

# Sustainable Seafood Coalition (SSC)

## Member's Meeting Minutes



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

**Date:** 01 February 2012

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### Summary of conclusions & actions:

#### Steering group options:

**Agreed:** that SSC doesn't need a steering group at the moment. Option for the future if the membership expands.

#### Secretariat authorisation:

**Agreed:** Statements of policy and lobbying require approval, even if something appears to have been agreed in a meeting. Statements of fact can be delegated as long as it doesn't relate directly to a member or is likely to have a bearing on a member's reputation. Permission for use of logos has already been given.

**Action:** Secretariat to amend Terms of reference to reflect issues requiring approval etc. The letter to Maria Damanaki will now be redrafted to introduce the SSC to the Commission.

#### Public consultation:

**Agreed:** there will be a public consultation period of 6 weeks. SSC will then meet to review responses and decide if issues need attention and course of action,

**Action:** A public consultation period will be added to the SSC Terms of Reference as part of the voluntary codes of conduct development process.

**Agreed:** Summary response to consultation will be published. SSC will not respond to individual submissions.

**Action:** Secretariat to compile list of invited consultees and broadcast consultation through appropriate channels. Consultation will ask specific structured questions.

Labelling code: Issue 1: Verification to FAO CoC standard. (How does SSC verify in-house decision trees)

**Agreed:** shelve the issue for 12 months and include in the Code 'the intention' to include independent verification of in-house decision trees in future.

**Action:** Secretariat to be sent 'Expectations of Standards' document – ie: what robust standards should deliver (10 point document).

**Action:** Section 4.2, particularly 4.2 c to be redrafted by Secretariat and 'sense tested'

Labelling code: Issue 2: Adequate measures

**Agreed:** adopt definition from MSC chain of custody standard for 'adequate measures'.  
Look at wording for mass balance calculations.

'Chain of custody' can be used in relation to 'sustainably fished' (4.2) but not in relation to 'responsibly sourced' (4.3)

**Agreed:** fishery / farming operation must be assessed every year.

Issue: SSC Code requires chain of custody to point of sale. Goes further than MSC standard.

**Agreed:** Amend the code so that chain of custody ends at point of application of the label or sealing the pack (ie: once pack is sealed before sale and responsibility for food sustainability ends)

**Action:** SSC to revise the code and get feedback twice before 21st March.

**Action:** Secretariat will provide members with examples of acceptable and un-acceptable uses of the term 'sustainable' as a comms guidance document.

**Action:** Secretariat to send draft code revised to reflect the meeting to members by end of week. Then take comments from the SSC members prior to revising the draft code ahead the Labelling Working Group meeting.

KPIs and baseline data:

**Agreed:** SSC needs a means of assessing its performance.  
But members don't agree to an SSC baseline data questionnaire for reasons of cost, work load and independent accountability (SSC can't audit itself).

**Action:** Secretariat to send revised KPIs, and background information, in light of today's discussion, then SSC members to send feedback on these.

**Action:** Secretariat to explore options for obtaining baseline data from 3rd party agencies and members will see whether their industry performance data can be made available externally.

Communication:

**Action:** Secretariat to try a few options for internal communication based on WikiSpaces.

**Agreed** that additions to website are good idea.

**Agreed** that pamphlet is a good idea.

Response to WWF:

**Agreed:** Don't respond and contact when starting consultation on labelling code.

Next steps for the SSC

Next labelling Working Group meeting: **21st March tbc**

Next sourcing policy Working Group – **18th April tbc**

Next diversification Working Group – **1st May**

Next member's meeting – **2nd May**

## Agenda item 1: Welcome & progress since last meeting

1. Welcome to new members Tesco and Le Lien. The SSC now cover 74% of the retail sector and 60-80% of the processing sector in the UK. ClientEarth will continue to encourage other Retailers to join the SSC.
2. There have been 2 labelling working groups since the last members meeting, to produce a revised draft of the code (version 2).
3. Secretariat has put forward some options on Governance for a steering group and also some key performance indicators (KPIs).
4. **Action:** Secretariat and members will now re-draft the letter to Maria Damanaki to introduce the SSC to the Commissioner.
5. Foodservice sector progress: Secretariat in dialogue with Goodcatch and the Sustainable Fish City forum (and has subsequently been approached by the Sustainable Restaurant Association). Secretariat will follow up with the intention of developing a coordinated approach with these stakeholders to the food service sector.
6. Secretariat has made presentations on SSC to Seafish Aquaculture Common Issues group and the Agricultural Industries Confederation fish feed committee.

