

Sustainable Seafood Coalition (SSC) Members' meeting minutes

Date: 14 August, 2014

Location: Food and Drink Federation, 6 Catherine Street, London WC2B 5JJ

Number of attendees: 18 total (including 4 ClientEarth staff acting as facilitator, member, communications expert and minute taker)

Summary of agreed points

Item 1: Governance

- Annual all-member meetings will be held to address issues arising in the SSC and to review codes if necessary.
- Where there is an issue that cannot be resolved easily by the member(s) and secretariat, an 'oversight committee' comprised of representative members and two independent organisations will discuss and resolve the issue.
- An anonymised review of complaints and their solutions will be published on the SSC website each year to show transparency and shared solutions.

Item 2: Implementation

- Members will not have individual implementation plans but will work towards group targets.
- Any new packaging printed one year after launch will align with the labelling code.
- The sourcing code will be implemented within one year of the launch, with plans in place for any improvement projects.
- Indicators for monitoring will not be used but the secretariat may repeat their labelling report after the initial implementation phase (e.g. 18 months after launch).

Item 3: Public launch

- The Humber Seafood Summit would be a great opportunity for the public launch. The secretariat will ask Seafish whether this is possible, on behalf of the group.
- The media plan will include targeting for an exclusive story. The press release

will be embargoed until the 18 September (subject to confirmation that this will be the date of the public launch).

Item 4: AOB

- The next meeting to amend the Guidance will be scheduled for February 2015.
- Members felt that there was no issue with accepting new members into the SSC after the launch of the new codes and that the secretariat can manage this process without additional agreement from all the members.

Purpose of the members' meeting

This meeting was to discuss and review the SSC governance structure; the implementation and monitoring of the finalised SSC codes; and the public launch of the labelling and sourcing codes. The meeting content was based on an in depth discussion between the secretariat and two members in July, and in the context of some research by the secretariat into collective impact initiatives.

In particular, the Stanford Social Innovation Review by Kania and Kramer (2011) was summarised and presented to the members. This review found that for a collective impact initiative to be effective and credible, there are five conditions to success: a common agenda; shared measurement systems; mutually reinforcing activities; continuous communication; and a backbone support organisation. In the context of the SSC, the 'shared measurement systems' is the condition that still needs developing.

Item 1: Governance

The SSC has now developed two voluntary codes, on labelling and sourcing, and is moving into a new implementation phase. Members discussed whether a 'governance board' would now be needed to deal with any challenges and to make decisions beyond the scope of the secretariat.

Discussion and comments

- Members felt that a mechanism was required for dealing with any blatant disregard of the codes or repeated non-adherence. The need for a particular group to act in the role of a 'board' was rejected by some and discussed further. Many felt that the purpose of a 'board' (if appointed) would be to discuss in an objective manner any issues or grievances that arise. These discussions would be only when required, and the group would not behave in an investigative manner.
- A member argued that a 'disciplinary' committee or 'governance board' is not appropriate for the implementation of voluntary codes of conduct. Other members felt that there is still a need to review the codes and agree on how to reach

resolutions during the implementation. The group discussed whether it could be comprised of SSC members (such as the representative bodies) but felt it would be more credible with external parties involved as well.

- The appropriate term for the 'board' was widely discussed with suggestions including steering committee; oversight board/committee; and disciplinary committee. For the purpose of the minutes, the term 'oversight committee' will be used from here on.
- Members discussed the different organisations that could sit on the oversight committee, with preference for the suggestions of Seafish and The Prince's International Sustainability Unit.
- When discussing how to manage potential complaints during the implementation phase, a member suggested providing open and transparent information for this process. Complaints are likely to be sent directly to the member involved, or to the secretariat whose contact details are on the website. Members felt that the first stage is for the member to try and resolve it themselves. If this is ineffective or complicated, the secretariat could convene the oversight committee to discuss the issue anonymously (to prevent any bias).
- Whilst many issues may include confidential business information, the group supported transparency of non-confidential issues and resolutions. This could be by publishing anonymous summaries on the SSC website, with the view that it would encourage improvement and demonstrate integrity of the SSC.

Agreed:

- Annual all-member meetings will be held to address issues arising in the SSC and to review codes if necessary.
- Where there is an issue that cannot be resolved easily by the member(s) and secretariat, an 'oversight committee' comprised of representative members and two independent organisations will discuss and resolve the issue.
- An anonymised review of complaints and their solutions will be published on the SSC website each year to show transparency and shared solutions.

Actions:

- The secretariat will organise annual SSC member meetings.
- The secretariat will organise an 'oversight committee' for the SSC and will invite the relevant organisations discussed (Representative bodies - BRC, FDF, SRA, NFFF, Seafish and ISU).
- The secretariat will seek input to collate a review of complaints and solutions for the website after the first year of implementation.

Item 2: Implementation

With the launch of the SSC voluntary codes due in September 2014 it is necessary to establish the expected timeframe for implementation of the codes. Members discussed what the different stages of implementation could be and what reasonable deadlines could be set. The group also discussed ways of driving improvement within the sector, and providing transparency to the public.

