



**BLACK SEA ADVISORY COUNCIL /BISAC/
CONSILIUL CONSULTATIV PENTRU MAREA
NEAGRA**

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MINUTE

meeting Working Group 6 BISAC – February 22, 2023

Subject: "Opportunities for certification in fisheries. Digitalization in fishery. "

On February 22, 2023, at the Continental Forum hotel, Constanta and online, on the Zoom platform, took place a meeting of working group 6 of BISAC, on the topic: " Opportunities for certification in fisheries. Digitalization in fishery. "

The meeting was attended by : Ms. Pinelopi Belekou - DG MARE , Ms. Lucia Revenga - Global Unit MSC Fishery - DNV Business Assurance, Mr. Konstantin Petrov Representative of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) for Bulgaria, Mr Alexandru Simeonov and Mr. Dinu Dobrin - National Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture/ANPA/Constanța, Ms. Georgeta Ivanov - Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority/ARBDD Tulcea, Mr. Tiberiu Cazacioc - RO-PESCADOR Association .

The meeting was opened by the Chairman of BISAC, Mr. Daniel Buhai and led by Mr. Yordan Gospodinov.

Ms. Lucia Revenga, from DNV Business Assurance - MSC Fishery Global Unit, made a presentation on "Seafood Certification". Were presented examples of European and global certifications and projects, as well as the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) fisheries certification process.

The certifications presented during the presentation are:

1. Fishing (sea, lakes and rivers)
 - MSC: Marine Stewardship Council
 - FoS : Friend of the pigskin
 - Alaska RFM: Alaska Responsible Fisheries Management.
2. Seaweed: ASC-MSC Seaweed standard
3. Aquaculture:
 - ASC: Aquaculture Stewardship Council

- FoS - Aqua: Friend of the pigskin Aquaculture
 - Global GAP: Good Agricultural Practices
 - BAP : Best Aquaculture Practices
4. Fish farms: - NOOMAS: Regulations NYTEK y NS 9415 (inspection services and certification services)

Then Ms. Lucia Revenga presented the scheme and the MSC Fisheries certification process, highlighting information about principles, duration, certification.

MSC Fisheries certification process involves the following aspects:

- 3 Principles: stock status, ecosystem, management - these aspects are considered in the certification process.
- Expensive process with several auditors involved - certification costs also depend on the stocks for which certifications are requested. The producers submit the application for certification, then checks take place and several reports are drawn up.
- This process is initially confidential, and then it is open to public consultation.
- Clients: Individual vessels or national fleets, artisanal or factory vessels.
- Long process, over 15 months.
- Some clients need help of consultancy by other entities.
- Certificate lasts 5 years and is subject to annual surveillance.

At the end of the presentation, Ms. Lucia Revenga thanked BISAC for the invitation to participate in this working group and to present this certification process.

This was followed by the question session from BISAC members and guests.

Mr. Daniel Buhai asked a question regarding the fact that during the presentation, in the slide with locations containing examples of certifications and projects, nothing was marked in the Black Sea area. He would like to know if there is no certified fishing organization in the Black Sea?

Ms. Lucia Revenga answers that there are no marked locations in the Black Sea area, because for the moment they do not have certifications in this area, but it represents a new market.

Mr. Marian Paiu asks a question about the benefits that these certifications bring and asks Ms. Lucia Revenga to provide more information on the benefits that certifications bring, especially for small-scale fishing.

Ms. Lucia Revenga emphasizes that these certifications offer the possibility of entering new markets. MSC Fisheries certification gives holders this possibility. It is necessary for fishery products to be certified to be able to enter the large commercial chains such as Carrefour, McDonald's, which seek and request that the products sold be certified. It states that it is important for fishermen to have species, stock, and historical information when applying for certification. Regarding the small-scale fishing sector, Ms. Revenga mentions that they also have this problem in Spain, namely that small fishermen do not see the benefits of these

certifications. England is given as an example, where there are many certifications, and the market demands certified products. Any certified species can be sold on the UK market, which is an advantage for exporters. It is important that these small-scale fishermen are part of larger cooperatives/coalitions and to be united.

Mr. Marian Paiu thanks for the answer and asks a question about how the fishing sector can learn about these certifications and how they help them.

Ms. Lucia Revenga answers to Mr. Paiu that being from the NGO, he can inform as many fishermen as possible of certain ecological aspects and the benefits of certifications in this regard.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov adds that the big commercial chains in Bulgaria, such as LIDL, Kaufland, demand that the products be certified, and their ships want to enter these markets.

It was followed by a presentation by Mr. Tiberiu Cazacioc, marketing specialist, quality schemes - RO-PESCADOR Association/Deltaica Seafood SRL on the topic "European quality systems". To begin with, issues were presented regarding quality systems and the fact that EU quality policy aims to protect the names of certain products to promote their unique characteristics related to their geographical origin, as well as traditional techniques and practices. A "geographical indication" (I.G., I.G.P., D.O.P.) can be protected for the names of agri-food products, if they have a specific connection with the place where they are manufactured.