## Agenda item 2: Governance- Options for a steering group

7. Item 1. Does SSC want steering group. Item 2. How will it be authorised?
8. Chris Anstey suggested the need for a steering group as the SSC expands, however the members felt it would be fine to keep as status quo for now.
9. Item 2: expansion of group – how will SSC accommodate expansion of the group? Should we introduce processes now?
10. It was noted that new members will want to be involved in formation of steering group and core group may grow with SSC.
11. **Agreed:** that SSC doesn't need a steering group at the moment. Option for the future if the membership expands.
12. **Agreed** that steering group as a decision making body is not an option.

## Agenda item 3: How should the secretariat be authorized?

- 13 SSC terms of reference will be amended to reflect any decision.
- 14 **Agreed:** Statements of policy and lobbying require approval, even if something appears to have been agreed in a meeting. Statements of fact can be delegated as long as it doesn't relate directly to a member or is likely to have a bearing on a member's reputation.

- 15 General agreement that permission for use of logos has already been given.
- 16 Secretariat undertakes that it will never take action without a certainty that it has members' approval.
- 17 Member's point that SSC is not a lobbying group – this was the issue with the Damanaki letter.
- 18 Influencing law is one of aims of SSC, but any document/ letter etc dealing with this needs express approval from everyone (see above). While SSC isn't representative of industry, we do have an element of lobbying in terms of reference.
- 19 Secretariat to amend Terms of reference to reflect issues requiring approval etc. The letter to Maria Damanaki will now be redrafted to introduce the SSC to the Commission.

#### **Agenda item 4: Making the draft codes available for public comment**

- 20 First members meeting agreed public consultation period as part of code but concerns were raised on 04.11.11 labelling meeting.
- 21 Cautious consensus among Members that transparency and willingness to gather opinions will limit criticism and make the code more robust. Need to be able to demonstrate that SSC has taken a sensible decision, supported by an audit trail.
- 22 Two Degrees Conference – View that SSC is leading way with discussion on sustainability on seafood. SSC template and process may set precedent for other industries. Need to consult with non-marine stakeholders like Kingfisher etc to see how SSC template/process is viewed.
- 23 White fish labelling code of practice already exists. Possibly, SSC with quasi-legal drafting, could be illegal. Getting comment from Govt at this stage is therefore key.
- 24 Fundamentally, SSC is looking for constructive useful comments for a voluntary code of conduct – not setting a bullet proof, legally testable standard. Fears therefore that a period of public comment may open up SSC to a barrage of may be unfounded.
- 25 SSC members to approve the invitation list of consultees. These should at least include:

All the working groups advisors  
Grosser  
MSC  
MCS  
WWF  
Greenpeace

Fish City  
Overseas NGOs  
Monterey Bay  
Retail forums  
BRC  
FDF  
2 degrees

27. **Agreed:** there will be a public consultation period of 6 weeks. SSC will then meet to review responses and decide if issues need attention and course of action. Wording to that effect to be inserted in code in paragraph on consultation (i.e. if they feel it necessary, the Members will engage further with (certain) consultees with regard to particular issues or similar wording).
28. **Action:** Secretariat to compile list of invited consultees and broadcast consultation through appropriate channels including IntraFish. Members to send contacts/relevant web-sites that they want to see included.
29. Suggested consultees might include:  
Defra, Soil Association, WWF, MCS, Greenpeace, MSC, Sustain, Sustainable Restaurant Association, Seafood Choices, Pisces-RFR, Sustainable Fisheries Partnership, Seafish, ASC, Global GAP, GAA, Scottish Government, Welsh Assembly Government, Shellfish Association of Great Britain, FEAP, SSPO, UNFAO,
30. Consultation will ask specific structured questions.
31. **Agreed:** Summary response to consultation will be published. SSC will not respond to individual submissions.
32. **Action:** A public consultation period will be added to the SSC Terms of Reference as part of the voluntary codes of conduct development process.

## Agenda Item 5: Draft labelling code (version 2)

- 32 (note: complex numbering in current draft will be revised and simplified by the Secretariat)

### Issue 1: Verifying compliance with FAO Code of Conduct.

- 33 SSC could rely on studies/summaries/analyses of certification schemes that already exist (Secretariat to compile analysis if possible) and establish whether SSC code standards can be considered as part of Seafish's study. Ask Seafish to include the SSC code in their review and assessment of the different certification schemes.
- 34 Point of terms: 'Sustainable fishery' and 'sustainable fish' are not equivalent terms.
- 35 SSC can identify acceptable verification standards and wait for Seafish study later in year (using Expectation of Standards document as a reference tool).

- 36 **Action:** Members to send Sustainable Fisheries Partnership 'Expectations of Standards' document – ie: what robust standards should deliver (10 point document).
- 37 SSC needs to identify an organisation who can implement SSC Code criteria for verifying FAO CoC standards. In meantime, we can use 'Expectations of Standards' document. This can be used for criteria in sections 4.2 c. (and 5.2 c).
- 38 **Action:** Redrafting section 4.2, particularly 4.2 c using Expectation of Standards document. Agreed to be done by Secretariat and 'sense checked' by Members by end Feb/start Mar.

