

Minutes: Sustainable Seafood Coalition Steering Group Call

9th September 2019, 14.00-15.30. 11 participants including secretariat.

1) Structural changes to the SSC / SWOT analysis

Sentiments:

- We should maintain the current structure, as outlined in the 'Status Quo' analysis. By establishing a Steering Group, the SSC has already evolved. The SSC structure and provision of secretariat services from ClientEarth continue to provide value. Changes to this would be disruptive.
- Structural change is not the answer to providing maximal value of membership, but there is interest in developing new ways of working. This could be through more active working groups or support systems being put in place to help new members / colleagues. Broad recognition that an online discussion forum could serve this need.

Next steps

- Secretariat to investigate options for an online discussion forum for SSC members, and present proposals to members during November meeting. The group could share information and signpost towards useful organisations in a more regular, less formal way. This should include the development of an FAQs document and steps to ensure competition law compliance within the forum.

2) Public disclosures

Sentiments:

- The Guidance already provides substantive advice about public disclosures. These can be built upon to clarify best-practice advice, but there is no need to develop a separate document. The Codes of Conduct are voluntary commitments – the coalition should avoid being too prescriptive about how they are implemented.
- Whilst the SSC should be wary of formally recognising any specific commercial platforms or programmes in public-facing documents, some support in navigating the range of initiatives available to businesses would be helpful. The online discussion forum mentioned above would be a suitable platform for signposting members towards such organisations, instead of developing more complex documents.
- Any development of disclosure best practice advice should consider both wild and farmed sources.

Next steps

- Secretariat to update ODP on Steering Group decisions, as offered during March engagement.
- Initiate online forum discussion on public disclosures, and consider updates to Guidance in light of this.

3) Objections mechanism

Sentiments:

- Given the growth of the SSC, and to protect its credibility, a formalised objections process is necessary. It should not be overcomplicated / burdensome / costly for the objector, or for those investigating the objection. Work to develop this process should not be disproportionate to the limited number of relevant enquiries received by the secretariat (there has only been one objection in the history of the SSC which would have triggered this process if it had been in place).
- Objectors should first engage with the member in question – evidence of this should be provided if bringing an objection to the secretariat.

Next steps

- Secretariat to build flowchart for draft objection review process, and to model an example scenario through this process. Circulate for consideration by SSC SG.
- Secretariat to develop draft objections form to suggest the categories of information required to initiate objections process. Build on ideas from downloadable MSC procedure for this.
- Following the above, a working group may need to be set up for final development.

4) Advocacy & SSC Commitments

Sentiments:

- Collective advocacy is a valid and often necessary improvement mechanism, but does not negate the responsibility of members to continue engaging with improvements in own specific supply chain.
- The SSC should develop advice on appropriate advocacy measures to justify responsible sourcing – this should outline the minimum requirements of engagement and also best practice. Advocacy must meet the

same standards as 'traditional' improvement methods by being time-bound, results-based and transparent. Structuring this within a FIP framework can be helpful but is not always necessary.

- The SSC is the optimum vehicle for some specific advocacy scenarios. Other platforms exist, but none which bring together retail, foodservice, processors and suppliers.
- Amendments to the Terms of Reference are necessary to enable the secretariat to support advocacy efforts. Explicit sign-off from all members will not be necessary for the SSC to publicly support or coordinate advocacy efforts. The Steering Group should be given the opportunity to review advocacy positions. All members should then be given the opportunity to opt-in. Their logos will not be attributed to a position unless they explicitly request this.

Next steps

- Secretariat to draft amendment to Terms of Reference in line with the above sentiment and give wider membership an opportunity to object.
- Specifically on NEA Mackerel, secretariat to invite SSC members to sign up to joint statement.
- Clarification on the requirements of advocacy where it is used to meet sourcing Code is still needed. Item for next SSC SG discussion, in light of progress made on the above steps.