

Sustainable Seafood Coalition (SSC) Members' meeting minutes

Date / location: 24 November, 2015 at the Counting House, 50 Cornhill, London EC3V 3PD

Number of attendees: 10 total (including 2 ClientEarth staff as facilitator and secretariat)

Purpose of the members' meeting:

At the last SSC meeting, on 14 July, members identified future priorities for the SSC. We agreed to initially focus on fishery and aquaculture improvement projects, in particular focusing on waters around the UK. The meeting today was to develop what exactly we want to achieve and how we can do so.

Summary of agreed points

Item 1: Exploring ideas

- The SSC has five objectives in relation to improvement projects:
 1. Act as a vehicle to collaborate and share information.
 2. Engage with catching sector to: (a) demonstrate demand and provide support with solutions; (b) ensure industry helps with scientific data collection.
 3. Improved access to funding to help improvements.
 4. To clarify what sources of information exist and how to improve or provide access to them; and seek clarity on what data is required by scientists for correct and up-to-date assessments.
 5. Identify and work together on improvement projects.
- The SSC will initially focus on UK fisheries and not aquaculture, although feed fisheries may be sources that would benefit from improvement projects. In relation to information gathering and sharing, this will be on a global scale (where relevant), not only UK related.
- The next meeting will allow members to look at the table gathered and prioritise which species/ fisheries / gear types to focus on. External stakeholders will be invited to be part of the next meeting in February to help share information.

Item 2: Species-specific information gathering

- The SSC will need to engage with data providers and with industry to help identify new potential improvement projects.

Item 1: Exploring ideas

The secretariat asked what our objective in relation to fishery and aquaculture improvement projects should be. We gathered ideas and recorded them on a flip chart.

List from flip chart (grouped here in themes for clarity)

- *Objective 1: Act as a vehicle to collaborate and share information*
Drive change; work together; take a British focus; show unity from the group and apply pressure (as a group); have a clear structure; enable access and inclusiveness; fishery improvements (FIP) do not necessarily have to lead to MSC certification; should aquaculture improvement (AIP) lead to certification?; prioritise interventions and don't spread work thinly; engagement needs to be fair and equitable; become a resource and information hub - gather basic information to be able to inform and direct to relevant projects and avoid duplication. E.g. from Seafish, localised industry initiatives, Cefas, FishSource, ICES, Project Inshore/UK etc.
- *Objective 2: Engage with catching sector to: (a) demonstrate demand and provide support with solutions; (b) ensure and incentivise industry to help with scientific data collection*
Engage with catching sector; show catching sector and other stakeholders there is demand/requirement for improvement; focus on problematic (med/high risk) materials e.g. *Nephrops* where no progress has been seen; be sensitive to terminology: 'FIP' can irritate some fishing communities due to connotations with MSC certification and the challenge of MSC certification for small scale fisheries.
- *Objective 3: Work together to access funding for improvement projects*
Seek group access to funding; share and reduce the burden; find donors; philanthropic organisations; consider EMFF funding.
- *Objective 4: To clarify what sources of information exist and how to improve or provide access to them; and seek clarity on what data is required by scientists for correct and up-to-date assessments*
Address data deficient stocks: Cefas does not focus on non-commercial species; organisations like SFP cannot always prioritise stocks requested by supply chain; push to improve data sources that are out of date or not adequately maintained.
- *Objective 5: Identify and work together on improvement projects*
Make a list of species/gears/fisheries that need improvement (see Item 2).

Discussion and comments

- The list on the flip chart was discussed and sorted into five objectives.
- Everyone wants to see improvements but it can be difficult to know when to start, especially for small and medium businesses. Confidentiality has also traditionally

been a consideration and this SSC-wide collaborative effort will focus on pre-competitive issues (such as stock sustainability). Members must not share any information that may conflict with competition law. In some cases, information gathering will be anonymised and/or aggregated by the secretariat.

- Using the SSC as a group voice (e.g. in joint letters) could provide a stronger incentive for improvements.
- In relation to improvements the SSC could focus on species, fishery, gear technology (e.g. how adopt more selective gear) including in relation to what is needed and what is already happening. These are tabled in Item 2 to gather input from all members for further discussion at the next meeting.
- Some SSC members don't source any or much British seafood because so many stocks are data deficient (and therefore higher risk), but they would like to. Therefore there could be financial contributions to improvements in UK fisheries from members that do not (yet) stock any species from the fishery.
- In relation to data deficiency, there is uncertainty as to what data is needed, how it should be gathered and how to deal with mistrust between fishers providing data and scientists accepting the data as robust enough to use. We will need to collaborate with relevant scientific bodies (e.g. Cefas) to find out.
- Governance and management of fishing effort is one of biggest challenges for many fisheries, with non-quota species posing a particular challenge.