### **How does SSC verify in-house decision trees?**

- 39 The issue is whether in-house standards and third party verification should stand as equivalent to reputable independent certification schemes?
- 40 In-house standards verification to a standard equivalent to reputable independent certification schemes is probably not possible at the moment. There isn't a formal assessment scheme for compliance with FAO CoC for Responsible Fishing.
- 41 Auditing of member's decision trees needs to be of a standard equivalent to reputable independent certification schemes. Seafish is currently undertaking a review of third party auditing schemes but will report in 12 months. Key that independent auditor is without allegiance to any interested stakeholder.
- 42 Point that cost of abiding by code will be massive.
- 43 Member's comms by email – 'The legalistic nature of the code means it'll have to be checked by our company's lawyers. This will carry an unwarranted cost which wasn't anticipated when we joined the SSC. This is an issue which may well create a barrier to entry for smaller companies eg: in the food service sector.
- 44 Discussion among members as to what SSC code 4.2 (d) actually means – ie: whether in-house decision trees require third party evaluation to an SSC prescribed standard.
- 45 If an in-house assessment concludes that a product is sustainable, the audit trail (decision tree) should be transparent. This will require a third party to conduct the audit. Problem – who does this work? How do you verify your products as sustainable? Who audits your decision tree?
- 46 A Member uses the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership but they wouldn't endorse a claim of sustainability.
- 47 We're narrowing down labelling claims to two: 'Sustainably fished' and 'responsibly fished'. In practice, 'Sustainably fished' will have to be 3rd party certified. 'Responsibly sourced' will stand for in-house certification with a view to a future scheme being able to perform an audit on in-house decision trees (for 'sustainably fished').
- 48 Clean definition of the term 'sustainably fished' is difficult to support. Difference in terms 'sustainably fished' and 'from sustainable fisheries'. The claims aren't equivalent.

- 49 Also, a difficulty that small sustainable fisheries which aren't accredited and can't demonstrate adherence to SSC Code will be excluded.
- 50 SSC's benchmarking of terms 'sustainably fished' and 'responsibly sourced' can be challenged.
- 51 GASDD (Global small scale data deficient) – can we build a GASDD equivalence into section 4.2 d. Reluctance to do so because of complexity.
- 52 Do we want **sustainability** defined by reference to certification schemes or can we define it in absolute terms in the SSC code?
- 53 **Key point:** Verification of in-house decision trees has to be seen to be an equivalent process to 3<sup>rd</sup> party verification schemes.
- 54 Problem: Independent scientific EIA which determines whether in-house verification is robust might not be accepted by 3<sup>rd</sup> party certifiers like MSC.
- 55 **Agreed:** shelve the verification of members in house standards issue for 12 months and include in code 'the intention' to include independent verification of in-house decision trees in future.
- 56 **Action:** Secretariat to re-draft section 4.2, particularly 4.2 c based on the Expectations of Standards document and Members to 'sense check it' by end Feb/start Mar.

## **Issue 2: Adequate measures in chain of custody**

- 55 What should the 'adequate measures' mean in relation to third party certification and self-certification?
- 56 Proposal that SSC just refers to MSC Chain of Custody standard.
- 57 SSC Code requires chain of custody to point of sale. Suggestion that this goes further than MSC standard. **AGREED AMEND:** chain of custody to point of application of the label or point of pack (ie: once pack is sealed before sale and chain of custody for sustainability ends).
- 58 On claim of 'sustainably fished', wording to be based on the following: **chain of custody** must show fish from source to point of labelling (not sale) and must show that product/fish has not been supplemented/tampered with (find proper wording) with any other fish; relevant wording from MSC standard to be used here, **adequate measures** definition will include requirement for mass balance calculations.
- 59 As a consequence of decision on decision-tree above, only need to refer to 'independent assessment and certification' (but not 'independent assessment and verification').

- 60 On 'responsibly sourced' wording, use 'traceability' instead of 'chain of custody', and same wording generally but excluding reference to 'independently certified' (so same standard except for certification), again including mass balance calculations.
- 61 Full chain traceability. Trace the fish from source fishery and verify that all fish in a product have an acceptable provenance.
- 62 **Agreed:** Every 5 years changes to every year (4.3 a – c).
- 70 **Agreed:** adopt definition from MSC chain of custody standard for 'adequate measures'. Look at wording for mass balance calculations. 'Chain of custody' can be used in relation to 'sustainably fished' (4.2) but not in relation to 'responsibly sourced' (4.3).
- 71 **Agreed:** chain of custody ends at point of application of the label or sealing the pack (ie: once pack is sealed before sale and responsibility for food sustainability ends).
- 72 **Action:** Secretariat to amend the code to reflect the above agreements

Other points:

- 62 Member's comment on Code point 4.6: Query whether definition of 'well managed' should not just be same as sustainable; members generally agreed that it should be broadened to include a responsibly sourced fishery/farm with FIP/AIPs in progress that are getting there, but not FIP/AIPs in beginning, so need to be low risk, and could include sustainable and some of responsible, but not FAO review of ecolabelling scheme):
- 63 **Action:** Secretariat to amend the criteria for well managed.