Geographical indications establish intellectual property rights for certain products whose qualities are closely linked to the area of production. For geographical indications, the following types of certifications are found:

- D.O.P. = protected designation of origin (for food and wine) - Product names registered as PDO are those with the strongest links to the location where they were registered. Every part of the production, processing and preparation process must take place in that region. Mandatory labeling for protected food and agricultural products.
- I.G.P. = protected geographical indication (for food and wine) - I.G.P. emphasizes the relationship between a specific geographical region and the name of the product, if a certain quality, reputation or other characteristic can be essentially attributed to the geographical origin of the product. Mandatory labeling for protected food and agricultural products.
- S.T.G = traditional specialty guaranteed - Traditional specialty guaranteed (TSG) highlights traditional aspects, such as the way the product is made or its composition, without linking it to a specific geographical area. Naming a product registered as an STG protects it against counterfeiting and misuse. Mandatory for all products.

For each type of certification, examples and certified products registered from Romania and Bulgaria were presented.

Another important aspect is protecting the name. As part of the EU system of intellectual property rights, product names registered as geographical indications are legally protected against imitation and misuse in the EU and in third countries where a specific protection agreement has been signed.

Some aspects regarding the registration procedure at national and European level were also presented. At the European level it is a system with third-party certification, consisting of the Ministry of Agriculture, the European Commission, and a certification body. At the national level, in Romania the authority is the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and in Bulgaria, the Ministry of Agriculture. After registration, over the years, compliance with the recipe is checked every 2 years by OIC, the inspection and verification body (Romania). There may also be verification, control, internal procedures within the applicant group .

The presented benefits were divided into two categories, for consumers and for producers, these being:

- For consumers
 - Encouraging quality production
 - High quality products
 - Promotes efficiency in market organization, consumers have lower identification costs
- For producers, processors
 - The right to exclude others as long as the value of the geographical indication, the STG, exists
 - Differentiation in the market
 - Higher prices

After the presentation was completed, questions from the working group participants followed.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov thanked Mr. Tiberiu Cazacioc for the presentation and mentioned that it was very interesting, with examples from both countries, Romania and Bulgaria. The certifications show what the origin is, but this does not necessarily happen, but at the initiative of the producers. Examples from Romania and Bulgaria were presented, but he knows that in Bulgaria there is a larger production of these products, and they are doing everything they can to protect the geographical dimension and for these products to be recognized in the market, also bringing more profit. In Bulgaria there is a certification unit within the Ministry, but unfortunately in the fishing sector there are still no certified pods, there is room for improvement, even if the Black Sea has more particular dynamics in this sector of fishery products. Thus, as a recommendation, the initiative of certifying a traditional product can be taken and be protected, being products that are not made in other areas.

Mr. Cătălin Balaban adds that Mr. Gospodinov says that he recommends fishermen to get certified, but he asks Mr. Tiberiu Cazacioc if he knows what the costs would be, because as far as he knows, certification is expensive.

Mr. Tiberiu Cazacioc answers that these costs for certification, from his perspective, are not very high (it depends on the producer's perspective), but the higher costs appear after certification. They reach the shelf with higher prices or are not visible there. The post-certification problem is how do you make these products stand out to the consumer? How can they be guided and how can they identify the product on the shelf? The post-certification costs end up being the highest compared to the certification ones, and they can vary from several thousand euros. The most difficult thing is for a consumer to understand this price off the shelf, the work done for certification and the process these products go through. The technical costs per certification body are not very high. In Romania, they work with certification schemes.

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov also adds that it is a way by which we can protect a product and its specificity, develop aquaculture, various fishery products. We need more initiatives to certify products from Bulgaria and Romania.

Ms. Pinelopi Belekou - DG MARE - mentions that she is happy to participate in this meeting and thanks BISAC for the invitation, but also for organizing these meetings in a hybrid format, thus giving the opportunity for DG MARE representatives to participate in them. She adds that the theme of the meeting is very important and that she must admit that it is one of the most informative meetings that BISAC has had so far.

The certification of fishery and aquaculture products is a very important aspect, and these certifications raise the added value of fishery products. As information about the certified products, there are 31 fisheries product certificates and 21 aquaculture and fishing producers, from France, Germany, Netherland, etc. The geographic indication of the product also adds value, and there are such indications in the Black Sea. In Europe, DG MARE pays attention to the origin of products. Information on how products can be certified and the benefits brought by the certifications are available on the website of the Commission, as well as on that of the GFCM.

The closing of the meeting follows.

Minutes of the meeting: Ms. Anca Panait

Chairman of BISAC: Mr. Daniel Buhai