



Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday 23 January 2019

Location: KPMG Office, 8th Floor, Prince's Building, 10 Chater Road, Central.

Attendees: Going forward, all meetings will be reserved for Members of the Hong Kong Sustainable Seafood Coalition. They will be closed to observers and members of the public.

10	Members	1	Technical Advisor
1	Secretariat	3	Steering Committee
3	External Advisory		

Agenda:

1. Greetings and introductions
2. Findings from the feedback survey
3. Public consultation and finalising documents
4. Implementation introduction and tools
5. Workplan for 2019
6. Media and public awareness
7. Discussion, wrap up, and AOB



1. Greetings and introductions

- Recap of Chatham House Rules and Member transparency
- Introduction of two new Members – do we need to mention company names?

2. Overview of feedback from Members for 2018

- No concerns from feedback survey circulated to Members at the end of 2018
- It was agreed that an informal element will be added to the Members meetings to enable further engagement /sharing of ideas
- Suggested by one Member to hold longer, technical meetings for Members only, and short briefing meetings for non-Members

3. Feedback from public consultation and finalising the Codes and Guidance documents

- Public consultation took place over four-weeks in Q4 2018. This was kicked off with a briefing webinar from the Technical Advisor (TA) and Secretariat. 23 individuals registered for the webinar. In total 6 individuals / organisations gave feedback on the documents during the public consultation period. This included international seafood consultants, a Hong Kong based academic, and local and international non-governmental organisations.
- In summary, the public believed that the Guidance Document and Codes of Conduct (the Codes) are great examples of best practice in seafood sourcing. The challenge will be around implementation and oversight. Specific feedback included:

Feedback	Response and action
To take into account food safety as it relates to naturally occurring (wild) reef fishes and scombrids (Ciguatoxin and Scombrototoxin)	Food safety for wild catch within the scope of the Code is limited to live reef food fish but the Guidance Document also refers to the Hong Kong food safety regulations. Emphasis of the documents is not on food safety.
Risk assessments should include a review of labour conditions.	Currently, social topics are outside of the scope of the Codes. This will be incorporated at a later time after legality, traceability and biological sustainability have been addressed.
Clarification needed around the word “integrity.”	The term integrity is used in relation to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and seafood fraud, and not sustainability. A definition has been added to the glossary.
For the medium risk category, it was questioned how a stock that was data poor could indicate that the stock was stable or improving?	Medium risk assessment has been revised. However, according to the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), 'data poor' does not necessarily equate to poor management: Many data limited fisheries may be well managed using precautionary management measures which do not rely heavily on quantitative data. Other metrics can be used to assess stock status.



Feedback	Response and action
The terms 'own brand' / 'private label' seem to refer only to retailers.	These terms were debated and agreed upon by the Members. The term 'own brand' was used in the United Kingdom's Sustainable Seafood Coalition's Codes, and 'private label' was added for Hong Kong.
Members should set a metric to contribute a portion of the proceeds of their sales to engaging positively with supply chains.	Members agreed that doing so would ultimately improve their own ambitions to improve their supply chains. However, as this is a voluntary initiative, we should avoid prescription that a specific portion of sales must go towards this.
Is there a list of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) for third-party assessments that can be used?	Given that the HKSSC is not a standard, there is no need to determine CABs. However, Members can provide a list of auditors that they are using to the Secretariat to keep record. Members may also conduct first-party assessments.
State a clear timeframe.	<p>A time commitment is already included in the Code that Members will conduct risk assessments or audits on an annual basis. Other commitments are agreed with Members directly as they join (to implement the Codes within 12 months for retailers, and 18 months for food service).</p> <p>The priority for Members in this first year is to start screening their seafood sources against the code requirements and then start to conduct risk assessments on a priority list of species once the tools are available to do so.</p>
Consider synergizing resources to set up a sharing platform of suppliers who have been checked.	It will be important that if this is done, commercially sensitive information such as how much is being purchased, costs, etc., cannot be shared. This is to respect Hong Kong's Competition law.
Is there a process in place to handle improper use of the HKSSC logo?	The UK conducted a review every two years. Such a review could be conducted by the Secretariat/ commissioned to local researchers/ university students.
Is there a role for an independent review committee?	<p>The original intent in the Guidance Document was for Members to commit to responding directly to requests for information from the general public. The UK took the approach of independent audits being conducted by Members and no review committee – it was up to the Members to say what they are doing.</p> <p>The Steering Committee advises not to impose an independent review committee at this time, however, there may very well be a role for an independent review committee at a later stage to review Member's policies, risk assessment results, etc.</p>



