

## Minutes: Sustainable Seafood Coalition Steering Group Meeting

14th January 2021, 10.00-12.00. 8 Participants.

### SUMMARY OF NEXT STEPS:

- Invite the Feed Working Group to adopt and test the Podio platform for project discussions and information sharing (*discussion 1 below*).
- Steering Group to develop a strategic plan for the SSC. This will be based on consultation with members and conversations with other collaborative seafood organisations. Some activities will be 'benched' until this strategy has been formalised. Other initiatives which the SG is confident will be included in the plan have been prioritised for Q1 (*discussion 3*).
- Members will be invited to comment on the SSC's Vision and Aims and on the specific role of the SSC. This will help to shape the strategy (*discussion 3*).
- Secretariat will seek observer status in some relevant organisations in order to provide updates to non-participant members (*discussion 3*).
- Members will be presented with a proposal to remove the UK-exclusivity of SSC membership, in conjunction with conversations with the Northeast Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy (NAPA) Group, to support like-minded businesses in Europe (*discussion 4*).
- The Global Dialogue for Seafood Traceability (GDST) will be invited to present to members at the February members' meeting (*discussion 5*).
- A representative from the Seafood Ethics Action (SEA) Alliance will be invited to provide an update on their workplan and outputs at the February members' meeting (*discussion 6*).
- A webinar on the High Seas Treaty and related advocacy opportunities should be arranged in coordination with Pew Charitable Trusts and the Global Tuna Alliance (GTA) (*discussion 7a*).

### DISCUSSION:

- 1. The group reviewed the value and uptake of the Podio platform.**
  - The platform has potential to be valuable but has not yet been fully adopted by members. For example, not all members are receiving notifications about activity on Podio so aren't sure when to check the workspace.
  - It is already useful for sharing information from the Secretariat, but could be adopted for managing projects and collaboration between members.
  - Podio should be tested as a project management tool – the Steering Group and Feed Working Group could trial moving fully on to Podio.
- 2. The group considered the minor updates to Codes and Guidance proposed since our last meeting.**
  - The Steering Group approve the proposed updates and these will be taken forward for sign-off at the all-members' meeting in February.
- 3. Review of a proposal to hold a member-wide discussion on a) a strategy for the SSC and b) a mechanism for tabling and implementing new workstreams which align with the strategy.**
  - A member explained that the Global Tuna Alliance (GTA) developed a 5 year strategy to measure progress against. It was suggested that the SSC should go through a similar process. Other members stressed that the process should be kept as simple as possible, and should not delay other SSC workstreams.
  - The SSC Vision and Aims were recognised as the core principles around which to guide future initiatives and to build this strategy.
  - A member recommended that the SSC strategy is not reviewed in isolation, but should involve discussion with other relevant organisations. The GTA, Food Network for Ethical Trade (FNET) and SEA Alliance were suggested. This will help the SSC to identify initiatives to proactively lead, to reactively support and to avoid.
  - A member suggested that a Gantt chart to establish timelines and necessary resources for SSC projects would be helpful.

- Internationalisation should be factored into the strategy discussion (either as direct SSC membership growth *or* by establishing a separately coordinated entity).
  - The role of the SSC in providing a signposting service was discussed. It was suggested that the Secretariat seek observer status on some relevant platforms (GTA, FNET, SEA Alliance) in order to update SSC members which are unable to be directly involved. These observer positions could be reciprocal.
- 4. The group reviewed the proposal that SSC accepts membership applications from seafood businesses operating outside the UK.**
- The group is confident that membership growth will be a central aspect of the SSC's strategic plan.
  - The group recognised some benefits of growth outside the UK: extending the influence of the Codes, bringing additional expertise into challenging areas of work, securing financial sustainability of the SSC and strengthening advocacy positions pursued in Europe.
  - The group also shared some concerns: strain on existing resources and Secretariat support, potential for differing priorities from European members, adaptations which might be necessary to account for different stages of market maturity.
  - The group explored the possibility of establishing a separate SSC entity for European companies wishing to work within this model. This addressed some of the above concerns but exacerbated others. It should be considered within the strategic plan. External funding may be necessary to ensure success and limit burden on 'founder' European members.
  - A proposal should be put to members that the Terms of References are updated to remove the UK-exclusivity of membership. Like-minded businesses involved in NAPA could be invited to join the SSC whilst the value of a European-centric SSC structure is explored.
  - If expanding in Europe, the makeup of the Steering Group should be reviewed to reflect this.
- 5. The group considered the role of traceability within the Codes, and whether updates are necessary to reflect developments in available tools and standard practices.**
- There was general recognition that the existing SSC Codes require development on traceability expectations.
  - It was suggested that the GDST is invited to present to members in order to explain their model and improve general understanding of traceability. The group could consider ratifying GDST 1.0 or incorporating the principles of the GDST into the Codes.
  - Traceability was seen as a priority issue which will definitely feature within the SSC strategic plan, as it underpins responsible sourcing and labelling practices. This initiative can therefore be scheduled for the February members' meeting.
- 6. Discussion on the need for a social responsibility update for members.**
- The social responsibility commitments in the SSC Codes need to be developed further, but other organisations are better placed to do this. It has now been three years since the SSC decided to wait for the SEA Alliance to develop appropriate guidance.
  - Agreement that an update on the SEA Alliance workplan and expected timelines is necessary. The group understands that a tangible SEAA code of practice is not ready to be incorporated by the SSC. The suggestion was made that this update is given at the all-members' meeting in February.
  - Members highlighted other organisations to monitor and consider for inclusion in the Codes, including the work of the GSSI on a social benchmark, the FishWise approach adopted by the GTA and the UN's guiding principles for business and human rights.
- 7. Discussion on a range of advocacy opportunities for the SSC to consider.**
- a) Supporting a robust High Seas Treaty. The SSC should aim to align position statements with those of like-minded organisations (Pew, GTA). This will maximise impact and minimize administrative burden. Members should be fully briefed on this topic to make informed decisions on advocacy.
  - b) Supporting robust secondary legislation for the UK Fisheries Act. The SSC should build on existing position statements developed and signed for the SSC's UK Fisheries Bill letter. A member stressed the importance of ensuring that catching sector is properly supported in implementing requested changes. This should be reflected in the content and tone of further advocacy.
  - c) Supporting the European Green Deal through the Farm to Fork strategy & a meaningful food labelling framework. The group recognised the value of using the SSC as a case study to encourage clear and consistent labelling and substantiated environmental claims. The Secretariat will monitor appropriate windows of opportunity for intervention.

- d) Supporting an EU framework on mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence. As with 7c, the group is interested to identifying appropriate opportunities to provide feedback. One member referenced the work of the Thomson Reuters Foundation in bringing businesses together on this topic.
- e) Raising climate-related concerns for fisheries at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26) in Glasgow, November 2021. The group share concerns on this theme but appropriate interventions from the seafood sector remain unclear. Public statements during such a large event should be in collaboration with other organisations – the group discussed NGOs which might already have advocacy plans in place. The Secretariat will aim to identify planned activities from the NGO sector with a view to identifying alignment with the SSC. The group also revisited a proposal to map wider environmental concerns within the SSC; work in this area has been progressed by Seafish and should not be duplicated.