

**Minutes**  
**Workshop organized by MAC & NWWAC on “Marine Plastics and the Seafood Supply Chain”**  
**Interpretation Directorate (SCIC), Rue de la Loi 102, Brussels**  
**07 November 2019**

Mr George Werner (EGF), member of the MAC, welcomed the participants and pointed out the high number of participants which is a sign of great interest of stakeholders in this issue, then he gave the floor to the several speakers.

The first speaker is **Guus Pastoor** from VisFederatie (MAC Chair) who points out that this kind of workshop is a promising formula because is connecting the MAC and NWWAC which are covering different relevant areas and values chains in order to raise awareness and facilitate discussion. He observes that consumers are asking simple questions such as how bad is the state, or can I still eat seafood, or who should do something about this situation? These simple but relevant questions which are guiding purchasing decisions and consumers opinions about this issue will be important. Consumers perception and concerns are: 1) climate change, 2) plastic waste. So, he explains they are focusing on what people associate to plastic in the ocean: first of all, air pollution. Who is supposed to take care of it and people think that business and politicians have to solve the problem, but just a small % think consumers should solve the problem. What should retailers do? He declares they have no really revolutionary idea, but just less plastic in packaging. He underlines the importance of seafood, as it is recommended all over the world, and can be essential for proteins provisions to humans and it has more perspective than meat production, so making an action plan to tackle plastic emergency, a joint action is necessary, as it should be a non -competitive issue in the sector.

Mr **Giuseppe Ferrandino** (MEP- Vice-Chair, EP PECH Committee) stresses the importance of acting now as there will be more plastic than fish in 2025. He remembers the two European Directives about this matter, one is about to reduce plastic and the impact on environment and the other one is concerning port reception facilities of delivery of waste from ship collected during fishing operations. These two directives are now on the way to be transposed into national laws.

Mrs. **Amy Lusher** (Researcher of NIVA/FAO) presents the recently published Report of FAO “Microplastic in fisheries and aquaculture” with a focus on occurrence and implications of marine microplastic for aquatic organisms and food safety. She shows some data: the global production is about 1800 million tonnes of plastic in world, 30 % is still on use and 70% is used once, only 4% is recycled. The recovery rate of plastics is about 6% of produced plastic and 4 million tonnes of plastic may enter the ocean. She points out that plastics are exposed to sun, waves, currents, winds etc and there is a degradation on plastic product till becoming microplastic which is < 1mm. Scientists have found them everywhere and there are a lot of studies where we can see the plastic moving through the food chain. Another important aspect is that microplastics interact with biota on a global scale. In 2016, a UK newspaper said “plastic is found in a third of fish caught in Britain” which was an alarming photo of the situation. Current state of knowledge just concentrates on plastic ingestion, but we do not know about other effects on fish (fish health etc) and often studies are not comparable, and the quality of the studies has been questioned. For shellfish for example, the toxicokinetic of nano remains largely unknown. Biomonitoring can be used to investigate biotic impacts of microplastics. As far as consequences for humans are concerned, exposure to microplastics in seafood is reduced by depuration of bivalves and removal of digestive tracts in fish but of course everything needs more

investigation. Seafood safety will need to look more towards nano-toxicity over physical effects: considering applying environmental risk assessment approaches, recognizing potential impacts but also lack of data; implementing cost-effective and targeted monitoring; communicating hazards and risk management.

Mr. **Werner Bosmans** (DG Environment) explains the EU plastics strategy and the Single use plastics Directive. He recalls the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and shows some predictions about future production of plastics in the next 50 years. Main European figures about circular plastics are as follows: 31,3% plastics are collected for recycling and it increased 79% in 10 years in the EU. The 4 chapters of the EU strategy for plastics in the circular economy are 1) to improve the economics and quality plastics recycling; 2) to drive investments and innovation towards circular solutions; 3) to harness global action; 4) to curb plastic waste and littering. He resumes the main points of the strategy, stressing that all plastic packaging must be reusable or recyclable by 2030 and that 10 million tons of recycled plastics in new products are expected on the EU market by 2025. He informs participants also about the Declaration of the Circular Plastics Alliance recently signed. Then he goes through marine litter and confirms that the most found on European beaches are single use plastics, that's why EU has launched the Directive aiming at reducing food containers, cup for beverages, establishing products design requirements, focusing also on extended producer responsibility (producers have to help to cover cost of waste prevention f.i. ), improving separate collection (Lithuania has shown best practices). He launches the next steps for Europe focusing on the green deal: a new circular economy action plan on sustainable resource use especially in resource-intensive and high impact sectors such as textiles and construction.

