

SSC members' meeting minutes

Date: 1 March 2017

Location: The Counting House, London, EC3V 3PD

Number of attendees: 13 attendees, representing 8 members, including four ClientEarth staff acting as facilitator, secretariat and minute taker.

Summary of agreed points

Item 1

- An SSC "AGM" will be held (c. early April 2017) in which strategy, governance, funding needs and financial reporting will be revisited and agreed.
- Membership expansion is critical (assuming the SSC must grow in order to achieve its aims), and should be targeted against the SSC strategy.
- A list of named attendees will be included in draft meeting minutes shared with members. The public version will remain anonymous.
- Silence will imply consent on secretariat requests for feedback.
- Consideration of social commitments to be practically included in the codes should be revisited in the future. However, keeping a small social working group would be valuable to share information and liaise with other stakeholders.
- The SSC coordinator post will be recruited after the SSC strategy is agreed, and be aligned with its outcomes.

Item 2

- Social responsibility working group to remain 'on hold' until the SSC strategy is defined, the outcome of which will dictate the social responsibility workstream and noting too that external tools are being established.
- Members would like to be informed if the SSC is to be used as case study at international events – this information could be circulated via a newsletter or email. Any outreach about SSC would need to align to SSC strategy in the first instance.

Item 3

- To decide SSC involvement on fishery improvements, though either Project UK or the proposed collaboration, at or after the SSC strategy has been defined.

Purpose of the meeting

To address questions in relation to governance, the role of the secretariat and SSC operational practices; to revisit and identify SSC priorities and decision-making processes; and to update members on actions since the last meeting and related initiatives.

Item 1: Role and responsibilities of SSC secretariat

Secretariat duties and areas of focus

Membership fees were introduced in 2016 to supplement external funding and provide for the secretariat function. From summer 2017, the SSC secretariat will need to be entirely funded by membership fees. The group revisited the SSC aims and priorities and discussed which should be prioritised to make best possible use of secretariat capacity.

- The SSC has achieved its primary goals of developing the codes and supporting pre-competitive dialogue between businesses. What is now required is to focus on how to best use available resources. We should avoid duplicating work held in other industry fora (eg. Seafood Ethics Common Language Group, BRC Seafood Group, UK Seafood Industry Alliance).
- One member felt that the SSC's objectives are unclear since the completion of the two codes of conduct. Several members worried the SSC is at risk of being "spread too thinly" and felt it necessary to identify an SSC strategy.
- The group briefly discussed incorporating a formal reporting mechanism, and key performance indicators, into the SSC governance structure moving forward.
- Membership expansion was discussed as a priority for the progression of the SSC, but that any expansion should be targeted, and against agreed aims. One example was within the foodservice sector. The secretariat noted that the greatest success so far has been when members have introduced the SSC to new businesses.
- Members asked if meeting attendance listed in draft minutes could be named. This would help members who could not attend know who was there and who they might speak to for updates, if meeting members at other industry events.
- The secretariat asked the group if facilitating the social working group, as it has since August 2016, should remain a priority. Overall, the group felt social responsibility is being addressed elsewhere, and should only be made more of a priority if in accordance to the strategy, and once other relevant tools are finalised.

Decision-making model

SSC decision-making has evolved from full consensus (with proxy vote for meeting absentees), to majority vote by members present at members' meetings. The secretariat noted that a lack of response can result in decisions not being made. The need for

engagement is essential, so as not to unreasonably delay progress, and asked the group how to formalise this process as the SSC expands further.

- Holding an annual general meeting at which decisions would be made, as originally agreed in 2015, would be useful. Maintaining consensus is however likely to remain difficult in that scenario. Creating a Steering Group, which all members would have the opportunity to join, could help solve this. Another member recommended that all decisions align with the SSC aims and strategy, reinforcing the need to define the SSC strategy.
- One participant suggested using an electronic questionnaire with targeted questions to inform SSC decisions. They also highlighted the need to avoid an overly bureaucratic structure. Another participant suggested that members who fail to respond to deadlines should be considered as being in agreement. The group reiterated that all members should have an equal voice in the decision-making process, regardless of membership fee band.
- One member wanted to reflect on why meeting attendance from the original membership group has reduced over recent years. Answers included too many meetings; other priorities; engagement with other seafood alliances; limited time and resources. Also, given that the codes have been created, there may be less value in attending meetings: following the codes – and getting others in the supply chain to also do so – may be sufficient for some members.
- It was observed that the membership-base of SSC is arguably in 2 components; 1. members who have been immersed in the development of the codes and sustainability in general for many years and 2. some of the newer members who join with the intent to learn about and engage in sustainability. Thus the 2 membership profiles have different needs, and possibly therefore engagement in, the SSC. This should be a discussion included in the AGM.
- The group discussed a suggestion by the secretariat to have an external consultant facilitate the AGM. Opinions were mixed, as this would have obvious cost implications, but may allow the secretariat to be more effectively part of the discussion and decision-making.

