

Domestic & Export Sector Panel

27 October 2021 via Zoom

Attendees:

Jerry Percy (Chair)
Anne Birnie (SAFPO)
Martyn Boyers (BPA)
David Jarrad (SAGB)
Chris Anderson (Processors using domestic catch)
Sarah Ready (small boat/inshore interests)
Dale Rodmell (NFFO)
Rosemary Johnston (NI interests) (in-part)

Seafish:
Marcus Coleman
Aoife Martin
Phillip Quirie (Secretariat)

Apologies:

Michael Clark (SSA)
Robert Duthie (SPPA)
Jim Evans (Welsh interests)
Sheila Keith (Shetland interests)
Elsbeth Macdonald (SFF)
Paul Trebilcock (UKAFPO)
Simon Potten (Secretariat)

Welcome and format of the meeting

1. The Chair welcomed everyone and outlined the importance of the Annual Plan 2022-23 and strategic review agenda items.

Apologies for absence

2. PQ shared apologies.

Minutes of previous meeting and actions

3. The minutes of the previous meeting (19 May 2021) were reviewed and accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.
4. PQ reported that all actions had been completed.

Seafish Annual Plan for 2022-2023

5. AM delivered a presentation of proposed content in the Annual Plan for 2022-23, with the following activity categorised by the 5 Challenges:

Challenge 1 – Changing landscape: Helping the industry navigate a changing political, economic and regulatory landscape as the UK exits the EU.

- Assessing/responding to the implications of the TCA on trade with the EU and on fishing opportunities.
- Regulatory equivalence – ensuring there is consistency in how regulations apply across different jurisdictions in the UK.
- Economic analysis and assessment of impact of EU exit, etc. on seafood supply chain.
- Continue the Seafish international trade programme:

- Trade facilitation: Ensuring FTA recognise needs of the seafood sector and assisting businesses to equip themselves to navigate the complexities of tariff and non-tariff barriers.
- Trade promotion: Identifying potential opportunities in overseas markets, providing ‘on-the-ground’ support at trade shows, and producing marketing and promotional assets that businesses can use to help promote their products.

Challenge 2 – Seafood consumption: Increasing consumer demand against strong competition from other protein and non-protein foods.

- Continue to extend our Love Seafood brand with a calendar of consumer campaigns and business to business support.
- Provide generic and bespoke market insight analysis.
- Regulatory guidance on marketing and consumer issues.

Challenge 3 – A safe and skilled workforce: Supporting the sector to find and develop a suitably skilled workforce, while addressing complex challenges around workplace safety.

- Continue programmes to support industry secure the labour it needs:
 - Sea a Bright Future campaign.
 - Analysis and advice on labour issues and requirements to inform policy development.
 - Economic surveys of labour needs.
- Continue to deliver Seafish safety programme:
 - FISG and regional safety groups.
 - At sea hazards via Kingfisher.
 - Fishermen’s training.
 - Administering safety funds to equip industry with appropriate safety gear.
- Onshore training – course development and delivery.
- Expanding our Young Seafood Leaders Network.

Challenge 4 – Ensuring sustainable supply: Helping the seafood sector to source sustainable seafood in an increasingly competitive global market, while ensuring consumer expectations on human welfare, the environment and animal welfare issues are met.

- Shellfish water quality work programme.
- Fisheries management:
 - Shellfish Industry Advisory Group (SIAG) and species/research groups.
 - Establishing a new finfish group – sister to SIAG.
 - Extending the South West Ecological Risk Assessment.
 - Fisheries plans.
 - Supporting Fisheries Improvement Projects.
 - Data and analysis on non-quota stocks.
- Supply chain initiatives:
 - Connecting fisheries management initiatives to meet supply chain requirements.
 - NAPA.
 - Scottish Nephrops project.
 - Haddock supply chain project.
- Climate change programme – practical advice and guidance on mitigating impact and adapting to climate change.
- Developing best practice guidance on welfare requirements for crustacea (in collaboration with SAGB).
- Continuing to deliver programme of Issues Groups.
- Expanding our programme of work on ethics, welfare and human rights issues (Packard Foundation funding).
- Our gear technology programme – driving efficiency and environmental improvement.
- Plastics.

Challenge 5 – Innovation and data: Helping the sector access data, analysis and insight to ensure it is equipped to understand and respond innovatively to challenges and opportunities.

- Continuing to deliver the Seafish Expert Panel.
- Supporting research and innovation through participation on SIF and FIS, and working to build collaborative networks with research institutes.
- Regular horizon scanning work programme.
- Industry briefings on key issues.
- Programme of economic data collection, analysis, and advice.
- Expanding our spatial analysis programme.

