SSC aquaculture focus group meeting minutes

Attendees: 10 including SSC members, non-member advisors and Client Earth staff

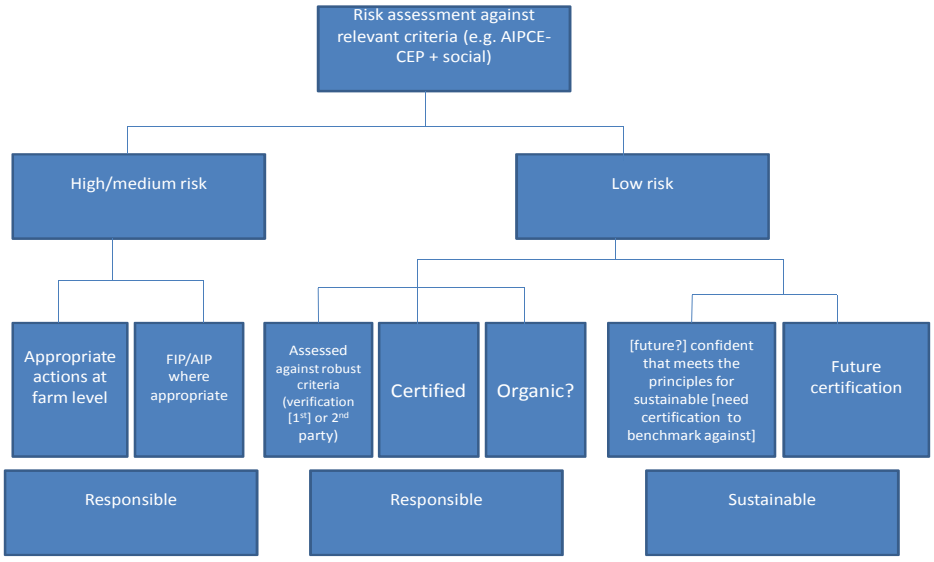
Chair and Secretariat: ClientEarth

Date: 27th June 2012

Summary of conclusions and actions

Conclusions

- Attendees agreed that *sustainable* aquaculture can exist, and may already do so in some very exceptional cases (e.g. rope grown mussel, integrated trophic, rice field aquaculture?) and should be covered in the code.
- Attendees agreed that *responsible* aquaculture can exist and should be covered in the code.
- The aquaculture section should consider social aspects
- Diagram for aquaculture self-declared claims (see below, item 7), to be discussed at the next labelling working group.



Action points

- ClientEarth to incorporate changes into labelling code for working group on July 3rd.
- To be discussed:
  - Can the alternative route to sustainability exist now in some cases (e.g. integrated multi-trophic aquaculture, rope grown mussels) or is this just an option for the future?
  - Where does organic fit in?
  - What are the relevant social criteria, i.e. what mechanism to be used as AIPCE-CEP principles do not cover social consideration? Can we incorporate some consideration of social factors into wild-capture to mirror aquaculture?

Item 1 – Purpose of today

Brief description on the purpose of the day's meeting:

Do we think sustainable aquaculture can ever exist?

→ If so, what does it look like?

→ If not what about responsible aquaculture/best practices?

Do we think responsible aquaculture can ever exist?

→ If so, what does it look like?

→ If not what about best practices in aquaculture? What do they look like?

How are sustainable/responsible/best practice aquaculture demonstrated?

Item 2 – Mirroring changes to tone and format of the wild-capture section of the code

Brief overview on mirroring changes to tone and format of the wild-capture section of code

- Redraft of labeling code to make less legalistic. Explanation of responsible vs. sustainable in relation to wild-capture.
- Voluntary code, not a standard
- Less 'legal' wording , e.g. ' no 'shall' instead require' and 'commitments',
- Less confusing format, e.g. fewer bullets and numbers
- Separate guidance will include detailed 'suggestions'

Agenda Item 3 – Presentation

Prior to discussions on whether sustainable and responsible aquaculture can ever exist, a non-member advisor gave a presentation on what sustainable aquaculture is/could look like.

Key points:

- We should attempt to define what the consumer considers to be meant by sustainable. There is currently no accepted definition of *sustainable aquaculture*. There are production standards, but they don't give an overall definition of what sustainable aquaculture (SA) is. Trying to have an umbrella term for SA is very challenging. Drew a parallel between sustainable agriculture and sustainable aquaculture.

- Sustainable development, as defined in the Brundtland Report is relevant but it is not the same as sustainable aquaculture. The Brundtland definition of sustainable development: "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"*.

- Breakdown of the Brundtland definition for the purposes of defining sustainability in the context of aquaculture: "Satisfies needs of the present"… "without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

- Key word = *compromising*. How could future production be compromised? 1. Depletion of resources. 2. Degradation of the environment 3. Unrealistic need.

- *Depletion*: what would be depleted? Feed resources, freshwater, land-space

- *Degradation* of the environment: environment required to support production, environment to assimilate waste/discharge, habitats/biodiversity.

