

SSC Aquaculture Labelling W.G. Meeting Minutes

Attendees: total of 17, comprising SSC members and non-member advisers.

Chair and Secretariat: ClientEarth

Location: [Food and Drink Federation](#), 6 Catherine Street, London, WC2B 5JJ.

Date & time: 4 November 2011, 10am – 4pm

Conclusions

Wild capture parallel session

Sustainably fished:

- Must meet FAO Code of Conduct on Responsible Fishing
- Independently certified OR
- The member's sourcing policy and decision tree has been independently verified as complying with the FAO Code of Conduct AND
- Is AIPCE low risk

Responsibly sourced:

- Must be a product that applies the AIPCE code AND
- Where the fishery concerned can be shown to be working towards compliance with the FAO Code of Conduct on Responsible Fishing in the form of GAP analysis risk assessment regarding compliance AND
- The member is actively engaged in a FIP, as long as the first two conditions are met
- Verification process in relation to AIPCE procedures is used

Aquaculture parallel session

- Current definition of sustainable as an organic product is too narrow. A sustainable aquaculture operation is one that effectively manages the ecological consequences of farming facility activities (note: does this include brood stock and hatchery?) and fish sources used for feed.
- Agreement that scope of terms is ecological – not wider environmental (e.g. carbon footprint), social and economic impacts. This must be clear to consumers.

Sustainably farmed:

- Independent certification in compliance with FAO Code of Conduct on Responsible Fishing OR
- An FAO compliant retailer standard, where a competent (ISO-65 compliant) third party has verified the sourcing decision tree and audit process and the member has

sufficient scientific evidence for each decision to substantiate the claim.

Responsibly sourced:

- A credible, external audit and risk assessment has been undertaken AND
- An AIP is in place, which is credible, and has milestones. Milestones to be monitored by the retailer and external assessor. The AIP, including name, assessor, objectives, timeframe and stakeholders, must be in the public domain.

Introduction

1. Began with progress since last meeting, recap of scope, timeline for code and other concerns (see ClientEarth presentation slides 3 – 6).

Presentation also included agenda for the day, including outline of issues to be covered by 2 parallel sessions on wild capture and aquaculture.

2. Some preliminary issues and discussion arising from the introduction and presentations were as follows:
 - It was reiterated that the wording of the labelling code is still very much open to change
 - General concerns were raised about the timeline of the code. While all agreed that an ambitious timeline will drive the code forward, it was felt that Jan/Feb 2012 will be too packed and that a consultation could take a considerable amount of time. Similarly, it was noted that “adoption” by members will require a transitional period. General feeling was that we want to get this right, rather than rush through to implement a code.
 - Discussion of what sustainable and responsible mean. It was suggested that most people have a very wide concept of “sustainable”, therefore we need to be clear about the scope of terms. For example, “sustainably fished” will refer to capture method, not wider socio-economic and environmental issues. The issue of “sustainably sourced” would be looked at under the sourcing code.
 - Some debate about how consumers define sustainability and implications for the labelling code: Do we label based on what consumers already think “sustainable” and “responsible” are (and how would this be ascertained?), or do we define these terms and educate the consumer?
 - The competitive impact of the code on members was noted: Members will be “raising their bar” while other retailers and suppliers may not.

Parallel Sessions

Wild capture group

3. Focus session: Proof of compliance/working towards the FAO Code of Conduct on Responsible Fisheries.

Issues raised:

- Does the umbrella FAO Code of Conduct include FAO eco labelling guidelines; specifically, where you are using independent certification, is the eco label in compliance with FAO eco labelling guidelines?
- How do you define an acceptable verification?
- “Member's sourcing policy and decision tree complies with FAO code of conduct” question of whether it should include a sentence that it “has been/can be [to be decided] independently verified” and question of whether to leave nature of independent verifier open? or define? Members want to be able to use different NGOs etc - indep certifying bodies not appropriate here.
- WRT dolphin safe; concerns have been raised that dolphin safe is a licensed claim, owned by EII, and therefore cannot be controlled by the SSC. ClientEarth clarified the purpose of including this in the code was to avoid situations where the label is used on a product where there was never a risk of dolphin capture, and where there are other bycatch issues (e.g. turtles, seabirds), because use of a label in this situation would mislead the consumer into thinking dolphin bycatch was the only issue.
- Suggestion: Members should only use the dolphin friendly logo if the product also complies with SSC principles on responsible sourcing i.e. it is responsibly sourced and does not involve cetacean or non-cetacean bycatch. Inform consumers that this is the SSC policy to educate about bycatch. (See other issues under wild capture)

Aquaculture group

4. Focus session:

Criteria/the meaning of sustainably farmed. Issues covered:

- Is only organically farmed sustainable?
- Defining “sustainably farmed” and “responsibly sourced”
- Verification of non-third party claims
- General feeling that retailers could not put code of practice and audits in public domain for ‘thirds party verification’ due to sensitivity. Members would need to work on how information can be provided to ensure transparency.
- It was pointed out that full transparency would be difficult as in some countries there is huge reluctance to provide information.
- What about companies that have their own technical audits and audit against their own or a retailer code of practice? Can these claim sustainably/responsible?

- Suggestion that the following is added to the criteria for responsibly sourced farmed fish: "AND It is considered "low risk" according to the AIPCE-CEP risk assessment process". This was suggested to harmonise with wild capture criteria.
- Not covered: harmonisation of methods and areas

Joint discussion

- Summaries from parallel sessions given (see conclusions)
- It was pointed out there are no independent aquaculture certifications that comply with FAO Code of Conduct, so how can independently certified aquaculture products be labelled as sustainable if stipulation of code is that they must be at least FAO compliant?
- EU wide report into eco labelling and fish just published – does this contain defined terms? SL to action.

Next steps

5. Secretariat to circulate these minutes and the presentation slides used in the meeting.
6. Secretariat to put forward more options to be discussed e.g. concerning aquaculture. Secretariat to amend draft, get comments by phone and email.
7. Suggestion of a feedback questionnaire to members: where each thinks we are with each issue, and what is their stance?
8. Meet in January.