AM asked the panel the following questions:

- Are we focusing on the right things?
- What other activities should we focus on?
- Are there areas that are important to you that we are not addressing?
- How can we ensure that industry is engaged on this work?

A summary of points made and the Seafish response:

6. It was asked if the government paid for the Seafish services it receives. AM confirmed that the Seafish reports assessing the impact of covid-19 and the EU exit are not exclusively for DEFRA, and they often fund the collection of the data. This data is held by Seafish and used where pertinent to deliver other Seafish products and services relevant to industry.
7. It was recognised that Seafish is in a difficult position due to the diversity of industry. Norway and Iceland both have prominent organisations promoting their products around the globe and particularly in the UK – is there scope for Seafish to collaborate with these organisations to promote the overall consumption of seafood in the UK? Imports are crucial to the survival of many UK businesses. MC explained that these organisations are focused purely on promoting seafood from their respective country meaning balanced collaboration is difficult but could be explored further.
8. There is a broad collection of proposed activity, all of which deliver value, so an exercise in prioritisation would be useful, but that is difficult without an itemised allocation of resources for each activity.
9. It was noted that there was no activity focusing on blue carbon, but AM reassured members this work sits firmly within the climate change activity and industry solutions will likely be through marine planning and developments in gear and efficiency.
10. Some members felt Seafish sits too closely aligned to government priorities over industry. However, others felt it was beneficial for Seafish to have open engagement with DEFRA, so to act as an intermediary between industry and government, for example helping DEFRA understand the inequality of access to grant funding and training – the current system excludes fishermen and smaller operators.
11. There were no specific actions provided on the Annual Plan, and the general consensus was that Seafish is focused on the right things.

Seafish strategic review - update

12. A presentation updating members on the strategic review was circulated to members in advance of the meeting. AM explained that Seafish reports to an independent steering group consisting of the four Devolved Administrations to ensure the review meets Cabinet Office requirements. AM also provided a summary of the responses of the cross-sector workshops and online surveys. The workshop and online survey findings combined

confirmed that there is strong support for Seafish, and that everything that Seafish does is valued (some more than others).

13. The Panel member views were sought on the following questions:
- Does this provide a basis for Seafish to continue to deliver our current work programme, provided we have the required funding to support it?
 - Is this reasonable or feasible?
 - If it is not feasible then where should we prioritise?
 - Is it appropriate for Seafish to more explicitly align its work programme to government priorities? Is this view dependent on Seafish securing multi-year government funding?
 - Should Seafish refocus its offering and step away from delivering less popular work programmes?

A summary of points made and the Seafish response:

14. Concerns were raised over the funding structure of Seafish – it was asked if Government is funding Seafish activity does that affect the political independence of Seafish? Is Seafish reliant on Government funding? It was explained that Seafish is a public body and levy income is considered public money, so Seafish is already part of the public sector infrastructure. Seafish already secures funding from government to deliver core projects such as fishermen’s training and data collection and analysis. However, regardless of the origin of the funding Seafish remains an evidence-based organisation.
15. It was difficult to comment fully without a greater idea of the resources allocated to each work activity.
16. The work Seafish does on mapping fisheries management measures should be funded by Government as it feeds directly into fisheries governance.
17. Love Seafood is a valued marketing initiative, and it was suggested the next campaign could be targeted at lower income audiences. Seafish confirmed that the marketing team is already exploring a campaign focused on stretched families.
18. CA asked what drop in levy income Seafish has experienced, and what measures have been taken to balance this drop in revenue. MC explained that levy income is usually around £8m and that dropped by £1.1m during 2020, with another £500-800k drop forecast for 2021. To act in accordance with the reduced resources, Seafish cut or trimmed work activity and made staff redundancies – this helped to stabilise and find an interim balance, but it’s not sustainable. Government funding to support Seafish output is unlikely, but the organisation is constantly applying for available funds to support activity, which is a lengthy process due to the political structure of four Devolved Administrations.
19. Seafish will have no direct presence at COP26 but has launched its Climate change campaign which highlights the impact that climate change could have on the seafood sector but also highlights some potential opportunities including positioning seafood as a climate-friendly protein source. Seafish fully expects to be involved in post-event activity supporting the seafood industry to meet net zero ambitions.
20. Members were then asked to state their top five preferences of future Seafish priorities.