Agreed:

- The SSC has five objectives in relation to improvement projects (as listed in italics, above).
- The SSC will initially focus on UK fisheries, and not aquaculture, although feed fisheries may be sources that would benefit from improvement projects. In relation to information gathering and sharing, this will be on a global scale (where relevant), not only UK related.
- The next meeting will allow members to look at the table gathered and prioritise which species/ fisheries / gear types to focus on. External stakeholders will be invited to part of the next meeting in February 2016 to help inform the group.

Actions:

- Secretariat to seek further input to table of species and existing work.
- Members to suggest relevant contacts to invite to part of the next SSC meeting.

Item 2: Species-specific information gathering

The group discussed what is already happening regarding formal and informal improvement projects around the UK. This table includes the species, perceived issue, what (if anything) is already happening. All members are requested to contribute further.

Discussion and comments

- How could we work together to help address data deficient stocks? We need to collaborate with other stakeholders in this process. Ecosystem based analysis is needed in some cases.
- What could we do as part of ongoing day-to-day work to look at risk to species?
- See input to table at end of minutes.

Agreed:

- The SSC will need to engage with data providers and with industry to help identify new potential improvement projects.

Actions:

- Members to contact the secretariat with:
 1. Information on what improvement projects they are engaged in that they are willing to share and/or would like others to engage in/know about (subject to confidentiality agreements).
 2. Contributions to the table at end of minutes on what species are a priority to the members, and what work is already being done (and by whom) on the current entries to the table so the secretariat can start a definitive list.
 3. Names of any known sources of external funding available for potential improvement projects.
 4. What information sources members use in relation to risk assessments or improvement projects and secretariat to provide initial summary for next meeting.
- Secretariat to research and compile a list of existing data sources, and consider their strengths and limitations.

Item 3: Any Other Business

- The SSC will be holding a panel in the SeaWeb Seafood Summit in Malta (1-3 February) called 'convergence and collaboration: lessons from the UK supply chain'.
- The SSC is working with Seafish on aligning the outcomes of the RASS tool with low/medium/high risk outcomes from the sourcing code. Once an initial proposal has been agreed by the small working group (Seafish/secretariat/SSC member) it will be shared with the wider group for comments and input.
- The final SSC guidance has been designed to match the codes, and is available to download from the website. Hard copies will be available in 2016.

Table of species on which the SSC could focus efforts for improvement (to be discussed at next meeting, in February 2016). All members to contribute to this by adding information to the columns or suggesting additional species/rows. Please email the secretariat directly.

Species / common name	Issue	What's being done
Brown crab	Data deficiency combined with not knowing the fishing effort (no record of how many pots or creels are being used). Solution could be anyone buying from these fisheries to request reporting of this information.	Orkney FIP, SFP East Coast FIP (to which SSC members are invited to participate – ask secretariat if interested)
<i>Nephrops</i>	Lack of coherence, lots of desire to improve, coordination needed	At least two members doing something; need to facilitate discussion
Plaice	Pulse trawling Flat fish worked on immature fish and <i>Nephrops</i> and juveniles	
Skates & rays	Conservation status.	Bristol channel; Shark Bywatch (Cefas project)
Gurnard	Data deficient.	Some progress in SW fisheries - there is a working group (with Seafood Cornwall, Seafish and industry/ producer organisations).
John Dory	Data deficient.	As above (gurnard).
Lemon sole		Some progress
Wild sea bass	Conservation status.	EU Commission: December meeting re: 6 month ban



King scallops		Lots of work on benthic impacts; some MSC certified, or in process
Monk fish	Conservation status, bycatch: difficult to avoid; always high risk, because of different gear interactions (targeted in gillnet; and bycatch)	
Whiting	Bycatch; no full stock assessment/ lack of data; no quota in Irish Sea, but a lot of it around: choke fishery	
Conger eel	Considered a high risk species but small catch in locally abundant areas has low impact on overall biomass.	
Cod	Overfished, data deficient; bycatch in South	Lots going on inc collaborative formal FIP for North Sea. Cod is choke species in SE England.