

SSC Members' Meeting minutes

10 February 2021

Zoom Meeting, 10-12.30. Number of attendees: 28.

Summary of agreed points

- Secretariat to update Codes in line with agreed amendments tabled below (item 1).
- Steering Group to revisit option for non-UK membership expansion pilot following strategy development (1).
- Steering Group to assess feedback received from members, liaise with external organisations and draft a strategic plan to share with members in April (2).
- Secretariat to publicly endorse the GDST 1.0 standard and add the GDST as an example of best practice in the SSC Guidance document (3).
- Members to volunteer for a Traceability Working Group, which will update the traceability components of the Codes and Guidance to reflect recent developments (3).
- Secretariat to update Risk Assessment template in light of developments from the GDST (on traceability data elements) and the SEA Alliance (on social responsibility risk assessment criteria) (3, 4).
- Members encouraged to contact the SEA Alliance secretariat to explore option of becoming an 'engaged organisation' (4).
- Secretariat to continue communication with SEA Alliance with a view to incorporating their outputs into the Codes when available (4).

Purpose of the meeting

To update members on SSC growth, finances and the work of the SSC Steering Group and SSC Feed Working Group; to share perspectives on the SSC's strategic priorities; to hear from the Global Dialogue on Seafood Traceability and consider updates to the SSC's traceability commitments; to hear from the Seafood Ethics Action Alliance and consider updates to the SSC's social responsibility commitments.

1) Secretariat update:

- The secretariat updated members on membership KPIs. The SSC has ten new members since the previous meeting. Membership retention was 95%, with two Band 5 foodservice businesses leaving the SSC during the first lockdown, citing

financial priorities. There are now forty-two SSC members. Twenty-five members are primarily in retail supply chains and seventeen are in foodservice. Twenty-three members sell B2B whilst nineteen sell direct to consumers.

- The secretariat provided an update on the SSC's finances, presenting the 2020 Budget Vs Actuals and a 2021 forecast.
- The secretariat presented a summary of recent progress made by the Feed Working Group and the Steering Group. All minutes for both groups are [publicly available for download](#).
- The secretariat presented proposed changes to the Codes, which members agreed to apply. These updates are as follows:

Current text	Location	Agreed amendment
<i>Member's risk assessments should consider whether appropriate measures are in place to:... If ghost gear is known to be an issue in the fishery, then mitigation measures are in place.</i>	Guidance, Section 2.1.1.d	Member's risk assessments should consider whether appropriate measures are in place to:... mitigate against ghost gear issues.
<i>Hereafter, 'fish' refers to any wild captured or farmed fish, crustacean, mollusc or other aquatic invertebrate...</i> This is followed by inconsistent use of 'fish', 'seafood' and 'fish and seafood' throughout the document	Guidance, p.5 and throughout Codes, Guidance and website	Use 'seafood' consistently throughout SSC communications.

- The secretariat asked members if they agree with the Steering Group proposal to invite a limited number of non-UK businesses to join the SSC as part of a membership expansion pilot. Some members supported this proposal as a means of extending the influence of the Codes and strengthening international advocacy positions. Others cautioned against initiating a pilot without a clear vision for what the end goal of international growth would be. Additional governance structures might be required to manage growth in number of members, in competing priorities from other markets and to ensure that UK members remain able to engage meaningfully with the SSC.

2) Strategic Priorities

In this sharing session, members were invited to: reflect on the purpose of the SSC; explain their motivations for involvement; share perceptions of the unique role(s) of the SSC in the wider sustainable seafood movement, and consider how the SSC should engage with other initiatives. These reflections will inform the Steering Group's strategic planning process.

