

Sustainable Seafood Coalition (SSC)

Member's Meeting Minutes



Location: Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Kings Place, London N1 9AG.

Date: 01 September 2011

Summary of conclusions & actions:

- The next labelling WG should include a focus session on 'sustainably farmed' and on 'what FIPs and AIPs' really mean, as well as further analysis on minimum criteria and definitions for claims. Aim to finalise labelling code by January 2012.
- Species diversification WG should focus solely on species diversification and all work on bycatch reduction and data collection should go to the Discard Action Group (DAG), to avoid duplication. Working Group to identify appropriate unpopular managed species. Secretariat will contract out market research on the barriers to change to these species.
- Secretariat will edit the letter to Commissioner Damanaki and send it to members for revisions, before sending it to the commissioner.
- Secretariat will: continue communicating with retailers and suppliers not currently members of the SSC; identify other suppliers/retailers/brands, foodservice businesses and celebrity chefs to approach regarding joining SSC and send to members for additions.
- Secretariat will produce a draft of seafood sourcing policies aim to add to the current aims, and send to members for comments.
- Secretariat will research how SSC's decision-making structure might be redefined (to include a representative steering group and possible advisory body), as well as non-compliance procedure, and to circulate proposals to members.
- Secretariat to add sentence to the current SSC webpage that notes that meeting minutes are available on demand, with relevant contact details. Secretariat will prepare a Wikispaces account where SSC documents (e.g. meeting minutes, draft codes, agendas) can be shared.
- Meeting dates for working groups and the next member's meeting were agreed:
 - Labelling WG: 4 November 2011
 - Diversification WG: 15 November 2011
 - SSC Members' meeting: 1 February 2012
- Reminder to members to sign the agreement to contribute to costs (secretariat will email again) and to pay (details on agreement). Secretariat will provide a receipt for each member contributing after receiving payment.

Agenda item 1: Welcome & Introduction

1. Thanks to members for contributing to the cost of consultant workshop.
2. Progress since the last members includes a new member- Lyon's Seafoods; 3 working group meetings; presentations on the SCC given to Common Language Group, Discards Action Group; Secretariat meetings with interested non-members on involvement; SSC information on FishFight website; Funding application and recruitment for SSC staff.

Agenda item 2: Workshop *"The big picture: global collaboration between companies for sustainability"*

3. Workshop presented by Chris Anstey of Chris Anstey Limited (see attached presentation)
4. The presentation focused on 3 of the SSC aims which are most relevant: harmonised labelling (aim 4); Codes of conduct (aim 6); and building national and global alliances (aim 8).
5. A slide showing the top 10 food retailers globally was presented and it was noted than 4 of these which exist in the UK are not yet members of the SSC- Asda (walmart), Tesco, Lidl (Schwarz group), Aldi- and remarked that it is crucial to the success of the SSC in achieving its aims that we engage with these retailers.
6. In the group discussion it was noted that only 5% if consumers are interested in sustainability, and that there are many consumers who are passionate and opinionated but uninformed, which links to the SSC aim 9.
7. Statistics were presented that show that globally 66% of the public trust the food& beverage sector. In the UK trust in the sector is slightly higher at 67%, however 82% UK consumers believe the government should regulate corporations activities. The Netherlands tops the table with 80% trust in the sector, and it is thought this is a result of their proactive government and good communication with the public. In comparison, Germany only 37% trust the sector, and it is thought this is a result of the sector being dominated by discounters, however only 48% German consumers believed their government should regulate corporations activities. France has shown a big improvement in trust of the sector from 50-64% between 2010-2011. In contrast, trust has decreased from 64-54% over the same period in the USA, possibly as result of the recent food safety issues. These statistics provided an insight into factors to consider when expanding the SSC beyond the UK.
8. The workshop covered competition law briefly, and Chris highlighted the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil anti-competitive guidelines as a good example to follow. Pertinent points included: no one will be pressured to join. If members are asked to leave due to non-compliance they may be seen as a breach of competition law- something the secretariat will investigate. It was noted that the Competition commission can be contacted if there are queries.
9. The workshop covered approach to governance, and used the ETI as an example of a tripartite group with genuine multi-stakeholder involvement (companies, unions and NGOs), however it was noted that as decisions are made by majority, the companies are often outvoted by the NGOs and Unions.

