

## Minutes: Sustainable Seafood Coalition Steering Group

22<sup>nd</sup> September, 11:00-12:30.

6 Participants (5 SG Members, 1 Secretariat).

### SUMMARY OF NEXT STEPS:

- Secretariat to share proposals for the addition of traceability components to the SSC Codes and Guidance with the SG. SG members to review, give feedback and sign-off. Secretariat to share SG recommendations to wider membership (Discussion 1.5).
- Secretariat to update SSC Risk Assessment Template to reflect best-practice in ghost gear risk assessment, based on Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) framework (Discussion 1.4).
- Secretariat to organise all-members' meeting on the role of the Labelling Code in light of developing consumer and regulator perceptions of 'sustainability' and 'responsibility'. To include reflections on the recent CMA Guidance, and introductions to holistic approaches to sustainability claims (Discussion 2.3).
- Secretariat to prepare and coordinate webinar series in line with SG feedback (Discussion 2).
- Secretariat to share an updated Terms of Reference with wider SSC membership and to invite objections or concerns. Updates to reflect widened geographical scope of membership, and simplified advocacy sign-on process for the SSC logo (Discussions 3.2 and 4.3).
- Secretariat to invite additional members to join the Steering Group (Discussion 5.1.1).

### 1. SECRETARIAT UPDATE AND REVIEW OF PROGRESS AGAINST THE SSC STRATEGIC PLAN

- 1.1** The Secretariat reminded the Steering Group (SG) of the SSC's four overarching aims, under which each of the planned activities have been categorised. They reviewed each of the planned activities from the [Strategic Plan](#) and reported against their progress.
- 1.2** As planned, the Strategic Plan was presented to members in Q2 2021, signed-off and published. It is now being used to guide SSC workstream priorities.
- 1.3** Regarding "*Aim 1: To encourage business commitments to the SSC Codes of Conduct.*" The Secretariat reported six new members since the start of 2021, bringing SSC membership to forty-six. 33% of growth came as a result of referrals from existing members, 50% from direct Secretariat outreach, and 17% from a returning 'lapsed' member. The Secretariat presented analysis of the SSC network, considering business sizes, sectors, and stages in supply chain. The membership structure remains fairly balanced across these metrics.
- 1.4** Regarding "*Aim 2: To continually review and update the SSC Codes of Conduct to reflect developments in sourcing and labelling practices.*" The Secretariat reminded the SG of the updates to the Codes, Guidance and SSC website since the last meeting. One update relates to expectations around ghost gear, and a member requested that the Secretariat reflects this expectation within the SSC risk assessment template. The SG discussed the planned activity of updating the Codes & Guidance documents to reflect the working principles of the Global Dialogue on Seafood Traceability (GDST), and agreed that such additions could be coordinated by the SG itself and a specific Traceability Working Group would not be required. The group agreed to review recommendations compiled by the Secretariat over email.
- 1.5** Regarding "*Aim 3: To support members to effectively implement their commitments to the SSC Codes of Conduct.*" As planned, the SSC has now formally and publicly endorsed the GDST Standard 1.0. The Secretariat also gave an update on the progress of the Feed Working Group (FWG), which has held four meetings and heard presentations from multiple stakeholders, include transparency & traceability initiatives, certification standard holders, feed manufacturers and NGOs & ratings organisations. The Secretariat explained that the FWG will sign-off and publish their specific Objectives & Activities document soon.
- 1.6** Regarding "*Aim 4: To influence changes in policy relevant to seafood sustainability.*" The Secretariat outlined progress on the advocacy activities that were set out in the Strategic Plan, namely the secondary legislation to the Fisheries Act and the BBNJ/High Seas Treaty statement. SG members agreed with the planned trajectory,

suggested that any positions drafted should be cognisant of policy developments since previous advocacy activities, and approved the Secretariat to work with partner organisations in preparing further activity.

