

## Seafood Ethics Common Language Group (SECLG)

**Note of meeting held at Fishmongers' Hall, London. Tuesday 28 January 2020.**

For the Seafood Ethics CLG minutes and meeting presentations see:

<https://www.seafish.org/article/the-seafood-ethics-common-language-group>

### 1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

Estelle Brennan welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### Attendees

Ally Dingwall	Sainsburys
Amber Madley	New England Seafood
Andy Hickman	Tesco
Andrew Nicholson	2 Sisters Food Group
Andy Smith	Iceland Seafood Barraclough Ltd
Annika Mackensen	GloBe
Anya Hemsley-Rudd	LDH (La Doria) Ltd
Archie Cage	Planet Tracker
Barry Harland	Whitby Seafoods
Beverley Hall	Ethical Trading Initiative
Birgitte Poulsen	Consultant
Brad Soule	OceanMind
Cameron Moffat	Youngs Seafood
Carol Scott	Identigen
Claire Pescod	MacDuff Shellfish
Clare Clifton	World Wise Foods
Colin McKercher	BSI
Colleen Theron	Ardea International
Dan Lee	Global Aquaculture Alliance
Daniel Murphy	Impactt
Dave Monaghan	UNITE
David Dickens	Fishermen's Mission
David Hammond	HRAS
Dominique Gautier	Sea Farms
Eleanor Adamson	Fishmongers' Company
Elena Piana	Sea Farms
Elenor Smith	Aldi
Estelle Brennan	Lyons Seafoods (Chair)
Evie Clarke	KnowTheChain
Hannah Boles	Praxis Labs
Helen Duggan	Seafish
Iain Pollard	Key Traceability Ltd
Inge Verwoerd	Agricultural Industries Confederation
Isadora Moniz	OPAGAC
Jack Cutforth	Aquaculture Stewardship Council
John Cousley	Department for Transport
Joe Prosho	Morrisons
Jonathan Shepherd	Seafish Board

Julian Engel	OceanMind
Julio Morón	OPAGAC
Karen Green	Seafish (Minutes)
Kate Smithers	Defra
Katharine Bryant	Minderoo Foundation
Kevin Powell	Seachill
Kristine Beran	Pew Trusts
Laky Zervudachi	Direct Seafoods
Lara Funk	Seafish
Laura Bain	Seafish
Leah Buckley	Marine Stewardship Council
Leah Riley-Brown	British Retail Consortium
Libby Woodhatch	IFFO RS
Louise Herring	Herring Consultancy
Louise McCafferty	Joseph Robertson (Aberdeen) Ltd
Lucy Blow	New England Seafood
Malcolm Harris	Sea Dragon Ltd
Malcolm Morrison	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
Maryam Duale	Ethical Trading Initiative
Matthew Cox	North Atlantic (Holdings) Limited
Max Schmid	Environmental Justice Foundation
Melanie Siggs	Global Seafood Assurance
Michaela Archer	Seafish
Mike Mitchell	Fair Seas
Mike Morris	Maritime & Coastguard Agency
Mike Park	Scottish White Fish Producers Association
Mike Platt	RS Standards
Mike Short	Seafood Industry Alliance
Nathan Zetterberg	FishWise
Nick Kightley	Ethical Trading Initiative
Nicola Clark	IFFO RS
Paulien Prent	Visfederatie
Peter Rodgers	Tesco
Polly Burns	Lloyds Register
Robin Bishop	Impactt
Rossen Karavatchev	ITF Seafarers
Sam Brown	Nomad Foods
Sam Ludlow-Taylor	Waitrose
Sara Walton	BSI Group
Sarah Hussey	Sea Farms
Sarah Mount	Freedom Fund
Siobhan Bradley	Lovering Foods Ltd
Shannon Conlin	SeaFarms
Stuart McLanaghan	Seafish
Tim Pilch	Issara Institute
Thomas Franklin	MRAG
Yemi Oloruntuyi	Marine Stewardship Council
Zacari Edwards	IPNLF
Zor Hussain	Kijani Foods

## **2. Minutes of the previous meeting on 3 July 2019 and outstanding actions. Estelle Brennan, Lyons Seafoods, SECLG Chair.**

The final minutes were accepted as a true reflection of the meeting and have been added to the Seafish web page. Attendees were asked to take note of the meeting guidelines. In the following minutes Seafish will provide a link to the various presentations given at the meeting but not summarise the whole presentation. In the main we do not attribute the comments made at the meeting. Outstanding actions were all about circulating links. All the presentations were added to the website and the links circulated in the SECLG follow-up email.

