

Sustainable Seafood Coalition (SSC)

Members' meeting minutes

Date: 25 January 2018

Location: ClientEarth offices, London E8 3QW

Number of attendees: 24 total (including 3 ClientEarth staff acting as secretariat, facilitator and minute taker)

Summary of agreed points

Item 1: SSC statement on social responsibility

- Subject to approval by members who were not at the meeting, the following statements will be added to the Sourcing Code in Section 2, Scope.
 - SSC Members recognise that social responsibility is another critical pillar of sustainability in the global seafood supply chain.
 - Members comply with the Modern Slavery Act 2015 where applicable.
 - Members have policies that consider social and ethical challenges in seafood sourcing in their supply chains.
- A one-year implementation period will apply for alignment with the above.

Item 2: Communications and social media

- Secretariat to: create an SSC LinkedIn business profile; create a video summarising the Codes to upload to SSC website and share with members; request slot at CLG to provide an SSC update.

Item 3: KPIs and secretariat reporting

- The following KPIs will be reported at each meeting:
 - Number of new members, split by sector.
 - Number of new businesses referred for a meeting or call on SSC membership.

- Member retention rate.
- Secretariat and members that volunteered to help will develop a survey to identify the value of the group to established members. This will later help to identify a suitable KPI to measure against.
- Financial report to be updated for each members' meeting and an electronic copy to be sent to members.

Item 4: Seafish RASS / SSC collaboration

- The work on the RASS-SSC conversion tool is no longer a priority and will not continue.

Item 5: Alignment with the Codes

- Minor seafood ingredients: businesses should use their own best judgement in relation to how to prioritise their resources regarding their seafood sourcing.
- Implementation reports will be conducted on a three-year cycle with the next report taking place in 2020 and next discussed in 2019.

Item 6: AOB

- Next members meeting to align with summer CLG or other London-based seafood meeting in early July and future meetings to follow summer/winter meeting pattern.

Purpose of the members' meeting

To decide on the inclusion of a social responsibility statement in Sourcing Code; discuss next steps for the RASS/SSC work; and agree on a communications strategy, KPIs, financial reporting and frequency of implementation reports.

Item 1: SSC statement on social responsibility

In the last meeting, SSC Members agreed to include a public statement within the Sourcing Code that addresses commitments regarding social/ethical responsibility. Currently the Codes only address environmental issues. Here we discussed and agreed what amendments to make in the Sourcing Code.

Discussion and comments

- Several members recently participated in a separate meeting in which an action group on social responsibility in the seafood industry was founded: the Seafood Ethics Action Alliance (SEAA). This group comprises of commercial, market-facing bodies. SEAA aims to avoid replication of other existing groups and focus on mutual areas of interest on which to take action with an aligned approach.

- One member asked why another action group was necessary and why the issue couldn't be brought under the SSC umbrella. Another member responded that the SSC membership base was much broader than that of SEAA, and expressed concern that tackling social and ethical challenges in the SSC could detract from its original core values and goals.
- The group discussed how the SSC could interact with the SEAA. With the expertise involved, there will likely be overlap on issues that will link closely and be of use to both groups. One member felt that whilst those participating in the SEAA will be able to do more advocacy than the SSC is able to, it would be useful to remain open to sharing the learnings and/or outputs from the SEAA within the SSC.
- A member suggested that a fairly broad statement would be most appropriate in order to cover the commitment and resource capacity of the variety of business sizes in the SSC, which range from very large to very small.
- The group discussed appropriate alignment periods to allow businesses to incorporate the new amendments.
- It was acknowledged that any wording relating to the Modern Slavery Act only applies to businesses with an annual turnover of over £36 million.

Agreed:

- Subject to approval by members who were not at the meeting, the following statements will be added to the Sourcing Code in Section 2, Scope.

SSC Members recognise that social responsibility is another critical pillar of sustainability in the global seafood supply chain.

Members comply with the Modern Slavery Act 2015 where applicable.

Members have policies that consider social and ethical challenges in seafood sourcing in their supply chains.

- A one-year implementation period will apply for alignment with the above.

Actions:

Secretariat to seek approval from members not present at the meeting and add agreed statements to the Sourcing Code.

