



Seafood Risk Assessment (SRA) Working Group Minutes

Date: 5 September 2022

Location: Zoom

Attendees: 10

4	Members	1	Technical Advisor
5	Observers	0	Steering Committee
1	Secretariat		

Agenda

1. Opening
2. Sea cucumber assessment (Mozambique)
3. Other assessment updates
4. Updates - Call with Monterey Bay Aquarium – Seafood Watch
5. HKSSC member survey – need for species lists from all members
6. Introduction to Global Seafood Alliance
7. Sustainable Fisheries Partnership squid supplier roundtable
8. AOB

1. Opening

- The Chair delivered an opening message to start the meeting.
- It was highlighted that HKSSC continues to engage with WWF Hong Kong to identify opportunities to work together.
- TA shared HKSSC aims at having 26 species profiles on SRA website by the end of this year. HKSSC and SRA website will work towards filling the gap in the market, where assessments of certain species are not available.

2. Sea cucumber assessment (Mozambique)

- Three sea cucumber species have been assessed this year - *Holothuria fuscogilva*, from Australia (low risk); *Stichopus japonicus*, from Japan (medium risk) and *Holothuria tubulosa*, from Turkey, Algeria and Morocco (all high risk).
- The high risk outcome is mostly linked to regulation. Several countries have banned the export of sea cucumber because of stock depletion.
- Knowing the scientific species name is of importance for conducting assessment on biological sustainability of the seafood product. It is also important to have open source information about the species available for public access, which SRA aims to do.
- Currently HKSSC is working on assessing *Holothuria scabra* from Mozambique, a sea cucumber species sourced by one of our members.
- A DNA test was conducted by HKU earlier in the year to confirm the species (note that this is a useful resource for members to be aware of when they are not able to identify their products down to species scientific level). Based on our discussions with TRAFFIC,



this sea cucumber species is most likely from Mozambique, despite the supplier originally stating South Africa. Risk assessment data for this species is not available publicly.

- TA reached out to WWF Mozambique office who connected us to Sidonio Chamo – a consultant in Mozambique and an expert on sea cucumber. He is currently piloting sea cucumber marine aquaculture projects in Mozambique, including hatchery level with a focus on local community upliftment.
- Sidonio Chamo later connected us to the Oceanographic Institute of Mozambique, a government institute.
- The SRA team recently had a call with the institute and submitted them a formal letter regarding the need for risk assessment of sea cucumber. The institute agreed to assist us in the data collection and combine new survey data with the existing scientific research.
- This is a good case study of how HKSSC members can convey the importance of seafood sustainability and illustrates the request of the private sector to the government to drive assessments on seafood species and future fisheries improvement projects.
- TA to circulate the letter submitted to the institute.
- This risk assessment is likely to take us some time due to the groundwork conducted by government and different parties for the data collection. HKSSC is dedicated to pushing forward the assessment.

3. Other assessment updates

- Assessment on soft-shell mud crab *Scylla serrata* (both wild and farmed) has been delayed due to difficulty in identifying experts for peer review.
- TA has recently received contacts for a peer reviewer from Indonesia. An academic from Bangladesh Agricultural University has recently submitted his comments. No peer reviewer from Thailand has been identified for now. TA encouraged members to connect us to academics or experts from Thailand for peer review.
- SRA rapid assessment usually takes about 6 days initially for the assessor to gather information, followed by an internal check by TA and Prof. Yvonne Sadovy (for wild catch). It will then be sent out for peer review. Finding peer reviewers can sometimes be challenging.
- AFCD funded the assessment of two farmed species - noble scallop and pearl oyster from Hong Kong. Both profiles have been uploaded to the SRA website. It was pointed out that fresh / live oysters are not available.
- Some members are interested in sourcing smoked or dried oyster from local farms and currently working on product trials.
- The Chair shared the experience of visiting some local oyster farms in Lau Fu Shan, Hong Kong.
 - Compared to oyster farms in France, local farms manage to grow oyster at a much faster rate – less than a year.
 - Local producers do not yet recommend raw consumption of local oysters.
- The profiles of the following species and the details of suppliers are now available on the Seafood Risk Assessment website.



- Spiny Lobster *Panulirus ornatus* from Australia (wild) – included main supplier (80%) for export and one smaller trader for local consumption.
- Albacore tuna *Thunnus alalunga* from North Atlantic (wild) – referenced the MSC supplier directory and FishChoice website.
- Sweetwater fish *Arapaima gigas* from Brazil – once the fishery is ready for export, BlueYou will be the prospective trader to Hong Kong. If it is sourced by members it will be community-based management only because the rest of the species is very high risk. The fishery bounced back quickly once proper management was in place.
- Pearl oysters *Pinctada fucata* from Hong Kong (farmed) – local farmers contact details have been provided.
- Noble scallops *Mimachlamys nobilis* from Hong Kong (farmed) – local farmers contact details have been provided.
- SRA team is searching for suppliers who can provide the following species. TA invited members to connect us to the suppliers of these species:
 - Leopard Coral Trout *Plectropomus leopardus* from Australia (wild) – HKSSC is still waiting for the response of The Company One Pty Ltd from Cairns.
 - Sea cucumber *Holothuria fuscogilva* from Australia (wild).

