



Working Group Minutes

Date: 24 Jan 2022

Location: Zoom

Attendees: 5

4	Members	1	Technical Advisor
#	Observers	1	Steering Committee
1	Secretariat		

Agenda

1. Assessment updates – wild and farmed
2. Peer review progress for all profiles
3. Aquaculture improvement project update
4. Assessment team updates
5. HKSSC member support tools and product trials
6. Priority areas for 2022
7. Q2 meeting date 2022

1. ASSESSMENT UPDATES – WILD & FARMED

- Six wild catch species assessed in 2021
- DNA testing on final wild sea cucumber product completed and identified scientific species - *Holothuria scabra* from South Africa (note originally it was thought to be from Indonesia) – assessment will start once TRAFFIC South Africa has confirmed species is commercially traded from SA
- Species usually occurs further north than South Africa - to confirm with experts that the species actually occurs naturally in SA
- Internal review process completed on the six wild catch profiles (Yvonne Sadovy, Stan Shea and Jacqui Dixon)
- One farmed species assessed in 2021 - Soft-shell mud crab *Scylla serrata*
- Two further farmed assessments underway - Pearl oysters and Noble scallops
- Building up a network of regional expertise for peer review with a focus on academic institutes to maintain affordability of assessments and peer review process
 - Peer review database available on request
 - All peer reviewers now get offered a small stipend (as of 2021)
 - Previously peer reviewers were asked to do the review for free - response rate was about 50%, hopefully we will be able to build a better relationship with them with a small stipend and responses so far have been good
 - Database of peer reviewers available upon request -speak to Jacqui



- One member asked if it would be possible to send follow up questions to the peer review network if needed. The TA suggested that it might be and that most peer reviewers would likely be interested to hear from industry. It was reemphasised and agreed by members that the aim of building up these peer review contacts is to create a connection between academic experts on species and the industry to enable a better use of that academic expertise that exists and is currently untapped

2. Peer review progress for 2020 profiles

- Farmed Giant Grouper (China, Taiwan, HK and Indonesia) – completed in 2021 despite challenge to find a peer reviewer
- Spiny lobster (wild) (Philippines, Australia) – completed in 2021
- Swordtip squid (wild) (Vietnam) – completed in 2021 and final review ongoing by consultant based in Vietnam to deal with confusion over trawling ban; thank you to Indoguna for putting us in touch with original trade association who introduced us to a Vietnamese research institute
- Remainder farmed profiles - spiny lobster, grey mullet, kuruma prawn, murray cod, Japanese sea bass, red snapper – completed in 2020 (free peer review process)
- Tuna species yellowfin, albacore and bluefin – assessments are annual therefore repeated in 2021. As these are based on ISSF reports no need for peer review
- ISSF - NGO that conducts tuna assessments - deemed as a credible resource
- Outstanding reviews:
 - Japanese sea bass (wild) – no peer review completed
 - Indian Ocean squid (Sri Lanka) – no peer review completed
 - Leopard Coral Trout (wild) – no peer review completed
 - Slipper lobster (Thailand covered / missing Sri Lanka) - no peer review
 - Member raised that Sri Lanka squid is a relatively small fishery, and importing quantity is not significant therefore decided to hold off from peer review
 - Same for the slipper lobster fishery - will hold off from peer review. Indoguna currently still sourcing from Sri Lanka and there is a three month fishing ban in place.
 - Indoguna might be able to get contact from Sri Lankan fishery department if we decide to do a peer review at future point if other members are sourcing squid / slipper lobster

Peer review progress for 2021 profiles:

- Sea cucumber - *Holothuria fuscogilva*, *Stichopus japonicus*, *Holothuria Tubulosa* – completed
- Sea cucumber - *Holothuria scabra* – DNA testing completed, and species identified; will be peer reviewed once assessment is completed



- Sweetwater fish – *Arapaima gigas* – completed but few issues need to be cleared up to focus the profile on the community managed areas - need to ensure traceability to managed area as the species should not be traded otherwise
- Soft-shell Mud crab *Scylla serrata* (wild and farmed) - still awaiting feedback on Bangladesh; note for Indonesia and Thailand no peer reviewers responded yet
- Antarctic toothfish - *Dissostichus mawsoni* – no peer review completed
- Note initial contact made with CCAMLR - but they cannot do peer review as they are a regional fishery organization - but introduced to the science committee representative (New Zealand government). Still no response.
- M&C currently sources MSC certified toothfish but feels its still useful to ask suppliers for key information given the news articles about toothfish
- TA pointed out that the MSC certification would be more rigorous than the SRA methodology so no need to do an assessment and peer review on MSC products, as long as chain of custody is in place
- M&C also raised the question whether the SRA should be focusing on currently existing products that members are trading in or new products that they are thinking to trade in, to ensure they are sustainable and traceable. It was agreed that local products farmed in Hong Kong are useful to assess as if discovered to be a good source, could be an opportunity
- Local HK farmed profiles put forward by AFCD - Pearl oysters *Pinctada fucata* and Noble scallops *Mimachlamys nobilis* - assessments underway