10. The example of a good governance model (GSCP) was presented and was found to be almost identical to the current governance model of the SSC. Important components include a decision making body which is balanced and effective- which can be elected, chosen or volunteered. The secretariats job is to execute the wishes of the body. An advisory body does not make decisions, only advice but this is seriously considered by the executive body. It was highlighted that Multi-Stakeholder Organisations (MSO) are formed as a results of gaps in the regulatory, economic or political system, and thus the SSC is an example of an MSO in this context.
11. Problems and limitations of roundtables were covered including: potential freeloaders, the need for legislation even with a successful roundtable, the need for a complaints procedure, and that they only represent a coalition of the active (engagement is resource hungry and can become exclusionary).
12. It was remarked that metrics will help to prove credibility of a group such as the SSC (for example Key Performance Indicators). It was suggested that whoever does the SSC metrics, they should be GS1 or GRI G3 guidelines.
13. The workshop summarised actions that lead to failure: poor decision making; complexity in approach; major players absent.
14. The workshop concluded with the steps required for success: decision making should be unanimous; the top companies (i.e. by sales) must be involved ; companies should aspire to best practice, therefore the group will never be static; a business case should be presented to the CEOs of the members and must be agreed at the senior/CEO level; alignment of buying with CSR by members; communications must be consistent and transparent; schemes should be allowed a reasonable transition period.
15. Chris Anstey Limited attended for the remainder of the members' meeting, having signed a non-disclosure agreement.

Agenda item 3: Wild Capture and Aquaculture labelling working group

16. General view expressed that 'sustainably farmed' should not be limited only to organic aquaculture.
17. View expressed that third party verification need not be a requirement for every 'sustainably fished' claim.
18. Work is still required on objective criteria need to decide what constitutes an 'acceptable third party'.
19. Work is still required on 'proof' of compliance with the FAO CoC on responsible fisheries.
20. If the final code results in only 4 self-declared environmental claims, then the acceptable variants of claims needs further discussion (e.g. well managed could not be used in isolation but could potentially be used with one of the 4 claims)

Actions and next steps:

21. The next labelling WG should include a focus session on 'sustainably farmed' and on 'what FIPs and AIPs' really mean, as well as further analysis on minimum criteria and definitions for claims.

22. Secretariat will contract out market research into consumer understanding of self declared claims and labels to aid the code development.
23. Aim to finalise labelling code by January 2012.
24. Seek to influence legislation in the UK and EU, but ensuring that EU legislation does not restrict to/bias an EU market, but remain global.

Agenda Item 4: Species Diversification working group

25. It was clarified that SSC aims to promote genuine diversification (e.g. encourage consumers to eat 20 species of fish, not just the 'big 5'), rather than transferring the demand for a 'big 5 species' to a single substitute (e.g. Pollock for cod).
26. Concern that we may just transfer demand for species from one sector to another raising prices in viable non-consumer markets (e.g. from bait sector), for those species. It was highlighted that this concern had also been expressed in the Working Group and the code must ensure that it does not have such unintended consequences.
27. Concerns regarding encouraging diversification to unmanaged species and risks of overfishing resulted in general agreement that species diversification work should begin by concentrating on managed but unpopular species (e.g. coley).
28. Concern that work on bycatch & discard reduction, and data collection would create unnecessary duplication.