Prioritisation results:

| Work activity | Votes / (rank) |
|--|----------------|
| 1. Work with industry and government to develop and deliver solutions to seafood trade issues. | 2 |

| | |
|---|-------|
| 2. Assess the impacts of the pandemic on the seafood supply chain and changes that need to be made as a result. | |
| 3. Use our Love Seafood brand to deliver targeted campaign to promote seafood in the UK | 4 (3) |
| 4. Promote seafood in overseas markets. | 1 |
| 5. Preserve and enhance the reputation of the UK seafood industry. | 6 (1) |
| 6. Establish the industry as a safe and attractive place to work. | 5 (2) |
| 7. Support the industry to access the labour it needs. | 4 (3) |
| 8. Assist the UK to develop and implement a leading fisheries management system. | |
| 9. Provide information and research to help understand key supply chain issues affecting consumer demand, e.g. plastics and microplastics, fisheries management, environmental sustainability, human rights and ethical issues, climate change, horizon scanning. | 2 |
| 10. Deliver comprehensive economic analysis on the operation of the 'whole' seafood supply chain. | 1 |
| 11. Improve understanding of how policy changes could impact on seafood businesses and assist industry to respond. | 3 (5) |
| 12. Provide insight, data and advice to increase business prosperity and supply chain resilience. | |

21. MC then explained that Seafish levy arrangements have been identical since the Fisheries Act was implemented in 1981, with rates remaining largely unchanged by inflation or evolution of the sector – this is an antiquated system and devalues the levy income. Panel members were then asked:

- How often should levy be reviewed – both levy rates and how the levy is applied?
- Should levy extend to salmon, trout, and all product forms? What are the risks and benefits of this?

Summary of responses:

22. The issue of whether salmon should be in scope of the Seafish levy has been on the agenda since at least 1997. There are concerns that including salmon and trout levy will be too difficult because it requires an act of parliament to amend the legislation. MC confirmed that DEFRA has agreed to a legislative amendment in autumn 2022 to address the Strategic Review recommendations.

23. The consensus was that the salmon and trout sectors benefit greatly from the work of Seafish and there is full support for salmon and trout to be included in Seafish levy funding.

Love Seafood - update

24. MC provided an update on Love Seafood year two activity strategy. A review of year one of the marketing initiative is currently underway and results will be made available in due course. MC reported that year two will focus on balancing in-home seafood consumption with out-of-home. The strapline is 'Bring on Better Living' and will underline seafood as a protein source full of rich health benefits. A wide variety of assets will be available, and the campaign will be supported via a range of media channels.

Any other industry issues – roundtable discussion

Shellfish Association of Great Britain

25. Water quality issues are ongoing – last year witnessed 400,000 spills; mollusc trade with the EU is subsequently affected due to waters being categorised as 'B'; trade with China is problematic for crab producers; sentience is becoming a challenge, with damaging media and NGO lobbying expected.

Processors using domestic catch

26. Exporting to far east Asia is difficult, with only a couple of available flights per week costing £8.25-£9.40 per kilo; shipping container prices have also doubled and no longer going to the far east.

British Ports Association

27. Export health certificates are becoming a problem for importers; recently hosted 40 EHOs to teach them about species of fish – it is worrying that these people will be responsible for issuing certification; the time involved certifying a highly perishable product will result in financial implications.

Scottish Association of Fish Producer Organisations

28. The catching sector isn't looking healthy due to ICES advice on stock status and the implications this will have on catch allocations; labour is an ongoing issue, as processors are struggling to find staff to process landed fish.

Small boats/inshore fishing interests

29. Over-regulation and admin levels are problematic. Some inspections result in eight documents – a huge burden for fishermen; price of fuel has recently risen from 45 pence per litre to 62 pence; fishermen are finding great difficulty accessing government support and advice and subsequently feeling isolated and despondent – they are being excluded from information and training because it is not pitched correctly, which is an equity issue.

National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations

30. A recent study assessing the vulnerability of the European fleet to climate change saw the UK fleet come top of the vulnerability list; unique vulnerabilities include temperature change affecting species and the fact that so much of the UK fleet is dependent on very few species – this is a long-term issue, and it would be useful to explore this and find mitigators.

Date of next meeting

31. It was agreed the next meeting will be held in approximately six months. **Action 1:** SP to arrange the date for the next meeting and confirm arrangements with members.

Actions

| No. | Action | Timeline | Owner |
|-----|---|---------------------|-------|
| 1 | Arrange date for next meeting and confirm arrangements with meeting invite. | As soon as possible | SP |