Member feedback on SRA 2020 profiles that have not been peer reviewed

- Japanese seabass (wild)
 - M&C commented this is traded a lot in Hong Kong - the regular seabass that is not too big, considered a small fish and has both wild and farmed origins. It looks like the species from France / Europe but caught locally here in Hong Kong and China. M&C are not sourcing from Japan, sourcing from local Aberdeen market currently; some might be farmed but suppliers are not sure
 - Indoguna suggested to talk to MSC/ASC Japan office if we do want to identify peer reviewers for Japanese products in the future; language is also an issue as most documents will be in Japanese
 - TA suggested as no members are currently sourcing this species from Japan, will not continue to look for peer reviewers for now and all agreed. It was reminded that the farmed Japanese seabass profile for China has already been peer reviewed in 2020
- Leopard Coral Trout (wild) - agreed to continue looking for peer reviewers as relevant to some members
- Indian Ocean squid (wild) - Sri Lanka - agreed to hold off from peer review given small size of fishery

Member feedback on SRA 2021 profiles that have not been peer reviewed



- Antarctic toothfish - confirm with 178 Degrees about this, otherwise no need to continue looking for peer reviewer
- Soft shell crab - Indoguna will follow up on potential contacts in Thailand and Indonesia to support on peer review process

3. Aquaculture improvement project update

- Members were reminded that this is an initial stage of an AIP
- Three members have been sourcing grey mullet / interested in sourcing grey mullet
- Hong Kong New Territories Fish Culture Association agreed to distribute a questionnaire to the grey mullet farmers
- RS Standards completed the initial questionnaire (English) in Nov 2021, reviewed by team and AFCD; translation into Chinese completed in Jan 2022; awaiting feedback from AFCD
- Budget for translation shall be considered in long term as this did take significant time
- Arthur Chung, the assessor, might conduct one-on-one interviews with some of the farmers
- Questionnaire to be tested with Chairman and Secretariat of the Association (both own farms)
- Following initial feedback, questionnaire to then be distributed to all other farmers (estimate Feb 2022 following CNY)
- Focus remains on seed (where juveniles are being sourced from) and feed (how much fishmeal / fish oil enters the feed and source fisheries for FMFO), but questionnaire covers other challenges that the farmers are facing, and issues raised by members (e.g. product safety / chemicals use)
- Local farmed species: M&C pointed out that members might be interested to know more about the farms or even to visit the farms themselves and consider connecting the farmers with coalition members. TA agreed this was an excellent idea and can be explored at a future point (following the AIP) with the AFCD / Fish Culture Association
- It was commented that even if the farms / products are considered problematic on some issues it would still be beneficial to create a connection between members and farmers to illustrate to local farmers private sector interest in aquaculture improvements around sustainability issues

4. ASSESSMENT TEAM UPDATES

- Loby Hau (HKU wild catch assessor) has been offered a full-time position at WWF HK
- We will need to identify a new assessor with the support of Yvonne Sadovy at HKU and training from Loby
- Arthur Chung (farmed species assessor) has one more year to complete his PhD at HKU
- Focus remains on building local capacity but also need to consider continuity



5. HKSSC member support tools and product trials

- M&C:
 - Supplier able to answer most questions for frozen black tiger, vannamei prawns and farmed Barramundi. These are considered easier products to assess
 - Confirmed Barramundi (GLOBALG.A.P) will be ASC certified this year, one of the few ASC certified worldwide
 - M&C to continue collecting data for wild catch from artisanal fishers in France - currently certified as Pavion France - a French national certification standard - not yet certified to other global sustainability standards as the fishery is too small
 - M&C to send the Pavion France standard to TA for review
- Indoguna Singapore
 - To cover whelks, squid, cuttlefish and octopus, as well as Pacific Oyster from Japan - linking up with the PAS 1550 project that is currently assessing these species for Indoguna
 - Whelk from Ireland - assessment has been done and records have been sent for review - still reviewing other details, shall be ready in February
 - Squid/ Cuttlefish/ Octopus - from same fishery and supplier (Vietnam), waiting for assessment report - might be able to have report after Chinese New Year (~mid-feb)
 - Pacific Oyster - difficult to get English reports, Makiko sent Japanese documents, and waiting for feedback; but likely that the outcome will be quite good for oyster
- Member supports tool / final-risk assessment and testing results:
 - Have not received enough data to try out the tool yet / M&C will try out the Member Support tool when he receives results from 2nd supplier

6. Priority areas for 2022

- Species assessments and SRA profiles – funding for any new profiles to be secured outside ADMCF (i.e., member funded or other potential sources) – member feedback on this?
- M&C pointed out that most buyers in the coalition are concerned about the source of the products they are buying so there should be an incentive to put forward species for assessment. Good to push members to ask questions and share their concerns about the seafood they are sourcing. TA agreed that at the AGM this week will recap the work of the SRA WG and encourage members to make use of the SRA assessment team
- Aquaculture improvement project – learning journey using Grey mullet as initial case study – to discuss further ideas on other species once initial AIP process has been completed (estimate June 2022)
- Members are happy with Quarterly update from TA who will integrate updates from the assessor on the ground
- Other areas for SRA to focus on in 2022?



- Potential webinar on sea cucumber (and DNA testing capability) in June/July 2022
- Other areas of interest to members should be communicated with the TA

7. Date / time options for Q2 2022 WG meeting

- 4th April 2022 @3pm (Monday) HKT
- Cesar de Sainte Marseville (M&C) has confirmed interest to Chair the SRA WG from Q3 onwards
- TA still to support on project co-ordination and quarterly updates to Chair / WG