**ACTION:** Provide links to available resources.

## **Worker representation – worker voice and beyond.**

### **3. The journey towards worker representation. Beverley Hall, Industrial Relations Adviser, Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI). [https://seafish.org/media/SECLG\\_Jan2020\\_ETI.pdf](https://seafish.org/media/SECLG_Jan2020_ETI.pdf)**

This explained the role of the ETI and the ETI Base Code and how ETI focusses on the issues from a business perspective, also explaining how the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for business and human rights were adding another dimension. Worker voice and worker representation were defined as:

- Worker voice is linked to two-way communications between employers & employees – informal, pre-set agendas, non-binding – for example, surveys, data gathering platforms, worker forums etc.
- Worker representation – independently elected worker reps. Where FOA is restricted and where unions cannot operate or have limited capacity, the next best available form of independent worker representation should be pursued in the short-term.

**ACTION:** Provide links to available resources.

### **4. Lessons learned: Issara Inclusive Labour Monitoring and worker voice in the Thai seafood industry. Tim Pilch, Issara Institute. [https://seafish.org/media/SECLG\\_Jan2020\\_Issara.pdf](https://seafish.org/media/SECLG_Jan2020_Issara.pdf)**

The role and aims of the Issara Institute were explained and its use of key technologies:

- 8,000 calls/messages received from workers per month.
- 200,000+ workers linked into Issara Inclusive Labour Monitoring (ILM), with access to independent helpline/grievance mechanism. This is at the core of what Issara does.
- 800+ Golden Dreams Ambassadors Promoting Jobseeker Education and Empowerment
- 21 Issara Strategic Partners - global brands and retailers.
- 1,000+ Thai suppliers in the supply chains of Issara Strategic Partners.
- Their report 'Not in the same boat' found issues of low wages, debt bondage, human trafficking (with only 13% of workers seen to be free from debt bondage). All of the issues listed above can be linked back to unethical recruitment and the inability to detect and deter exploitation. This highlighted the continuing reliance on social audits which should not be the only solution.

Identifying poor working conditions is not enough - audit protocols do not allow enough visibility. This can only be achieved by talking to the workers. Businesses need to incentivise change. Ethical recruitment is a good place to start where we can have a big impact. Worker voice gives workers an opportunity to provide insight into working conditions and a lot of the issues are knock-on effects of the recruitment process. There does have to be the assurance that any information gathered will be treated responsibly and the workers have to have confidence that remedy is likely to happen.

**ACTION:** Provide links to available resources.

## 5. Worker representation moderated panel session.

**Moderator:** Louise Herring, Herring Consultancy.

**Panellists.** There were brief introductions from each of the panellists: Nick Kightley, ETI; David Dickens, Fishermen's Mission; Melanie Siggs, Global Seafood Assurance; Tim Pilch, Issara Institute; Dave Monaghan, UNITE.

### What are the barriers to worker representation?

- Workers have got to believe there can be 'remedy' and accountability. There are worries about becoming a target for speaking out. This is where well-trained Trade Union reps and HR personnel step in.
- In Thailand migrant workers can join a union but not form one so there is not real freedom of association. A common set of standards is required.
- Language is the real barrier which can lead to cultural and contractual misunderstandings.
- The seafood supply chain is very complex and there is insufficient movement towards accountable standards and a lack of willingness to move beyond social audits.
- Being at sea for two and a half years is a barrier. There is isolation at sea. Being able to communicate with family is crucial
- Top-down approach more evident but little evidence of bottom-up approach. In the UK there is more scope to navigate through concerns but there are much more significant challenges in somewhere like Thailand.
- Fundamentally unless workers trust you they won't speak to you. So any solutions have to be doable, practical and trusted and this applies to migrant workers and our own UK workers and local solutions can be possible. Trust is what drives success. Workers need to have the confidence to speak.
- Work is ongoing re the Responsible Fishing Vessel Scheme version 2 and worker voice has been a big area of discussion. Global Seafood Assurances in hoping to fund a research study to look into the whole worker voice issue in a lot more detail which would feed into this with the aim that anybody working on an RFVS vessel would have access to both worker voice channels and worker representation and what this means in reality on a vessel.
- There are various employment models - in the UK we have share, self-employed, employed and non-EEA migrant fishermen. This presents challenges.
- There are basic questions that need to be addressed so that a baseline can be established which has global applicability.
- **Question.** To what extent do the panel believe that worker voice at sea will be driven by legislation and governance? Or is it going to be driven by voluntary initiatives on the ground?
- **Answer.** I don't believe any more legislation is required. ILO 188 is enough providing it is enforced.