Personnel

The secretariat will shortly be recruiting for someone to fill the role of maintaining and developing the SSC, and expanding membership. This person will be the focal point for all SSC related activity. The secretariat invited the group to identify the skills and characteristics they would like the new SSC coordinator to demonstrate.

- Acknowledging this will depend on the updated SSC strategy, members requested the new employee should ideally possess the following: marketing and outreach experience - necessary to attract new members; supply chain experience; excellent

communication skills; experience of working in membership organisations; general project management experience.

- Technical seafood knowledge is desirable; but not essential as expert knowledge exists amongst the members, and would be brought in as necessary (e.g. for fishery improvement project coordination).

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- Silence will imply consent on secretariat requests for feedback.
- Consideration of social commitments to be practically included in the codes should be revisited in the future. However, keeping a small social working group would be valuable to share information and liaise with other stakeholders.
- The SSC coordinator post will be recruited after the SSC strategy is agreed, and be aligned with its outcomes.

Actions:

- Secretariat to: 1) share a Doodle (for date) and survey monkey (for content) with members. This will be to organise an all-day strategy session in the first half of April; and 2) to add the following to the agenda for further discussion - reporting against membership fee funding; SSC / ClientEarth clarity of roles.
- Members to: 1) complete the Doodle and a survey monkey questionnaire to critically reflect on what they want from the SSC. This will be shared with other members and the facilitator ahead of the meeting; 2) inform secretariat of any recommended external facilitators; 3) share the advertisement for a new SSC coordinator with relevant contacts once published (April/May 2017).

Item 2: Progress on SSC priorities and related initiatives

The secretariat updated the group on actions and updates since the last SSC meeting.

New SSC website, video and Twitter account

Secretariat has developed a new website and promotional video for the SSC which can be found on the website (www.sustainableseafoodcoalition.org).

Secretariat created a Twitter account for the SSC (@ssc_seafood) in response to member request. SSC Twitter guidelines are outlined in the SSC terms of reference. Due to limited capacity to monitor Twitter and a limited tweeting range, the secretariat invites members to share any relevant news for retweeting.

Membership expansion

The Big Prawn Co., Joseph Robertson Ltd. and another retailer joined the SSC since June 2016. River Cottage and Le Lien have unfortunately left the SSC.

The secretariat has been in discussion with eight businesses on SSC membership, and is making an effort to target the foodservice sector. It has been focusing efforts on approaching businesses with the support of SSC members, particularly representative bodies, and strengthening the business case for joining the SSC.

The secretariat has been approached to attend food trade shows and industry events. This provides a good opportunity to meet new businesses. However, prohibitively high entry costs have limited attendance so far.

Implementation report

The secretariat commissioned an independent review of member alignment with the SSC codes of conduct. Preliminary findings were positive, demonstrating that all members are in alignment with the codes. For a number of reasons, the process has taken longer than originally planned. The secretariat will send the final report to members in the next few weeks, and will only consider critical feedback from members on this final version. The secretariat will share a communications plan / press release with members, and subsequently publish the report.

Social responsibility

A social working group was set up and has met twice. This group identified five high level actions that could potentially be written in the sourcing code (such as mapping the supply chain). These actions would reference tools being developed by other stakeholders, so as to avoid duplication. Two key tools are in development: the Seafood Human Rights Risk Tool (SHHRT), which is being developed by Seafish, Sustainable Fisheries Partnership and Seafood Watch; and the Tools for Ethical Seafood Sourcing (TESS) website.

