Training across the....pdf>

- Paper should influence and inform future decisions on training.
- RAS tool is being re-developed for improvements.

Agenda #4

Defra Update

Ruth Allin updated ALG.

- The UK is now in the transition period of the EU Exit. During 2020 trade continues as normal whilst negotiations with the EU occur.
- The Fisheries Bill had its second reading at the House of Lords.
- Dr Tom Pryke, Defra, is now beginning the formal consultation for the EMFF replacement fund.
- Defra is running a pilot marketing campaign from March to May to raise consumer awareness of species from England including mussels, oysters, crabs, mackerel, and hake. The target audience will be those 45 years and older.
- The Defra Regulatory Review Group continues with their work to review the aquaculture regulatory framework.
 - The Group is conscious of the challenges and that the landscape is confusing and complex.
- The Pacific oyster policy focus group continues to work on the policy.

General Comments

- A concern was raised that aquaculture is not always a part of national food producing discussions.
 - The Fisheries Minister requested Defra at the 30 Jan SF2040 SILG meeting to speak with Henry Dimpleby and the National Food Strategy team to ensure seafood is in the report.
 - Cefas has been contacted by the National Food Strategy and will be meeting with the team. Aquaculture will be on the agenda.
 - The trade association members of ALG said they would contact Henry Dimpleby's office to request the inclusion of seafood and aquaculture.
 - It was noted that the 'Size of the Prize' report and English Aquaculture Strategy will help to increase aquaculture momentum in England.
- It was suggested to invite the Chair from the Association of the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority to the June ALG meeting to better understand their role in aquaculture activities.
 - The SF2040 Secretariat and ALG Chair will consider the suggestion. The invitation would be to discuss their role in aquaculture and what constructive participation and opportunities could arise benefitting all parties as well as the English Aquaculture Strategy if appropriate. Thus far IFCA's have not been involved in SF2040; there is scope for dialogue aligning with ALG's remit.

ACTION:

- KC to provide contact details of the National Food Strategy to the trade association ALG members.
- ALG Chair and SF2040 Secretariat to consider IFCA participation at upcoming meetings.

Agenda #5

Marine Plan Consultation¹

Dr Chris Sweeting presented on the MMO Marine Plan Consultation process.

- Marine Planning process and timelines
- Draft Plan Statutory Consultation
- How to respond to the consultation
- Explore Marine Plans

Public consultation is 14 Jan – 6 April 2020.

General comments

- A point was made about the burden of consultation on the industry.
 - Stakeholder validation – particularly the industry – is necessary to ensuring the Marine Plans are appropriate. Dr Sweeting is willing to have phone conversations with industry ALG members if that is a more efficient use of their time.

ACTION:

- KC to provide contact details of industry ALG members to CS.
- KC to email Marine Plan Consultation presentation to ALG.

Agenda #6

SF2040 Update

Kim Cullen updated ALG.

- Seafish is interviewing for the next Chair of SF2040. The new Chair will attend the June ALG meeting.
- The future of SF2040 will be on the June agenda. It is hoped more will be known about the future of the programme which currently ends September 2020.
- The SF2040 Recommendation 6 report on the socioeconomic impacts of increased seafood consumption on population health and government budgets is yielding noteworthy results of interest to the seafood industry.
 - Rates of obesity, Type 2 diabetes and some cancers can be reduced with an increase of seafood consumption. This in turn leads to healthier, better quality lives and reduced spend by the government on ill health.
- The SF2040 Secretariat is reviewing the 25 recommendations with SILG, ALG, Seafish, Defra and other key stakeholders to ensure ongoing relevance.
 - Due to time constraints at the 12 Feb meeting, ALG will review Recs 13 and 14 via email.

ACTION:

- KC to provide final Rec 6 report to ALG when released in the spring.
- KC to email Recs 13 and 14 to ALG for comment on relevance.

¹ Dr Sweeting's presentation is provided in the email to ALG with 12 Feb meeting minutes.

Agenda #7

The Future of Aquaculture in England

Dr Angus Garrett and Kim Cullen led the discussion on:

- Anticipated changes in next ten years (seafood supply base to 2030, key changes in the industry landscape)
- English Aquaculture strategy – update and discussion on scope

Anticipated changes in next ten years

Dr Garrett discussed his work in Horizon Scanning and the development of a map of external factors impacting on the UK seafood industry.

- This is an exercise in joining the dots between aquaculture ambition, the future, and the threats and opportunities to English seafood production.
- It is important to review Recommendations 13 and 14 and to consider the scope of the English Aquaculture Strategy (EAS) in the context of overall UK seafood supply portfolio and priority changes in the wider landscape.
- The committee overseeing SF2040 (the Seafood Industry Leadership Group – SILG) agreed on the top 6 external factors to consider when reviewing the recommendations and developing the EAS scope. Please refer to Table 1 directly below.