- Members agreed on the importance of establishing an overarching strategic vision, to ensure consistency and fairness in how SSC workstreams are decided upon. With recent growth and a proactively engaged membership, members feel that now is a good time to revisit the SSC's strategic direction.
- The Codes of Conduct were recognised as a fundamentally important component of the SSC. Several members explained that the Codes are central to their sustainable seafood policies, that they routinely refer to the SSC as part of their work and that it continues to have an essential role in the sustainable seafood movement. External organisations also refer to the SSC because of the strength of the Codes.
- To maintain Code value and relevance, a member emphasised the legitimacy of 'keeping pace' with external developments, tools and practices. It was stressed that where other organisations are better-placed to lead these developments, they should be incorporated into the Codes to raise standards and signpost SSC members toward relevant organisations and available support in meeting their commitments.
- Members value the SSC's role in encouraging a level playing field for sourcing and labelling practices, and improving the credibility of environmental claims. Longstanding and newer members alike explained that their primary motivation for SSC membership is clarity and credibility of environmental claims, including having these assessed by a third-party.
- It was stressed that the SSC should not duplicate the work of other organisations. Members referenced Seafish, North Atlantic Pelagic Advocacy Group (NAPA), Global Tuna Alliance (GTA), Food Network for Ethical Trade (FNET) and the Seafood Ethics Action Alliance (SEA Alliance).
- It was recognised that the diversity of members (in size, sector, resource, influence and sustainability experience) within the SSC can make it challenging to identify a common vision. The growth of membership is desirable but adds complexity. Another member recognised that newer members may need additional support in order to align with the Codes, but that longstanding members which contribute to this support into the SSC (in time, money and expertise) benefit from improved standards across the industry.
- The diversity in SSC membership was seen as a strength by some members, who suggested that no other organisation brings together such a broad coalition of businesses able to engage in advocacy (e.g. Seafish is constitutionally unable to advocate). The SSC plays an important role in coordinating a unified industry voice which can encourage positive changes from other stakeholders.
- A member pointed out that growing membership always has been and always will be an aim for the SSC, in order to extend the influence of the Codes and continually 'raise the bar' for the industry.
- Members agreed that clear KPIs for the SSC would be valuable, whilst recognising that these may not follow the format of other types of pre-competitive platform which are more external goal-oriented. Suggestions for KPIs which align with the core goals of the SSC were a) membership growth and b) consistency in Code

implementation (as measured by the Implementation Report). Engaging with market data to understand gaps in membership expansion was recommended.

3) The SSC & Traceability

Members were invited to consider the need for updates to the traceability components of the SSC [Codes](#) (pp. 6-7) and [Guidance](#) (p. 9). A representative from the Global Dialogue on Seafood Traceability (GDST) presented to members.

- The GDST representative explained the key principles of their initiative. The GDST standards define: what Key Data Elements (KDEs) need to be collected and transferred; who in the supply chain is responsible for that data capture, and how this data can be standardized and shared.
- Some members explained that their businesses intend to implement the GDST Standards themselves. Some suggested that as a starting point, members could be encouraged to gather a limited range of KDEs. The Secretariat will explore incorporating the KDEs into the SSC Risk Assessment template to support these steps.
- Members agreed that the SSC should collectively endorse the GDST Standard 1.0, to indicate general support for the initiative and to encourage wider adoption by individual businesses.
- Members agreed that the GDST should be referenced as an example of best-practice on page 9 of the SSC Guidance document.
- Members agreed that a Traceability Working Group should be established to update the Codes and Guidance. The group will incorporate the principles of the GDST into the SSC's traceability commitments, and will seek GDST input into this process. The group should learn from the process of the traceability discussions currently underway within the GTA.

4) The SSC & Social Responsibility

Members were invited to reflect on the role of social responsibility & ethical due diligence within their sustainability commitments. Social responsibility was last discussed by the SSC in January 2018, when it was recognised that the Seafood Ethics Action Alliance (SEA Alliance) was best-placed to make progress on developing industry tools, standards and guidance. Incorporating these developments in to the SSC Codes, as they become available, was supported. During this session, a representative from the SEA Alliance updated members on progress made so far.

- The SEA Alliance representative explained the group's origins. Secretariat services are provided by Seafish and the alliance has twenty-six 'engaged organisations'.
- Five SEA Alliance workstreams were outlined: information gathering and risk assessment (including the development of a shared risk tool); enhanced due

diligence (including improving the accessibility of PAS1550); improving conditions for workers; advocacy; and monitoring progress and impact.

- The SEA Alliance is applying for external funding, which will increase capacity for the above workstreams. SSC members were encouraged to contact the SEA Alliance secretariat and join the list of 'engaged organisations'.
- Members explored options for alignment with the SEA Alliance, and emphasised the importance of avoiding duplication. Members recommended supporting the advocacy work of the SEA Alliance, sharing resources between the organisations and ensuring the Codes were kept up to date with relevant outputs from the SEA Alliance as and when they become available.

AOB

- Members were reminded to monitor updates shared on the SSC Podio workspace. Members without access to Podio should contact the Secretariat.
- The High Commission of the Republic of Maldives have invited SSC Members to take part in a Maldives Information Visit. The proposal is for businesses to experience pole-and-line tuna fishing and to meet with representatives of the Maldivian government and the Maldives Seafood Processors and Exporters Association (MSPEA). The SSC Secretariat will not be directly involved in this initiative; members expressing an interest will be connected with the High Commission.