

# Sustainable Seafood Coalition (SSC) Members' meeting minutes

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**Date:** 14 July, 2015

**Location:** The Counting House, 50 Cornhill, London EC3V 3PD

**Number of attendees:** 13 total (including 3 ClientEarth staff acting as facilitator, secretariat and minute taker)

## Summary of agreed points

### Item 1: Future priorities for the SSC

- Expand membership to include all other interested players in the seafood supply chain in the UK.
- The SSC will establish working groups that address issues that will help implement the sourcing code. The first of these will be a working group on Fishery Improvement Projects.
- An EU wide ecolabel for fish and aquaculture products is not supported by this group. However, if it goes ahead, the SSC would like to become involved its development to help ensure it is robust.
- Promote the SSC codes (or relevant aspects of them) as a collective voice, in the EU and globally.
- Establish a structure to the SSC, such as a steering group and/or working groups on particular issues, once membership has expanded more.
- Relevant ClientEarth updates will be shared with SSC members by email and/or in person at meetings, where appropriate.

### Item 2: Review of SSC aims

- The aims are updated as summarised in Item 2.

### Item 3: Potential SSC membership fees

- Turnover is an appropriate measure for establishing which membership band a business fits in to as it is transparent and publicly available.
- The top two membership band fees as suggested by the secretariat are appropriate (turnover greater than £1billion = £3,000 per annum; turnover of £100m - £1bn = £2,000). There were no members present that fitted into the bottom two proposed bands, so the secretariat will consult with relevant

members and amend as appropriate (but fees will only potentially be lower; they will not be higher).

- If any current members are not able or willing to pay, their membership will cease.
- Fees will be on an annual basis from 2016, with pro rata invoices sent to cover the period from 1 October 2015. This means that applications for external funding will be a request for co-funding.

#### **Item 4: Any other business**

- Members agreed the SeaWeb Seafood Summit could be a good opportunity to promote work of the SSC to a wide audience, and some would be interested in sitting on a panel.

#### **Purpose of the members' meeting**

To discuss and agree the future priorities of the SSC; to update the group on current funding applications; and to finalise discussions on potential membership fees.

## **Item 1: Future priorities for the SSC**

Prior to the meeting, an online survey was sent to members asking for them to rank a selection of future priorities for the SSC, as proposed by the secretariat. Weighted outcomes of the 8 member responses from the online survey were as follows: traceability; FIPs/AIPs; IUU fishing; data collection; and membership expansion. Members were also invited to offer their own suggestions during the survey for discussion at the meeting.

#### **Discussion and comments**

- As members discussed the issues proposed in the online survey, there was general consensus they fall under two main themes: the first four (traceability, improvement projects, IUU and data collection) address how to more effectively implement the Sourcing Code; and the group considered the fifth, membership expansion, as a route to engage the rest of the supply chain.
- Regarding membership, many of the group felt this was a priority and that it should include expanding within the sectors already established, as well as to leading figures (such as celebrity chefs with their own restaurants. The secretariat invited current members to share their contacts. A member suggested the SSC should consider targeting wider European members in the future as well.
- The secretariat pointed out the clear link between traceability and IUU, and proposed they be considered together. One member in absentia raised the challenge of tracking seafood products in each stage through the supply chain and

suggested that developing a standardised template for traceability (and therefore also IUU) would be useful. For example, if the fish passes through several different countries during fishing, processing, packing and sale, the documents record various units of measurement and are written in the language of that country, making it potentially difficult to understand.