Item 2: Communications and social media

The secretariat offered a strategy for a more proactive approach to social media activity which, until now, has been limited and on an ad hoc basis. Members are able to provide content as and when they have something to share. A structured approach would help raise the profile of the SSC; assist in the fulfilment of our aims; highlight individual

members; and help expand membership (in addition to current direct actions) by exhibiting the value of the SSC.

The secretariat offered to create and publicly disseminate a short video outlining the commitments of members signing up to the SSC codes. This could be available online for potential new members as well as for existing members to use internally.

Discussion and comments

- One member raised the issue of businesses with a 'no social media' policy, who would not be able to contribute or reap any potential benefits.
- There was a discussion on whether it is appropriate for content to be member-specific, which members can do directly, or if it should contain more general information/news about the seafood industry. Some members felt that an SSC/member retweeting arrangement would be most suitable.
- There was a discussion on the risks of opening the group up to internet antagonists ("trolls") and concern as to the potential time spent on responding to comments and the nature of the responses.
- Some thought that there is value in publicly exhibiting that the SSC is actively seeking new members, and that the current risks of a social media strategy were marginal. However, due to the low current number of followers there was debate as to how useful it would be as a membership expansion tool. It was suggested that social media interaction with the SSC should remain optional for members and that it is worth monitoring engagement with new members going forward.
- Members suggested other useful tools for the secretariat to use to help membership expansion: LinkedIn; participation and attendance at conferences; and quick updates at the Seafish CLG when possible.
- Members asked whether the SSC Twitter handle is linked to any public ClientEarth accounts and the secretariat confirmed that the SSC account is not.
- The group felt that a video describing the commitments of members signing up to the SSC could be a useful tool.

Agreed:

- The position outlined in the Terms of Reference is still appropriate, and a more strategic approach is not required at the moment.
- The SSC should have public facing communications tools, including a LinkedIn page, a video explaining the commitments in the codes, and for the secretariat to engage in meetings to invite new members.

Actions:

Secretariat to: create an SSC LinkedIn business profile; create a video summarising the Codes, share with members and upload to SSC website; request slot at CLG to provide an SSC update.

Item 3: KPIs and secretariat reporting

In the strategy meeting last April members agreed there should be a reporting mechanism with emphasis on a simple report against strategic aims, with key performance indicators (KPIs), and basic financial accountability. Initially, the SSC was funded by a private foundation but, as of 2016, membership fees were introduced to provide a sustainable income to run the SSC. Therefore the secretariat presented members with some suggested KPIs and a financial report for 2017 with projections for 2018.

Discussion and comments

- Members suggested additional KPI metrics, including the percentage of each sector covered by membership, and retention of members.
- One member asked if the secretariat could assess and demonstrate the value of the SSC. Some said that the 'number of new members' alone was not a sufficient indicator of the value and felt that there was disparity in the experience of the SSC between new and long-established members. The 'value' of the SSC is important to all businesses who measure success in commercial terms and need to demonstrate return, and yet the SSC's values can be hard to justify as a business-case because they tend not to be tangible. One participant suggested a survey as a means of identifying ways to provide value to longer-term members. Some members volunteered to be a part of a steering group to help design this survey.
- One member felt that the implementation of the Codes is the primary purpose of the SSC, and therefore the most important metric. There was a discussion about if and how this could be measured as a KPI, including the amount of resource that would be required from members and whether they should assess individual levels of compliance with the Codes.
- Concerning financial reporting members discussed how often they would like an update and whether it is necessary to publish the information publicly.

Agreed:

- The following KPIs will be reported at each meeting:
 - Number of new members, split by sector.
 - Number of new businesses referred for a meeting or call on SSC membership.
 - Member retention rate.
- Secretariat and members that volunteered to help will develop a survey to identify the value of the group to established members. This will later help to identify a suitable KPI to measure against.

- Financial report to be updated for each members' meeting and an electronic copy to be sent to members.

Actions:

Secretariat to monitor agreed KPIs and compile report for next members' meeting; update financial report for next members' meeting; and develop a survey, with support of members who volunteered to advise on appropriate questions.

Item 4: Seafish RASS / SSC collaboration

The Seafish Risk Assessment for Sourcing Seafood (RASS) tool is a free online risk assessment tool for wild fish stocks. The SSC and Seafish developed an algorithm to convert the RASS fishery risk ratings into SSC risk outcomes of Low, Medium and High-Risk. These were based on available data for stock status, management, bycatch and habitat impact, which are categories used both on the RASS tool as well as in the Sourcing Code. This collaboration was part of an effort to show links between the two, and particularly to support smaller businesses with lower internal capacity to conduct their own risk assessments for each source fishery in their supply chains. The precautionary nature of the algorithm scored a large number of stocks as 'high-risk', especially where data is deficient for any of the criteria.