Table 1: SILG’s Priorities of External Factors Impacting on England’s Seafood Sector

Priority	External Factor Impacting on England’s Seafood Sector
1	Environmental conditions and climate change (Macro conditions)
2	Market and consumers (Industry supply, trade & markets)
3	Tied for 3 rd priority - Resource management; and Political conditions (Industry supply, trade & markets)
4	Government spend on fisheries (Other)
5	Tied for 5 th priority – Labour vs technology (Labour & skills); and Sustainability (NGOs and consumers)
6	Tied for 6 th priority – Industry image (Industry image); and Health credentials for seafood (Food safety and integrity)

English Aquaculture Strategy

- In-line with Rec 13, continued support from Defra is essential to underpin Government support for the growth targets and a short-, medium- and long-term delivery plan.
- The starting point for the new strategy should focus on what ALG wants to see included, rather what is missing from the 2012 Plan. The 2012 document is for reference only.
 - The 2012 strategy did not have a working group to take it forward. ALG would be the group to take the 2020 strategy forward.
- It was agreed that the consultant appointed to produce the English Aquaculture Strategy would be asked to produce a project method statement for consideration by the ALG.
 - What’s the methodology to be employed? Will need to be sense-checked by ALG.
- The ‘Size of the Prize’ project will include three future growth scenarios for the UK’s bivalve aquaculture industry to 2040, including a baseline (business as usual) scenario; it was agreed that the applicability of these scenarios will be considered when developing scenarios for the strategy.

- ALG agreed the EAS should be industry-led with government partnership.
 - The strategy requires buy-in from government.
- The EAS should strike a balance between high-level/big picture and practicality for example the inclusion of meaningful, actionable targets.
- The document should include the term social license – the concept threaded throughout.
 - Social license in aquaculture: a term used to describe a positive relationship between an industry and its local community. A social license to operate indicates the level of approval from the community that an industry has to operate.
 - <https://www.seafish.org/article/social-license-to-operate>
- Wide stakeholder engagement is necessary therefore a plan is required.
- Good resources to start with:
 - NZ Aquaculture Strategy
 - Stewart Graham of Gael Force led the development of the Scottish Aquaculture Strategy
 - Ask him to share his insights.
- ALG was asked to select their top five priorities for the EAS Scope. Please refer to Table 2 below.

Table 2: ALG’s Priorities for the EAS Scope

Priority	EAS Scope
1	Barriers to growth (water quality, regulatory framework, poor consumer demand, etc)
2	Food security - moving aquaculture from an export to a domestic market (this ties in to needing a stronger consumer demand)
3	Technology/innovation – new species and techniques
4	Promotion of aquaculture
5	Jobs/skills/social aspect of aquaculture – the knock-on social and economic benefits of aquaculture

Agenda #8

Aquaculture Regulatory Framework Review²

Beccy Redrup presented on Defra’s work in aquaculture regulation.

- There is a recognised lack of growth in aquaculture.
 - Main barriers are complex regulatory landscape, access to start-up capital and policy ambiguity (Pacific Oysters).
- Defra leads an Aquaculture Regulatory Review Working Group.
 - Members include NE, FSA, Association of IFCA, Cefas and MMO.
 - Aim of group is to reduce the regulatory burden on industry to enable growth of aquaculture.
 - Desired outcomes include an improved consent process, improved communications and understanding of regulatory responsibility between the regulators, and aquaculture sector growth.
 - Phase 1 – The development of a user-friendly guidance on what is needed to comply with current regulations.
 - Phase 2 - Full review of current regulatory framework.

² Beccy Redrup’s presentation is provided in the email to ALG with 12 Feb meeting minutes.

- Will include the identification of opportunities to cut unnecessary red tape, streamline the existing process and align regulators; workshops facilitated by SF2040 to seek stakeholder input, and the development of a multi-year roadmap for regulatory improvement for Ministerial buy-in by end of 2020.
- The industry will be involved in the framework review through workshops facilitated by SF2040.
- Defra will look to extend the regulatory framework review to finfish after delivery of the shellfish piece.
- Points were raised by ALG about the regulators working better together.
 - There would be value in an evidence review matrix of regulator responsibility (i.e. what they look at and how it aligns, intersects, and/or overlaps with others).
 - There was concern by ALG industry members that learnings from the consent process is not picked up by the regulators.

Agenda #9

Update on Cefas/DED FLAG Regional Aquaculture Mapping Project³

Keith Jeffrey, Cefas, presented on the Aquaculture Mapping Project.

- Purpose of project to:
 - Identify and map areas best-suited to specific types of sustainable aquaculture, within the boundaries of the FLAG area (a local larger scale plan).
 - Produce an in-depth analysis which should benefit aquaculture interests in the FLAG area and act as an exemplar approach for others to adopt.
 - Identify potential management and mitigation measures that may facilitate sustainable aquaculture development in the FLAG area, without unduly restricting opportunities for fishing.
- The original project cost £100k. Now that Cefas understands the work entailed and the resources required the replication of the project in other English regions could average £50k.
- Project could be carried forward across England. MMO, Cefas and ALG keen to continue the conversation.
- Project could lead to a national strategic aquaculture map for England.
- Keith will distribute the report via the SF2040 Secretariat.

Agenda #10

AOB/Finish

- The next ALG meeting is in June in London. A Doodle poll will be emailed to determine the date.

³ Keith Jeffrey's presentation is provided in the email to ALG with 12 Feb meeting minutes.