- Additionally, catch certificates can be more easily tampered with in some countries, adding to the risk of IUU. Members discussed how the onus is on the supply chain to carry out due diligence, whereas it should be government closing legislation loop holes. Regarding the issue of catch certificate fraud, the secretariat referred to work developing a tool for Flag State audits as a best-practice approach to implement the FAO's voluntary codes.
- The group discussed potential links between data collection, FIPs and IUU with regard to species listed on the IUCN red list. For example, wild Atlantic halibut is classified as vulnerable by the IUCN, yet the population status of this and many other species is out-of-date, having been last assessed in 1996. The group discussed whether some collaboration from the supply chain with scientists, fishers and other relevant stakeholders could provide a solution to this problem. Members were keen to establish a FIP working group that would help develop an action plan to contribute to improvement projects as agreed in the Sourcing Code. Some businesses prefer to engage in improvement projects exclusively or with a limited number of partners, but on the other hand it can be difficult to establish who else might be interested in a particular fishery without disclosing your sources. One participant suggested that the secretariat could coordinate engagement amongst members and 'match' partners that have both expressed an interest in a particular fishery or species. Using the Brown crab FIP as an example, there is a lack of capacity within the industry that could be resolved through specific actions in the supply chain. Working collaboratively could help generate more traction to make necessary changes.
- The group discussed whether the environmental scope of the codes was too limiting, and if social assessment in the supply chain should be considered as an 'add-on' to the Sourcing Code. Whilst all members agreed that social requirements are integral to a sustainable future, many felt that there were other groups they are involved with that are addressing these issues, such as Seafish's Ethics Group. One member felt the SSC could lose credibility if it did not address this, but another member noted that there is no capacity to work on it at the moment.
- The group discussed the European Commission's feasibility study for a single EU wide ecolabel for fishery and aquaculture products. This proposal was not supported by any members. If the development of an ecolabel goes ahead, the SSC should be involved in the process to ensure it is as robust as possible.
- Members were keen to address structural issues of the SSC as it expands in membership, and suggested a core group of active members. One member suggested establishing various working groups for different businesses (e.g. retailer, foodservice, FIPs) headed by experts to facilitate engagement. Another member highlighted the need to measure expectations, as members working on different aims.

- Members wanted to receive more information on fisheries policy and law from the secretariat in the future.

#### Agreed:

- Expand membership to include all other interested players in the seafood supply chain in the UK.
- The SSC will establish working groups that address issues that will help implement the sourcing code. The first of these will be a working group on Fishery Improvement Projects.
- An EU wide ecolabel for fish and aquaculture products is not supported by this group. However, if it goes ahead, the SSC would like to become involved its development to help ensure it is robust.
- Promote the SSC codes (or relevant aspects of them) as a collective voice, in the EU and globally.
- Establish a structure to the SSC, such as a steering group and/or working groups on particular issues, once membership has expanded more.
- Relevant ClientEarth updates will be shared with SSC members by email and/or in person at meetings, where appropriate.

#### Actions:

- The secretariat will invite members to participate in the first FIP working group in September or October this year.

## Item 2: Review of SSC aims

Members were asked to review the SSC aims to ensure they are current and correct. The original wording is written below with the discussion points.

#### Aims of the SSC with discussion and comments

1. To promote sustainable fish and seafood consumption
  - Should this include a reference to a 'wide range of' fish and seafood, and should we include the term 'responsibly sourced'.
2. To support the diversification of responsibly sourced seafood in the UK market.
  - Some members queried whether this is an achievable aim. Many felt it was, and examples to support this were: 'catch of the week' being used as a promotional instrument in many businesses. Also foodservice businesses often provide the less popular species as well as the 'big five' because consumers are more likely to try

something new in a restaurant rather than at home. The language is perhaps too niche and 'wide range' would be suitable.

3. To develop, adopt and adhere to base criteria for responsible seafood sourcing, policies and decision trees.

- This can be updated to say members commit to the SSC voluntary code of conduct on environmentally responsible fish and seafood sourcing.

4. To support the sustainable use of unwanted discarded species' trimmings and offal in the manufacture of fishmeal.

- A member questioned whether the CFP deals with this under the landing obligation. Another felt this isn't in direct control of the SSC and there is no current work stream on this. Remove this aim.

5. To use harmonised seafood labelling based on agreed criteria in order to provide consumers with accurate information on sustainability.

- This can be updated to say members commit to the SSC voluntary code of conduct on environmental claims.

6. To require fishers, where possible, to collect catch and discard information for the fish and shellfish sourced by Coalition members and pass this information to government authorities for use in scientific assessments.

- Regarding data collection, members observed that scientists often cannot recognise data collected by fishers for use in their analyses (due to lack of consistency and/or reliability). This makes it a challenge for the SSC to work collaboratively without input from relevant bodies, such as Cefas. Remove this aim.

7. To adhere to new voluntary industry codes of conduct agreed by the Coalition until sufficient management measures and labelling rules are in place.

- This is no longer necessary if Aim 5 is amended as above. Remove this aim.

8. To influence changes in policy relevant to seafood sustainability at UK, EU and international level, where deemed appropriate by members.