Mrs **Magdalena Andrea** (Head of Unit on Maritime Innovation – DG MARE) states that marine pollution is quite complex and is more than plastics, as we don't have to forget agriculture pesticides, and heavy metals eutrophication, oil drilling, ocean acidification. DG MARE actions in this context are as follows: 1) contributes to implementation of EU rules (Single Use Plastics (SUP) and Port reception Facilities (PRF) Directives, Fisheries Control Regulation, MSFD); 2) Support fishing for litter schemes and funding of adjustments of port reception facilities under current and post-2020 EMFF; 3) continuously improving marine litter data maps (EMODNET); 4) visualize marine litter data in EU Atlas of the Seas; 5) Support allocation of research funding for marine litter projects where most needed. She focuses on the Directive on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment, entered into force on 2nd July 2019, which provides for extended producers responsibility schemes for producers of fishing gears containing plastic; monitoring of fishing gears placed on the market of the MS and number of waste fishing gear collected and for MS to establish national minimum annual collection targets of waste fishing gear containing plastic for recycling. The EC tries to fix also standard for circular design of fishing gear to encourage re-use and to facilitate recyclability at the end of life. Implementing acts on reporting format and methodology should be adopted by 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020. She also cites the Revised Port Reception Facilities Directive entered into force on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019, whose goal is to enhance the availability and use of port reception waste facilities by MS. She talks about the Revision of Fisheries control regulation too aiming to extend gear marking requirement and to improve retrieval and reporting of lost gear. She explains that the EU Marine Observation and Data Network (EMOD net) was expanded to marine litter in March 2017 so they are collecting and aggregate data about seabed litter, micro litter and beach litter. As far as the EMFF (shared management) fishing for litter schemes are concerned, MS are not spending a lot of the allocated fund (5Mio€ of 22Mio € allocated), so EU has to encourage MS to spend on this issue. She believes that fishermen are part of solution, as an example, thanks to their partnership with KIMO, over 500 fishing vessels landed 2500 tonnes of waste from the sea between 2011-2016 which will no longer be affecting the marine environment.

Question time:

A representative of an AC asks if the Fisheries control regulation is considering also recreational fisheries together with the professional fisheries as they are using a lot of plastic in their activities in the Baltic Sea.

A representative of MAC stresses that food packaging is single use, so it is a problem. but for food safety reasons the requirements are very strict. so it is a specific issue and food manufacturing industry has to tackle some specific requirements because it is complicate to recycle but they need solutions to optimize.

A representative of Italian producers asks to get more info about the definition of microplastic and nano plastic. He believes that communication to consumers is not clear and that from a legal perspective is needed. He states also that harmonization in testing methods is needed.

Mr. Richard Cronin (OSPAR) talks about the effect of Plastic Pollution on the Marine Environment. First of all, he explains what Ospar means, that is Oslo Paris Convention for the protection and the environment of the Northeast Atlantic (1992) signed by 15 countries and composed by 5 thematic committees with experts' groups. He shows all the main issued dealt with in the framework of this Convention.

Mrs. Catherine Morrison (BIM) presents the Clean Oceans initiatives – She starts explaining that in the seafood sector a wide range of materials can be found to reduce reuse and recycle such as nets, fishing gears boxes etc. She shows the marine degradation timeline usually used during activities for kids and then she tries to explain that fishing Net recycling is difficult to accept for fishermen as it is very difficult, because is a multipart item with different kind of plastic and you can try to deconstruct it and reuse some of the components which however are contaminated with salt. With their programme they support trials, but she confirmed that to make it economical viable, it is very hard.

Mrs. Patricia Perez (CETMAR) presents the INTERREG Project “Tackling marine litter in the Atlantic Area” which aims protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services in the Atlantic Area by improving capabilities to monitor, prevent and remove macro marine litter. The project will also contribute to raise awareness and change attitudes among stakeholders and to improve marine litter managing systems. She shows some focus about fishing for litter pilot action in Galicia (Spain).

Mr. Pedro Lago (SONAE - MC - food retail market leader in Portugal) presents their sustainable packaging and new direction in plastic from a retailer perspective. He points out that plastic is very good to preserve food, it is cheap, light, an excellent material, but the problem is to use it in a responsible way. He stresses their engagement in eliminating problematic or unnecessary plastics, and in studying new solutions, he shows a new material recently produced with the University of Valencia (Project YPACK).