## 2. IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT WEBINARS

- 2.1** The Secretariat described the feedback received from members during the strategic planning process, which included requests for educational webinars which could connect members with topic-specific experts. It was suggested that these webinars should focus on supporting members in the implementation of their commitments to the SSC Codes. The Secretariat presented a series of proposed sessions for members to review.
- 2.2** SG members agreed with the overall structure of the proposals. They suggested the webinars should be hosted roughly every three months. Where appropriate, they proposed a combined approach of presentations from experts followed by an optional extended workshop. The workshops would offer the opportunity for less confident members to be more involved, dive deeper into specific needs and enable networking between members which is more difficult with larger online meetings.
- 2.3** Members expressed a strong interest in the recent CMA Greenwashing Guidance, and suggested that this should be prioritised as an all-members' meeting rather than as an educational webinar, with the rationale that it might inspire updates to the Codes (rather than relating directly to implementation of the current Codes). Members suggested hearing from representatives from the CMA and from legal experts from ClientEarth to help understand implications of the new guidance for the SSC. One member referenced work being undertaken by researchers in the Livestock, Environment and People labelling (LEAP) group at Oxford University on holistic environmental claims as a related initiative, suggesting that it could be presented to members as part of this discussion.
- 2.4** Members highlighted the importance of including aquaculture-focused themes within the webinar series.
- 2.5** Members suggested prioritising those issues which directly assist members in the implementation of the Codes, but that supplementary 'off-topic' sessions (e.g. plastics & packaging, climate change mitigation, adaptation & advocacy) would still be helpful for information sharing.

## 3. GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE OF THE SSC

- 3.1** The Secretariat reminded SG members about previous discussions held within the SSC on this topic. In January 2021, SG members suggested that the Terms of Reference should be updated to remove the UK exclusivity of membership. This proposal was taken to the all-members' meeting in February 2021, where members agreed to postpone this decision until after the strategic planning process had completed, at which point the Steering Group would be able to identify whether international expansion would align with the SSC's overarching aims.
- 3.2** SG members reflected on the four overarching aims of the SSC, and on the activities outlined in the strategic plan, unanimously concluding that accepting non-UK members would support the SSC to achieve its aims. In particular, members noted the potential of an international membership to add strength to SSC advocacy positions, and to widen the knowledge-sharing network to the benefit of all members.
- 3.3** The Secretariat outlined the governance structure options available to the SSC as it adopts a wider geographical scope of members. SG members unanimously opted for an organic growth option, in which non-UK members are invited to join the SSC and the governance structure remains the same as present. In the short term, setting up a dedicated governance structure for non-UK markets was seen as an unnecessary investment which risks losing some of the benefits identified in 3.2. This decision will be regularly reviewed to assess the SSC's fitness for purpose and the satisfaction of UK and non-UK members. Dependent on scale and areas of growth, and compatibility of non-UK member priorities with those of existing UK members, a dedicated governance structure for specific markets could be developed in future. The SG agreed that wider members should be notified by email of this decision, and given the opportunity to raise objections.
- 3.4** Participants pointed out that many SSC members are already operating within multinational organisations, and that with mergers and acquisitions this will only continue. They observed multiple benefits of involving the non-UK components of their businesses within SSC dialogues and decisions.
- 3.5** A member pointed out the limitations of responsible feed guidance currently within the SSC documents, and that feed manufacturers should not be invited to join the SSC until such guidance has been developed by the FWG, to clarify the commitments expected of businesses from that sector.

## 4. BBNJ/HIGH SEAS TREATY ADVOCACY SIGN-OFF

- 4.1** The Secretariat presented the draft BBNJ position statement to the SG, and reminded the group that the SSC had hosted two webinars for members, held in collaboration with the Global Tuna Alliance (GTA), Pew Charitable Trusts and the Stockholm Resilience Centre. Based on feedback received during those webinars and expert input from colleagues at Pew & the Stockholm Resilience centre, the aforementioned position statement was developed.
- 4.2** The Steering Group unanimously agreed to add the SSC logo to the statement and for the document to be made public and used in relevant advocacy activities. In accordance with the Terms of Reference, wider members will be given the opportunity to raise objections before publication.
- 4.3** In light of growing membership and the likelihood of increased advocacy activity to fulfil Aim 4, the SG suggested amending the Terms of Reference. They proposed a simplification of the administrative process, by enabling the Steering Group to sign-off on advocacy activities which use the SSC logo. It was agreed that any activity carrying individual business logos should continue to require explicit permission from those businesses. Participants noted that opportunities should be given for all members to feed into the drafting process, and that introductory webinars are an effective mechanism for doing this without generating unmanageable administrative burdens.

## **5. AOB**

- 5.1** The Secretariat raised the topic of SG membership, and invited participants to discuss the appointing process for SG members.
  - 5.1.1** The Steering Group suggested inviting members to volunteer themselves to fill positions on the SG, up to the limits set out in the SG Terms of Reference.
  - 5.1.2** Members pointed out the importance of a diverse and representative SG, which is able to reflect the wide range of perspectives within the SSC membership. At present, there is a disproportionate number of value-added processors. If there is a surplus of volunteers for available positions, members should be selected in a manner to maintain balance of size, sector and stage in supply chain.
  - 5.1.3** It was suggested that, with international expansion, the SG should aim to invite at least one non-UK member to join the SG.