- The SSC is a strong group to make collective statements and suggestions to influence relevant policy, where possible. An example of this is the proposed EU wide ecolabel for fish and aquaculture products.

9. To build national and global alliances.

- This is an important role for key players in the seafood industry and sharing the SSC as a best practice case study should be taken forward when opportunities arise.

10. To inform the public debate on seafood.

- This is an important role for key players in the seafood industry.

#### **The agreed updated aims:**

1. To promote responsible and sustainable fish and seafood consumption
2. To support a wide range of responsibly sourced seafood in the UK market.
3. To commit to the SSC voluntary code of conduct on environmentally responsible fish and seafood sourcing.
4. To commit to the SSC voluntary code of conduct on environmental claims.
5. To influence changes in policy relevant to seafood sustainability at UK, EU and international level, where deemed appropriate by members.
6. To build national and global alliances.
7. To inform the public debate on seafood.

#### **Actions:**

- The secretariat will amend the aims as agreed and update the Terms of Reference and SSC website.

### **Item 3: Potential SSC membership fees**

The group has discussed membership fees as a sustainable solution to the running of the SSC. Prior to the meeting, members were asked to consider potential fees proposed by the secretariat.

#### **Discussion and comments**

- One member suggested that rather than fixed bands we could consider an approach that calculates a percentage of turnover up to a limited top fee. However, this would mean the fees would likely change slightly each year and would require more administrative time.
- Fees must not be a disincentive to potential new members; fees must be sufficient to help cover maintenance costs of SSC.
- The secretariat sought members' opinions on steps to take in the event a member is unable to pay any agreed fees. The group unanimously felt that there should not be any exceptions for business members to avoid paying fees.

- Several members said that whilst the fee should be paid annually, the invoice should cover three years so that it would be secured in their budgets (and future fees not payable if the business withdraws membership).

#### Agreed:

- Turnover is an appropriate measure for establishing which membership band a business fits in to as it is transparent and publicly available.
- The top two membership band fees as suggested by the secretariat are appropriate (turnover greater than £1billion = £3,000 per annum; turnover of £100m - £1bn = £2,000). There were no members present that fitted into the bottom two proposed bands, so the secretariat will consult with relevant members and amend as appropriate (but fees will only potentially be lower; they will not be higher).
- If any current members are not able or willing to pay, their membership will cease.
- Fees will be on an annual basis from 2016, with pro rata invoices sent to cover the period from 1 October 2015. This means that applications for external funding will be a request for co-funding.

#### Actions:

- The secretariat will discuss membership fees with members that have a turnover of less than £100m and amend the proposed amounts as necessary.
- The secretariat will provide members with relevant details to their accounts departments and send invoices.

## Item 4: Any Other Business

Members were given the opportunity to raise any other business relevant to the SSC.

#### Discussion and comments

- The secretariat asked whether any members would like to participate in the upcoming SeaWeb Seafood Summit in Malta (1-3 February, 2016). The secretariat will submit an application for a panel presentation where, if successful, up to four members can present changes or improvements they have made to improve the sustainability of fisheries or farms in their portfolio.
- Another member questioned whether the SSC should engage with the Innovation Forum conference, as several of the group have been given different information.
- One member has been in discussion with the BBC on their upcoming programme 'Oceans', which is due to air in 2017, and will focus on the interaction of humans with the ocean, including as a source of food. They are interested in speaking to the secretariat about the Sustainable Seafood Coalition.

- Members raised concerns over the continued non-attendance and lack of input from some other members.
- The secretariat noted that the updated Guidance is online and requested members to submit final comments and feedback on the document before September. In addition, the secretariat will be sending a short online survey to establish how satisfied members are with the guidance.

#### Agreed:

- Members agreed the SeaWeb Seafood Summit could be a good opportunity to promote work of the SSC to a wide audience, and some would be interested in sitting on a panel.

#### Actions:

- Members to submit any additional feedback on the Guidance before September.
- Secretariat to draw up a list of potential new contacts to be circulated to current members. Members to contribute to the list and be as specific as possible (name, email, phone).
- Members interested in attending the SeaWeb Seafood Summit should contact the secretariat, who will be submitting an application (closing date for that is 3 August).
- Secretariat to send an online survey to determine members' satisfaction with the guidance. This will be sent in early August with approximately one month to complete it.
- Secretariat will contact the relevant person at the BBC in relation to their Oceans programme to offer assistance.