4. Updates - Call with Monterey Bay Aquarium – Seafood Watch

- TA enquired about risk assessments of Chinese cuisine species via the Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions (CASS), a global community representing over 100 organizations across 22 countries. The idea is to save resources by teaming up with others that may be focusing on these species. CASS connected the TA to Monterey Bay Aquarium (MBA) to explore relevant assessments.
- MBA do commission assessment work but only for their own priorities and unfortunately Chinese cuisine species are not a priority (for the U.S.-based market)
- TA recommended members to look at MBA assessments on farmed abalone (worldwide production) which is on the green list. The farming techniques being used are similar worldwide and thus can be assessed together, which saves resources
- Global ratings for farmed bivalves have also been completed. These farmed bivalves are on the green and yellow list.
- MBA has profiles for sea cucumber species from Canada and Australia only. SRA and HKSSC will fill the gap by assessing other sea cucumber species relevant to Hong Kong market.
- MBA does not assess fish maw because it is a Chinese product and not relevant for the U.S. market.
- MBA is to focus mainly on the seafood products produced by and coming into the U.S. market. One third of the assessment will be related to local fisheries and aquaculture and the rest are the imports into the U.S.
- Currently MBA has no capacity for assessing Chinese cuisine species, but they are going to assess Asian Carp because it is traded in such large volumes.
- TA reiterated the assessments conducted by MBA and WWF are usually more in-depth and take around six months to complete, which is very different from the rapid



assessment approach of SRA that takes about 6 days plus time for internal review and peer review.

- MBA pointed out that there is a need for and value to have rapid assessments like this to fill the gaps.
- Next steps on Chinese cuisine species - TA to reach out to Global Seafood Rating Alliance members based in Asia and ask if they have assessed any Chinese cuisine species ensuring our work does not overlap with them.
- A member agreed that MBA focus is on the U.S. market and is used by their U.S.-based operations.
- TA raised that the global assessment of farmed products on MBA is very useful. If the farming system appears to be low risk, companies do not have to go through detailed assessments on individual countries.

5. HKSSC member survey – need for species lists from all members

- For member trade data survey, 7 responses have been received so far.
- Only 3 members have filled in the species identification spreadsheet, which is very important for us to identify common species traded amongst members and the volumes traded as a coalition.
- Member shared that filling in the spreadsheet was not very time-consuming and it is an exercise to develop good practices to chase suppliers for product details.
- Spreadsheets can also potentially be used as a more simplified data collection tool as the first step for hotel member suppliers.
- A member raised the challenges for requesting information from suppliers because they often lack the information. Local suppliers are generally behind compared to those in Europe. It is relatively easier, however, to work with suppliers from Japan. Despite there being no certification system, fishery or product information can often be found on the product stamp and notes provided by both Japanese fishers and government as a proof of catching method. It is tricky to work with suppliers from Vietnam as they seem reluctant to disclose information.
- A member pointed out that changing to another species of fish maw is usually not noticeable. In general, the size of fish maw seems to be more important than the type of species used.
- TA brought up the catch of totoaba whose swim bladder is used as fish maw is very problematic to the population of vaquita - the world's smallest porpoise – as bycatch. This fish maw product is particularly high risk and not recommended.
- Other fish maws that come as a byproduct of certified fish, such as cod, are not problematic.
- TA to introduce members to supplier of fish maw from MSC-certified cod fish.
- Fish maw products from Africa are mostly problematic due to the limited regulations on fish maw and the lack of traceability.
- A gentle reminder for all members to fill in the species list survey by mid-September.
- Some members raised the challenge to submit before the deadline due to communication with the procurement team.
- Secretariat to send members the survey in word and excel files.



Member support tools and product trials

- HKSSC support tools help members to align with the HKSSC code of conduct and conduct internal risk assessments on biological sustainability, legality and traceability by asking suppliers questions about the products.
- M&C Asia and Indoguna Lordly have been collecting information for the products sourced in large volume using the member support tools.
- Secretariat to share with hotel members again both English and the recent Chinese translated version of member support tools (excel spreadsheets).

6. Introduction to Global Seafood Alliance

- It was historically called the Global Aquaculture Alliance which is well known for their BAP standard.
- The alliance has recently been renamed to Global Seafood Alliance because the alliance is now covering wild catch as well.
- The new GSA wild catch standard covers areas that are missing from other seafood certification standards such as crew working conditions, food safety and environmental responsibility at vessel level. Aiming to provide assurances to the marketplace that wild seafood has been harvested and processed in an ethical manner.
- For example, the MSC certified wild catch standard does not look at labour standards or environmental management on board the vessel, but focuses on fisheries status, regulations and fisheries management.
- TA proposed a presentation by Global Seafood Alliance to members on the new Best Seafood Practices standard to be scheduled on 26th September. Email to be sent out to all members shortly.

7. Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP) - squid supplier roundtable

- SFP is a non-government organisation that has run multiple fisheries improvement programs across the world.
- SFP will hold a workshop about their squid supplier roundtable *at the Seafood Expo Singapore* in mid-September.
- TA recommended members to introduce their source squid suppliers, down to vessel level, to the SFP squid roundtable so as to promote adopting fishery improvement and tackle IUU fishing. Note that global best practice in terms of corporate sourcing policies is either sourcing certified products or products that are undergoing improvement work, and suppliers participating in such roundtables would be an example of this.
- Secretariat to circulate email to all members this week.

8. AOB

- Peer review on mud crab for Bangladesh recently received and profile should be made available on the SRA website within two months.
- TA recommended members to focus on assessing species that are sourced in large volume and potentially problematic. SRA rapid assessment covers multiple countries and



catch methods. The whole process takes a few months including peer review, unless delays in identifying a peer reviewer. Members are welcome to enquire with the TA for a quotation if they are interested in new species risk assessments.

9. Q4 meeting date 2022

- Next meeting date - Monday 28th November 2022 at 3 pm HKT