Actions and next steps:

29. Species diversification WG should focus solely on species diversification and all work on bycatch reduction and data collection should go to the Discard Action Group (DAG), to avoid duplication.
30. Based on DAG's proposals on these issues, SSC will agree to a code.
31. Working Group to identify appropriate unpopular managed species,
32. Secretariat will contract out market research on the barriers to change to these species
33. In the future, use data from unmanaged species (once collected, processed and potentially management measures in place) to assess viability of use.

Agenda Item 5: Administrative decisions:

Damanaki letter

34. General agreement that the letter to Damanaki is the right forum to put questions regarding the CMO.
35. But it was noted that the SSC wants CMO to address global sustainability context, not merely European sustainability context.

Actions:

36. Secretariat will re-edit the letter and send it to members for revisions, before sending it to Maria Damanaki.
37. Each member will required to give permission for use of its logo on the letter.

New Membership to the SSC

38. The intention to invite new members from both retail and foodservice sector was discussed
39. It was agreed that the SSC should produce a single code, rather than different codes for each sector, and therefore the foodservice sector should be invited from now on, to ensure full agreement on the codes for labelling and species diversification. However it is expected that the foodservice sector will not have sufficient resources to attend working groups, therefore SSC members may not be represented in these groups by the existing retail/supply/brand members.

Actions:

40. Continue communicating with Tesco updating on the SSC and encouraging membership.
41. Pursue communication with Asda, Cumbrian Seafoods, Aldi and Lidl updating on the SSC and encouraging membership.
42. Building on Member's suggestions, the Secretariat will draw up list of appropriate retailers, suppliers and brands to approach regarding joining the SSC, and will send to members for additions/contacts (e.g. Whitby Scampi; Dawn fresh; John West; Budgens; Ocado; Iceland; Joseph Robertson; Nisa; Costco).
43. The secretariat Draw up list of appropriate food services companies, as well as membership groups (e.g. frozen food federation) with a view to inviting them to join SSC and will send to members for additions/contacts.
44. SSC to start making contact with celebrity chefs over the next 6 months.

Additions to Aims

45. Due to dovetailing with DAG, SSC will not add aim on bycatch reductions
46. SSC will add aim re: agreeing minimum standards for seafood sourcing policies –

Actions:

47. Secretariat will produce a draft of seafood sourcing policies aim.

Addition to Terms of Reference

48. Suggestion that the issue of policing SSC code should be given to 'advisory group' who could present their expectations of the SSC members in an open letter.
49. Following workshop and the intention to start inviting members from the foodservice sector, it was felt that the SSC governance model needs to be revised to include a representative steering group, and possibly an advisory body.

Actions:

50. Over next 2 months, Secretariat to research how SSC's decision-making structure might be defined, and to circulate proposals electronically.

SSC transparency

51. Minute of SSC members' meetings should be made available on demand
52. Agreement that Wikispaces (invite only & password protected) is a suitable tool to share documents between members, rather than a more costly intranet.

Actions

53. Secretariat to add sentence to the current SSC webpage that notes that meeting minutes are available on demand, with relevant contact details.
54. Secretariat will prepare a Wikispaces account where SSC documents (e.g. meeting minutes, draft codes, agendas) can be shared.

Agenda Item 6: Next steps for the SSC

55. Meeting dates for working groups and the next member's meeting were agreed:
 - Labelling WG: 4 November 2011
 - Diversification WG: 15 November 2011
 - SSC Members' meeting: 1 February 2012
56. Reminder to members to sign the agreement to contribute to costs (secretariat will email again) and to pay (details on agreement).
57. Secretariat will provide a receipt for each member contributing after receiving payment.
58. Secretariat to send minutes and workshop presentation to members.

Agenda Item 7: Any Other Business

59. A member noted their work with other members on "What certification schemes can deliver" which may be of use to the SSC particularly the labelling working group and sourcing working group (when developed) – see attached document.
60. The International Association of Fish Inspectors upcoming world seafood congress in October was mentioned, including the possibility of a presentation on various UK seafood work including expectations of the SSC achievements.