## Agenda Item 6: Key performance indicators & baseline data questionnaire

- 75 Members given printout of proposed SSC KPIs – these were originally used in SSC funding application and are based on vision and aims of SSC. However KPIs are key to measuring the SSC performance against our aims.
- 76 Request to change sustainably sourced to "sustainably fished/farmed or responsibly sourced". Clarification: sustainably sourced in this context relates to a code on sustainable sourcing policies rather than the labelling code.
- 77 It was noted that it is the stock that matters, not the species. We should be looking at which underutilised species are sustainable and then encouraging consumption. Also don't necessarily want less consumption of big five but rather an improvement in sustainability.
- 78 Baseline questionnaire: We need this to assess performance against KPIs.

- 79 Consensus view is that retailers do MCS questionnaire every 2 years and it's hugely onerous. Do not want to agree to an SSC questionnaire.
- 80 Alternative proposal to find independent market data e.g. EPOS, Kantar World Panel, Seafish etc.
- 81 Issue: Members concerned that SSC baseline document should not simply be based on a data questionnaire filled in only by members for reasons of cost, work load and independent accountability (SSC can't audit itself).
- 82 **Agreed** we need a means to assess performance of SSC.
- 83 **Action:** Secretariat to revise KPIs to reflect today's discussion, and send to Members. SSC members will review and comment on KPIs. KPIs will be finalised at next members' meeting.
- 84 **Action:** Once KPIs agreed, caseline data to be assembled in relation to the KPIs. Secretariat will try to identify third party sources of data, but may need to revisit with members if that's not sufficient. Members will see whether their industry performance data can be made available externally.

## Agenda Item 7: Communication

### Options for SSC members to privately exchange documents & share information

- 87 **Action:** Secretariat to try a few options for internal communication based on WikiSpaces.

### Public communication of SSC's aims & progress

- 88 **Agreed** that additions to website are good idea.
- 89 **Agreed** that pamphlet is a good idea.

### Response to WWF

- 90 WWF wrote to say they will not be participating in labelling WG anymore as believe MSC and ASC are only credible certification schemes at the moment regarding consumer facing labelling. Secretariat hasn't responded, as wanted to discuss with SSC members, how to get them reengaged.
- 91 WWF specify what it believes should be incorporated into "sustainably fished". WWF are very invested in MSC. ClientEarth thinks there is an element of misunderstanding in their response, since the code covers more than sustainably fished/farmed claims (e.g. consistent capture method terms). It was noted that WWF don't see a need for claim of responsibly sourced.
- 92 **Agreed:** No need to respond to WWF for now, and contact them when starting consultation on labelling code.

## Agenda Item 8: Next steps for the SSC

- 93 **Next Labelling Working Group meeting: 21st March tbc**
- 94 **Next sourcing policy Working Group – 18th April tbc**
- 95 **Next diversification Working Group – 1st May**
- 96 **Next member's meeting – 2nd May**

## Agenda Item 9: Any Other Business

- 98 World Fisheries Congress. Some members are speaking on how Icelandic Group is using fisheries science to behave responsibly. **AGREED** they can use opportunity to speak about SSC. Also note that Secretariat is hoping to present on the SSC concept at the congress.
- 99 Euro Commerce. BRC attending and European Commission pondering CMO and starting to look at labelling criteria.
- 100 Use of claim 'sustainable'. Suggestion that Secretariat should look at how the word 'sustainable' used in other sectors and produce a list of the kind of statements that are allowed/not allowed in general advertising/blurb etc. Members suggest that it will be really difficult to stop the use of the word as per the labelling code. Many members think it'll be quite hard to get their entire companies to not use 'sustainable' incorrectly.
- 101 General agreement that the aim is to move towards a more sustainable seafood market. 'There is a difference between stating an aim and actually saying that what you are selling is currently sustainable'. This will affect KPIs and there is also a need to know who will be checking that usage is correct and what repercussions are for mis-use.
- 102 **Action:** Secretariat to collect examples of usage of the term and suggest list of how allowed, not allowed. Possible option of preparing guidelines to marketing departments etc.
- 103 Potential for non-SSC members to adopt terms without complying with code. SSC will need to audit ourselves – SSC must be "policed".
- 104 **Action:** To be discussed further + Secretariat to look into this.