Seafish invites supply chain input on the fisheries of highest concern to them in terms of social risk. This will inform the development of SHHRT profiles.

RASS

The SSC-RASS function is expected to be launched in March 2017. This will provide a convenient and free way of translating RASS ratings directly into the SSC risk outcomes and required actions. Use of the tool is optional. As the SSC information will be public, members may receive more requests for justification of their sourcing decisions.

Members' own risk assessments may vary from the findings of the RASS-SSC function and this should be noted on the online tool. Members are invited to notify the secretariat of any discrepancies with their own risk assessments.

RASS does not use certification as a criterion in its assessment. Therefore, fisheries coming out as medium or low risk via the RASS-SSC function will still be low risk according to the SSC sourcing code, if certified to a credible third party standard.

Fishing4Data

Fishing4Data is a cross-sectoral initiative that aims to make fisher-collected data more widely accepted. WWF is currently seeking funding for a person to be responsible for drafting a strategy document and coordinating the activities of the group moving forward. The secretariat has attended two workshops on request from SSC members.

Building global alliances

The secretariat is often invited to present the work of the SSC at external non-UK events. Where appropriate, the SSC is used as an example of best practice from the UK supply chain, in line with the SSC aim of building global alliances. Members were asked if they would like to be informed and/or consulted if the secretariat is invited to speak about the SSC at an external event.

Agreed:

- Social responsibility working group to remain 'on hold' until the SSC strategy is defined, the outcome of which will dictate the social responsibility workstream and noting too that external tools are being established.
- Members would like to be informed if the SSC is to be used as case study at international events – this information could be circulated via a newsletter or email. Those events should be targeted according to the SSC strategy.

Actions:

- Members will inform the secretariat on: sharing relevant news on SSC Twitter account; introductions with potential new members; opportunities to share a stand at industry events.
- Secretariat will share information from Seafish on the Seafood Human Rights Risk Tool (SHHRT). Members can get in touch directly with Seafish.

Item 3: Update on fishery improvements

The secretariat has gathered information from members on which fisheries they are currently involved in improvement projects, or those they would be potentially interested on working on. The anonymised table has been shared with all members. It is an ongoing process that members can continue to contribute to.

Priority fisheries in the UK include brown crab (North Sea), *Nephrops* (Irish Sea, Clyde, North & South Minch, North Sea (Farn Deep)), European hake (North Sea). International priority fisheries include anchovy (Peru), blue swimming crab (Vietnam), squid (New Zealand, Thailand, Vietnam), yellowfin tuna (Indonesia, Sri Lanka).

Project UK

The SSC's priority UK fisheries were included in the first or second tier of fisheries prioritised for pre-assessment under Phase 2 of Project UK.

The secretariat recently met with the Project UK organisers to discuss the opportunity to manage Phases 2 and 3 (pre-assessments and the next round of FIPs). This would require establishing funding. The group included funders of Project UK who felt they had not been updated recently on the progress of Project UK nor the need to seek a manager for Phases 2/3, and agreed that would be useful. The group believed that SSC participation would be determined by the outcomes of the upcoming strategy meeting.

Proposal for 'medium-risk fisheries collaboration'

Improvement in medium-risk fisheries can be challenging for a number of reasons including lack of funds, time, contacts or clarity on appropriate solutions. Actions needed do not always require a formal Fishery Improvement Project, but could benefit from group collaboration.

One member had a proposal to share. The SSC could add value by initiating an innovative 'incubator' to deliver smaller-scale projects. These could focus on an issue, (e.g. data collection, mapping or tracking boats, reducing bycatch) as opposed to a fishery, to help bring targeted fisheries to a lower risk level. Consultants would be invited to pitch projects at a workshop, based on an initial set of priority issues agreed by interested SSC members. An initial project (or set of projects), allocated through a competitive bid, could then be delivered through a pooled SSC fund.

One member noted that overlap may be difficult to find; but a focus on 'issues' is appealing. Centralising best practice within the SSC could help replication on a larger scale. More discussion will be needed at or after the strategy meeting.

Agreed:

- To decide SSC involvement on fishery improvements, though either Project UK or the proposed collaboration, at or after the SSC strategy has been defined.

Actions:

- Secretariat to update Project UK on outcomes of this meeting.

No items under AOB.