Feedback	Response and action
	<p>Members agree that there should not be an independent review committee. However, there is merit in having an independent third-party assess risk as it will help to keep commercially sensitive information private. Members should remain aware not to share strategic information of their business with others.</p>
<p>The qualification and standardisation of the auditors should be provided</p>	<p>It will be up to the Member to use the auditor of their choice. If Members would like, they can share the names of auditors to the Secretariat that meet the definition in the Glossary. There are no specific requirements on the qualifications of the auditors, but they must have relevant experience.</p>
<p>Anti-Competition Policy reminders.</p>	<p>These Codes should not prevent Members from making independent decisions. All actions can be taken “as deemed appropriate” by Members. Minor updates in wording have been made throughout the documents.</p> <p>Members can fund audits together as long as both parties agree that they are happy for the other party to know the information and outcomes.</p>

- TA ran through the final decision trees
- There were no major concerns from stakeholders over the shark procurement and life reef food fish additions to the Guidance document

4. Implementation introduction and tools

- There are three tools that are currently under consideration to assist Members in implementation:
 - **Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels Group (HSH Group) sponsored traceability tools:** Overview of the “Marketplace” – a tool that brings buyers who want traceable seafood and sellers who have confidence over the traceability of their seafood together. The database tool developed also provides a mechanism for buyers and sellers to clearly identify the seafood and avoid the confusions associated with different languages and variants on common names. It is important to HSH Group that the funds that have been invested into the development of this tool allow for sharing and others to benefit from it. The tool cannot show pricing or other commercially sensitive information – as this will go against Competition Law.
 - **Biological sustainability risk assessments:** Providing assessments for Members using science-based methodology that aligns with the HKSSC Codes. This could be a cost-effective way to generate risk assessments as the results can be



shared amongst Members. Would also partner with local universities and research institutes to gather baseline intelligence. It gives credible third-party oversight. The cost will depend on how many species will be assessed, if a website is needed, and the consultants involved. If some information has already been collected by another assessor, it might just be ensuring that all required information is there.

- **Global Dialogue on Seafood Traceability:** One Member is working on this initiative. Essentially, it uses blockchain technology to verify information from source to point of sale. Once this software is complete, it will be open source and free for anyone to use. There is no set timeline and looking to be a long process. The Member has started testing with a fishery that is already third-party sustainability-certified to check the robustness of their design. This is teaching them a lot about where information is, and how it can be accessed.

5. 2019 workplan

- The funding currently covers from 1 January 2019 – 1 July 2019
- During this time, activities that will be supported by the Secretariat and TA include:
 - Implementation guidance and support (webinars)
 - Recruitment of additional buyers and sellers of seafood to join the Coalition
 - Secretariat will start a bi-monthly Member newsletter with information from the industry
 - Explore avenues for funding from other sources
- Members do not wish to currently support the following given resource constraints:
 - Baseline study on seafood labelling in Hong Kong
 - Government engagement
 - Public education
 - Industry education
- In the next month, Members are encouraged to start the screening process, including reviewing their own-brand/ private label seafood to see what is third-party certified with chain of custody, and what is not

6. Media and public awareness

- In the next few months, there will be avenues where ADM Capital Foundation's Choose Right Today and HKSSC can collaborate to increase public awareness of the Coalition
- The Secretariat and Steering Committee will indicate when it would be appropriate to host a press release

7. Discussion, wrap up, and AOB

- For governance reasons within the organisation, the Vice Chair has had to step down from the position. In the coming weeks, if any Member would like to initiate a vote to



seek a replacement, including nominating a new Member or volunteering themselves, they are to contact the Secretariat