Discussion and comments

- Members felt relatively happy with the step by step approach to implementation discussed for the labelling and sourcing code deadlines. The secretariat had previously suggested that implementation plans could be individually tailored to each member but none of the members felt that they would need individual attention and that group milestones would be more appropriate.
- Regarding implementation of the labelling code, several members discussed the packaging production timelines (and existing material) that must be considered before there can be complete alignment with the code across stores. This is due to the fact that there is usually mass production of packaging that is stored until needed at a later date, in particular for frozen and long shelf-life products (e.g. canned fish). Until these are used up there will not be any reprinting of packaging, and timelines for implementation will need to account for this to avoid any commercial losses by wasted packaging.
- A member suggested that any packaging printed from one year after the launch will align with the labelling code (if not before). This would mean that the majority of products will align with the labelling code from September 2015, with the potential exception of some products for which the pre-printed packaging still needed using up. The group supported this timeframe.
- Several members felt that the process of aligning with the sourcing code is going to constantly evolve and it will be difficult to have a specific date by which it will be fully implemented (e.g. to include the implementation of any improvement projects). One milestone suggested was that risk assessments will be in place within six months, and used for any new lines after that date. Members discussed the variability between industry sectors and business types, with some having resources to comply more quickly than others.
- The group was keen to set a target date for alignment with the sourcing code. A member suggested having risk assessments complete on all lines within 12 months of the launch, with plans in place to work towards dealing with high risk lines that need further engagement.
- The secretariat suggested some potential indicators to help monitor the impact of the SSC. These were based on discussions with some members in July, and on the collective impact report by Kramer and Kania. Many of these were rejected as they might include potentially confidential business information. One member suggested that ClientEarth repeats its report on 'Environmental Claims on Supermarket Seafood' after the implementation phase. This would be based on publicly available information and show change over time on seafood claims being used in the UK.

Agreed:

- Members will not have individual implementation plans but will work towards group targets.
- Any new packaging printed one year after launch will align with the labelling code.
- The sourcing code will be implemented within one year of the launch, with plans in place for any improvement projects.
- Indicators for monitoring will not be used but the secretariat may repeat their labelling report after the initial implementation phase (e.g. 18 months after launch).

Actions:

- Members will begin to implement both codes with a view to having full alignment within one year of the public launch. The only potential exceptions will be labels that were already printed and not yet used, and the outcomes of any improvement projects under the sourcing code (but any plans for these will be in place).
- The secretariat may repeat its labelling report 18 months after the public launch.

Item 3: Public launch

Plans for the public launch of the SSC codes were discussed. The secretariat noted that the type of press release, and location for the launch, would depend on whether the target audience was the public or the seafood industry. The secretariat will be organising a press release and communications information that member can use and share.

Discussion and comments

- The group wanted to launch both to the public and to the seafood industry. The secretariat confirmed that the press release would be sent to both national and sector-specific media, but that we could first try to secure an exclusive with one national media journalist. Members felt this was a good approach. However the secretariat pointed out that there is no guarantee of coverage, particularly in national press.
- Members identified other events in September which could provide additional or alternative opportunities to gain publicity for the SSC.
- One member suggested that the launch could be at the Humber Seafood Summit on the 18th of September. An SSC member is a key note speaker for the summit, and would be happy to launch the Codes in his presentation, subject to agreement from his own business and from Seafish (who are organising the summit). This date falls on the day of the Scottish Referendum vote, which may mean it will be a challenge to get any media attention. However, it was argued that the occasion of the Humber Seafood Summit would be great opportunity to launch the codes, with a great audience from across the seafood industry.

Agreed:

- The Humber Seafood Summit would be a great opportunity for the public launch. The secretariat will ask Seafish whether this is possible, on behalf of the group.
- The media plan will include targeting for an exclusive story. The press release will be embargoed until the 18 September (subject to confirmation that this will be the date of the public launch).

Actions:

- The secretariat will develop a press release and a media plan to share with all members.
- The secretariat will ask Seafish whether they would be happy for the SSC to launch its codes at the Humber Seafood Summit on 18 September and follow up with members' other suggestions for media opportunities.

Item 4: AOB

Topics raised were on the SSC Guidance review, membership expansion, and the secretariat updated the members on matters relating to the funding of their work as the SSC secretariat.

Discussion and comments

- The group sought to set a time to review and amend the Guidance document once the implementation phase has begun. Members felt that they would not have time until after the New Year, and February was suggested as a realistic opportunity.
- New membership of the SSC has been closed while the codes were in development. There are several businesses that have shown an interest in joining the SSC, and the secretariat asked the group if they should manage new membership on behalf of the coalition, or if anyone else should be involved.

Agreed:

- The next meeting to amend the Guidance will be scheduled for February 2015.
- Members felt that there was no issue with accepting new members into the SSC after the launch of the new codes and that the secretariat can manage this process without additional agreement from all the members.

Actions:

- The Secretariat will schedule a meeting for February 2015 to discuss, review, and amend the Guidance document.
- The secretariat will invite and manage any new members to the SSC once the codes have been publicly launched.