Mrs. Rebecca Anego presents the Oceanwise INTERREG Project, wise reduction of EPS/XPS marine litter in the North-East Atlantic Ocean which is developed by several partners such as Sustainn (Circular economy consultant company), REAPK and PUNTO VERDE (packaging companies' partners).

Professor Quinn Brian talks about effects of microplastics on human health. He points out that the exposition to microplastic is not just through ingestion in seafood but also in sugar, inhalation through air etc. There is a problem on how to define impact and at what level do we assess impact.

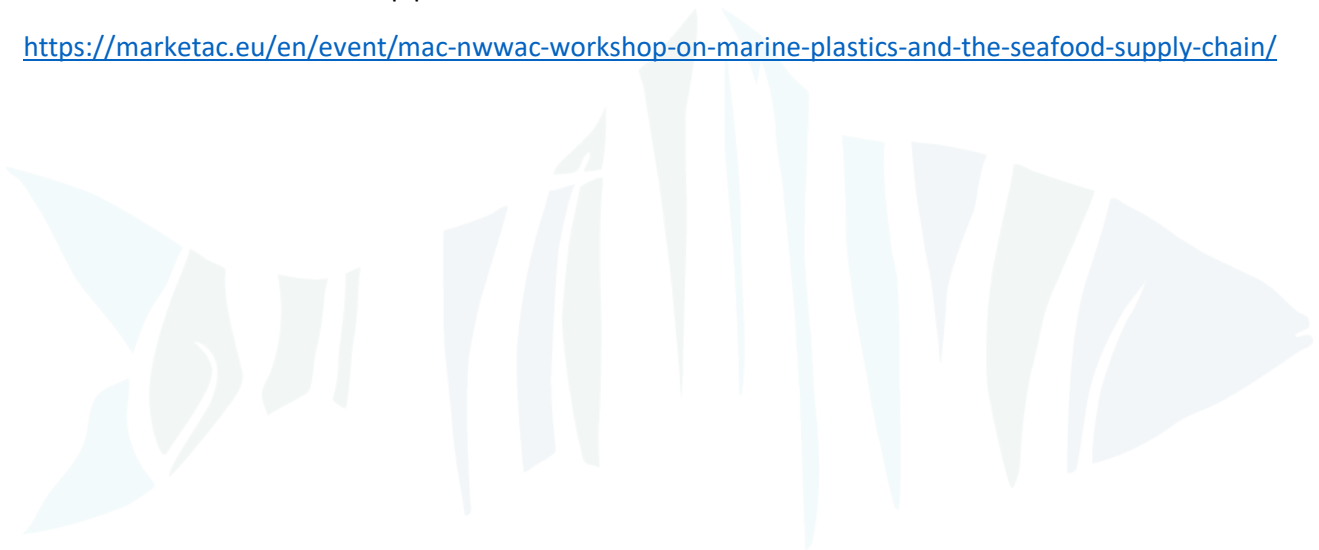
Mrs. Cristina Dixon from the EIA- Environment and Investigation Agency based in London explains that a quarter of UK consumers are extremely concerned about plastic packaging in grocery stores and that 72% think that supermarkets are not doing enough. Consumers are not thinking very much in changing their



behaviours. She shows the results of a survey made by Greenpeace in UK Supermarkets and these are the main data: 10 supermarkets use 810,000 tonnes of single use plastic, billions of bags and over 59 billion single-use items; 5 out of 10 companies have plastic reduction targets; there is a greater focus on recyclability, but a third of plastic still non-recyclable; supermarkets are all committed to eliminate non-recyclables by 2025, with some earlier timelines and commitments to phase out problem plastics; there is a fairly positive responses to legislation including deposit return schemes and microbead ban. She points out also that it is important to avoid false solutions such as non-conventional plastics (to adopt a precautionary approach and fully assess the sustainability issues associated with biobased, biodegradable, compostable plastic, viewing them as a last resort for well-adapted purposes rather than a go-to substitute for conventional plastic) and substituting one single-use item for another (a simple switch of one single use material for another (i.e. paper) likely to have negative environmental consequences – focus on reduction and reuse instead.

You can download the workshop presentations:

<https://marketac.eu/en/event/mac-nwwac-workshop-on-marine-plastics-and-the-seafood-supply-chain/>





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