The secretariat presented three options for how to use the RASS/SSC outcomes: make them publicly available on the SSC website; update the matrix with the latest scientific advice twice a year and share with members internally; or leave this work behind for businesses to risk assess their supply chains in their own ways.

Discussion and comments

- The group discussed whether it was appropriate to make the tool publicly available as a demonstration of transparency, or if it was more useful as an internal sense-checking tool. Most members felt that the precautionary nature of the algorithm is potentially off-putting for new, smaller business members and would be misunderstood if it was made public.
- One member felt that the conversion matrix was a simple tool to help fix a complex problem. Instead, members felt that risk assessments and resulting actions are best managed by individual businesses. The business can make its own decision based on resource, volumes bought and other factors such as involvement in fishery improvement projects. The decisions will be in line with the commitments in the sourcing code, and businesses can use the RASS tool directly if they wish.

Agreed:

The work on the RASS-SSC conversion tool is no longer a priority and will not continue.

Actions:

Secretariat to update Seafish.

Item 5: Alignment with the Codes

Sharing approaches to minor seafood ingredients

Several members have products in which the seafood content is only a minimal percentage of the overall product, such as fish oil in a salad dressing. This can cause challenges due to low volumes limiting influence with the supplier, difficulty of tracing the fishery, or resource needed to deal with such a wide range of products. The group was invited to share their practices in place for dealing with Code alignment for these minor seafood ingredients in products and their interpretations of the Guidance on this matter.

Discussion and comments

- There are many factors involved: the amount of resource involved in conducting risk assessments; the supplier-customer relationship; the volume of ingredient being purchased; and the resulting amount of leverage that could be exercised on the supply chain.
- The inherent riskiness (such as if classified as endangered) of the species involved should be taken into consideration.
- Boundaries and interpretations can differ slightly between businesses.
- One member emphasised that for their business transparency is the most important sentiment. They suggested that the issue could be addressed via explicit public facing statements (e.g. "We will apply our seafood sourcing policy to products for which the seafood content is less than 0.5% once we are confident that all other products meet or exceed our standards.")

Outcomes from the implementation report

In 2016, the secretariat commissioned a report (published in April 2017) to assess the implementation of the Codes by members. Based on feedback this was considered overall as a useful process that should be repeated. The secretariat asked members to decide on the frequency of future implementation reports.

Discussion and comments

The group discussed both the time-burden and benefits and added respectability of the report. One member emphasised that the methodology and process should be reviewed before it is recommissioned.

Agreed:

- Minor seafood ingredients: businesses should use their own best judgement in relation to how to prioritise their resources regarding their seafood sourcing.

- Implementation reports will be conducted on a three-year cycle with the next report taking place in 2020 and next discussed in 2019.

Item 6: AOB

Secretariat Announcements

- Upcoming events of interest:
 - Organisers of the London Seafood Festival, taking place in October 2019, have been gauging interest. The SSC has been invited to be involved, as have several members. All members are invited to contact the secretariat should they wish to engage collaboratively. Organisers will be doing a media launch in October 2018.
 - Oceana is hosting a roundtable at LSE on April 10th 2018 on the socio-economic benefits of rebuilding fisheries in the UK. A formal invitation will be issued to the secretariat soon, which it will share with members.
- The Hong Kong market, in collaboration with a HK-based NGO, has decided to adopt the SSC codes and form the Hong Kong Sustainable Seafood Coalition. This is not a direct relation to the SSC but is strong recognition of its credibility and endorsement of the model. ClientEarth has accepted an invitation to join the steering group for this initiative.
- The ClientEarth Spanish seafood project is now working with industry in Spain on voluntary agreements. ClientEarth will also be presenting at the Seaweb Summit in June on this initiative.
- SSC meetings often aligned with Seafish CLGs. Members discussed the timing of the next meeting.

Agreed:

Next members meeting to align with summer CLG or other London-based seafood meeting in early July and future meetings to follow summer/winter meeting pattern.

Actions:

Secretariat to arrange the next members' meeting and share relevant invitations with members by email.