### What should the next steps be?

- There is no substitute for a Trade Union but collaborative efforts can help and many positive steps have been taken.
- We need to 'finish' the job in Thailand and make sure that the lessons learnt are available elsewhere.
- A really good standard should naturally become de-facto legislation. There is a strong requirement for ILO 188 to be universally ratified and worker voice is implicit within this.
- Greater unionisation is probably the way forward working with the industry rather than anything being imposed on the industry. There is traction for this. Co-operatives are also an option and crew councils.
- Supply chain collaboration. Business has to drive change.

**ACTION:**

- It would be useful to find out from fishermen how they have found the RFVS audit process. What issues they have had? What has been the most use? What has worked or not worked?
- Could look at the work Nautilus is doing in this area.

**The role of certification and assurance**

**6. The role of certification and assurance: the emerging landscape. Melanie Siggs, Global Seafood Assurance. [https://seafish.org/media/SECLG\\_Jan2020\\_GSA.pdf](https://seafish.org/media/SECLG_Jan2020_GSA.pdf)**

Whilst standards are not the answer to addressing social responsibility issues they have a fundamental role and do at least provide a basis for mutual understanding. The industry addressed environmental concerns some time ago but this focussed on the fish rather than the worker. Recent exposés have turned attention to human rights. A standards map illustrated what standards are operating in different areas of the seafood sector. The Responsible Fishing Vessel Scheme (RFVS) is moving towards global applicability. The benchmarking initiative between the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI) and the Consumer Goods Forum Sustainable Supply Chain Initiative (SSCI) will provide a benchmark for social standards. Looking ahead:

- More work is expected on aquaculture. The Fair Trade USA move in to aquaculture may result in the first FT seafood products in Europe.
- Wild capture supply chains will have to address their social responsibility, not only for their own corporate risk mitigation, but as a moral imperative.
- MSC will move on social, beyond current activity.
- Vessel standards will work together for equivalence/recognition.
- Benchmarking of social standards is coming.
- Standards will create benefits beyond value chains – compliance is an expensive and tough job, those with certification are potentially a lower risk.
- Worker Voice project.
- The use of standards as measurements to demonstrate working towards the SDGs.

**ACTION:** Provide links to available resources.

**7. Driving Social Responsibility at Sea: Benchmarking the AENOR 'Atún de Pesca Responsable (APR) Standard'/Monterey Framework for Socially Responsible Seafood. Dr Julio Morón, OPAGAC. [https://seafish.org/media/SECLG\\_Jan2020\\_OPAGAC.pdf](https://seafish.org/media/SECLG_Jan2020_OPAGAC.pdf)**

The OPAGAC goal is to ensure social responsibility safeguards in at least four priority seafood supply chains by 2025 and to drive the uptake of social responsibility initiatives among business, governments and NGOs to safeguard human rights in the seafood sector. Their focus is on integrating the Monterey Framework into seafood supply chains by placing value on human welfare and ensuring situations of decent work through ILO C188. The Social Responsibility Assessment Tool (SRAT) is useful as a diagnostic or rapid assessment tool – to assess risk of social issues, to identify areas in need of improvement, to inform the development of a work plan that includes a social element. The Social Responsibility Assessment Tool has been piloted in OPAGAC's Eastern Pacific FIP

**ACTION:** Provide links to available resources.

**8. Is Certification Driving Social Change and Improvement in aquaculture? Birgitte Poulsen, Consultant. [https://seafish.org/media/SECLG\\_Jan2020\\_BAP.pdf](https://seafish.org/media/SECLG_Jan2020_BAP.pdf)**

Employment in the aquaculture sector is large with 19 million people employed in fish farming (of which 14% are women) and 7 million in post-harvest (of which 63% are women). This survey looked at whether private voluntary standards can contribute to address social and labour issues.



The aims of the assessment were to understand how BAP social and labour standards are applied and how they impact practices among producers, and processors, and to generate learning on how social change happens in aquaculture. The conclusions show that BAP standards are having an impact but that this is not the only solution. The assessment shows: ease of compliance was reasonable; certified companies are likely to be already 'advanced'; improvements related to social and labour practices; impacts are context dependent; it does facilitate market access; it is difficult to clearly show impact on the bottom line; an integrated package with other standards is beneficial; behaviour change not fully achieved by certification; there is a difference between minimum wage vs. living wage; certification is a continuous improvement tool but part of a larger toolkit for social change; and that spill over to non-certified farms is limited.