- What is sustainable now?
    - Example: Mussel farming. Economically viable, non-reliance on inputs/freshwater, minimal degradation, no depletion of resources.

- What could be sustainable? Possible for all aquaculture to be sustainable. How? Responsible use of sustainable resources, no degradation of environment, production of healthy, good quality, large employer, profitable. Not talking about an environmental utopia where the environment is not affected, but where degradation is managed and understood.

- Who defines what 'sustainable' means? Example:
    - The FAO code of conduct. Their definition is very similar to the Brundtland definition.

- The ASC have spent a great deal of time into defining sustainablility. At this stage, the ASC feel they are working towards sustainability but have not achieved it yet.

- Discussion on the differences between responsibility and sustainability: Responsibility: produced to a credible third party standard, maintaining status quo and responsible practice. Sustainable: who defines? 3 elements or not? FAO principles, in future – ASC?

Conclusion: define the audience of who you are trying to speak to. Define purpose of message and decide on appropriate action.

Agenda Item 4 – Can aquaculture ever be sustainable?

Decisions:

All agreed that 'sustainability' is possible and that it should be covered in the code.

Considerations:

- what the coalition wants to achieve in its definition of sustainability.
- Do we want to include all 3 pillars, environmental, social and economic?
- Some concern that excluding social aspects pillar from this debate could be an issue. Social factors are a greater issue/more work being done on them in aquaculture than in wild-capture.
- The issue of confusing the customer with too much terminology, ie. ASC responsible = SSC sustainable?

Item 5 – Can aquaculture ever be responsible?

Decisions:
All agreed that aquaculture can be 'responsible'.

Considerations:

- A non-member advisor pointed out that 'Responsible' should not be a *lower tier* than sustainable, rather a different claim. 'Responsible' is about behaviour, 'sustainable' is a measure. A 'gap analysis' approach was considered to determine what 'responsible' is, what sustainable might look like and to determine the missing components between the two. What is missing that is preventing us from using the term sustainable?

Item 6 - What does sustainable and responsible aquaculture look like?

Decisions:

- A brainstorming session was held to create a list of potential criteria for 'responsible' and 'sustainable'.
- All agreed on the following issues to be critical to sustainable aquaculture, responsible aquaculture or both.

Feed

Responsible only:

- colorants,

Sustainable only:

- Feeder Fish Dependency Ratio (FFDR)
- Certifications such as MSC

Responsible and sustainable:

- Marine protein
- marine oils
- vegetable/non-marine(ie FW algae, brewers yeast…)/micronutrients/mammalian & avian feedstock
- GM
- sustainability
- availability
- certification (of all of the above)
- the FAO tech guidelines for responsible fisheries supplement 5 (talks of trash fish in SE asia – fish feed vs. human feed)
- waste/unused feed/feeding systems
- by-products/discards,
- Food Conversion Ratio
- pro-biotics
- anti-biotics
- contaminants

- finished fish nutritional profile
- organic

Farming (physical process)

Responsible and sustainable:

- waste
- escapes
- stocking densities
- pollution
- anti-foulants
- predator interaction
- habitat/species impacts
- benthic impacts
- impacts on wild stocks
- disease, parasites
- parasite control/cleaner fish
- welfare (including transport & slaughter)
- site carrying capacity
- environmental impact assessment
- re-circulation

Water/water bodies

Responsible and sustainable:

- Freshwater
- salinization
- pollution, area management
- discharge contents
- input water quality
- water treatment-input/output/recirculation
- freshwater/competing uses

Social

Responsible and sustainable:

- worker welfare including health and safety, worker conditions,

Social considerations/discussion:

- Reminder the wild capture fisheries code did not address social aspects.
- Wild-capture supply chains *are very* wide and varied, making audits very difficult. Aquaculture industry is potentially better suited to address social issues.

Consensus: Incorporate social considerations.

Environmental

Sustainable only:

- polyculture,

Responsible and sustainable:

- Environmental impact assessments
- impacts on habitats and species
- ecosystem impacts
- effect on seabed
- legislation compliance
- source of brood-stock

Item 8 – How are 'sustainable' and 'responsible' demonstrated?

Discussion

- a growing number of aquaculture farms are 3rd party certified.
- AIPCE needs to be a part of the process (either adopt the AIPCE principles or use them as a basis for our own principles).
- A new diagram drafted by attendees is in the summary section. There remain some issues to discuss:
    - Can the alternative route to sustainable exist now in some cases (e.g. integrated multi-trophic aquaculture, rope grown mussels) or is this just an option for the future?
    - Where does organic fit in?
    - What are the relevant social criteria, i.e. what mechanism to be used as AIPCE-CEP principles do not cover social consideration? Can we incorporate some consideration of social factors into wild-capture to mirror aquaculture?

Item 9 – Next steps

- ClientEarth to incorporate changes into the code
- Changes to be discussed at the labelling working group on July 3rd.