**ACTION:** Provide links to available resources.

### **Making a difference in Thailand**

#### **9. Tracking Progress: Assessing Business Responses to Forced Labour and Human Trafficking in the Thai Seafood Industry. Hannah Boles, Praxis Labs.**

[https://seafish.org/media/SECLG\\_Jan2020\\_PraxisLabs.pdf](https://seafish.org/media/SECLG_Jan2020_PraxisLabs.pdf)

This covered the research methodology; an update on the situation in Thailand; an overview of the private sector response; examples of good practice; and key findings and recommendations. The worker reports on working conditions in Thailand so show some improvements but there have been some unintended consequences of this reform namely: debt to employers due to the regularisation of undocumented migrant workers; a withholding of fishers' identity documents and ATM cards; and limitations on workers' ability to change employer. Six key findings were highlighted supported by recommendations on further action that could be taken.

**ACTION:** Provide links to available resources.

#### **10. The latest technological advances - labour indicators using VMS data. Brad Soule, OceanMind.**

[https://seafish.org/media/SECLG\\_Jan2020\\_OceanMind.pdf](https://seafish.org/media/SECLG_Jan2020_OceanMind.pdf)

OceanMind is working with businesses and Government in Thailand to support capacity development and reduce IUU fishing activity and labour violations. The aim is to identify compliance with labour rules for fishing vessels using VMS (and there are 6,000 vessels in Thailand where VMS data is available) and other fisheries data. This work is all about verification rather than certification - how we can make the data more useful and work harder; how fishing tracking data can be used to monitor human rights abuses; identifying a correlation between how a vessel moves versus what impact this is having on the crew; how to get a machine to think like a person in being able to determine how tagged tracks could be an indication of potential violations. There is pilot project underway now with the PAS 1550 being used as a preliminary check list. The results should be available at the end of 2020.

**ACTION:** Provide links to available resources.

### **Collaborative working**

#### **11. Collaborative working. Andy Hickman, Tesco/SEA Alliance Chair.**

[https://seafish.org/media/SECLG\\_Jan2020\\_SEAAlliance.pdf](https://seafish.org/media/SECLG_Jan2020_SEAAlliance.pdf)

The Seafood Ethics Action Alliance (SEA Alliance) has been established by the seafood industry to provide a platform for collective engagement, to share information on emerging issues, agree best practice solutions, and provide a forum for collective pre-competitive action where it is not better fulfilled by an existing organisation. There are five key areas of activity: information gathering and risk assessment; enhanced due diligence; improving fisheries and supply chain; advocacy and

engagement; and progress monitoring and evaluation. Collaborative working means: combined learning from different skill sets; the ability to discuss how retailer demands impact on the supply chain; a greater opportunity to influence positive change. A clear time-bound action plan has been produced to guide activities.

**ACTION:** Provide links to available resources.

## **12. UK Fisheries Sector Human Rights and Social Welfare Baseline Project. David Hammond.**

**HRAS.** [https://seafish.org/media/SECLG\\_Jan2020\\_HRAS.pdf](https://seafish.org/media/SECLG_Jan2020_HRAS.pdf)

David talked about the UK Fisheries Human Rights and Social Welfare Baseline Project 2020. The Stage 1 Needs Assessment Overview has just been completed. The aim was to determine whether there was a need for further in-depth research to determine the 'ground-truth' covering all applicable human rights and social welfare provisions, positions and needs throughout the UK Fisheries Sector. Concerns have been raised about the report but the independent assessment has highlighted from the respondent's views a clear need for more comprehensive and in-depth quantitative and qualitative research to be undertaken throughout the Sector alongside all stakeholders and considering the full spread of opinions, positions and mechanisms from government, commercial and welfare perspectives. There was also mention of a prosecution in Scotland where a Fraserburgh skipper has been fined £3,000 for the racially-aggravated harassment of five members of his crew. The response from the audience was that large numbers are employed on fishing vessels in Scotland and industry representatives were following all the correct due diligence procedures but equally acknowledge that the situation is not perfect and actions are being taken continuously to improve the welfare situation for crew members.

**ACTION:** Provide links to available resources.

## **13. Summing up and date of the next meeting.**

Estelle thanked Seafish for facilitating, all the speakers for sharing their expertise, Fish Hall for their wonderful hospitality and all attendees for their participation. The key take-away messages from today were highlighted as:

- Trust is fundamental and has been mentioned on numerous occasions today when talking about how to empower workers to talk about issues and then how to support them and address those issues.
- Standards are not the total answer but they are an important tool in the toolbox.
- Brands need to take ownership and work collaboratively to address issues.
- We need to acknowledge and recognise good practice.
- Technological advances are exciting and can only help in this arena.

The next meeting will be at Fishmongers' Hall in July 2020. The date was subsequently confirmed as Wednesday 8 July 2020.