

Social responsibility in seafood - Seafish role

April 2018

This factsheet provides an overview of the work Seafish is doing to help the seafood industry address issues relating to labour and worker welfare.

Definition

Social responsibility is paramount to Seafish and to the entire seafood industry. The definition of social responsibility is the idea that businesses balance profit-making activities with activities that benefit society; it involves developing businesses with a positive relationship to the society in which they operate.

In the past 20 years, the seafood industry has focussed on sustainability, responsible sourcing and ethical business practices in the widest sense. More recently, attention has switched to concerns about labour and human rights issues. This changing landscape has directly influenced Seafish's work.

Focus on the seafood supply chain

In the last decade, concerns regarding abuses of workers engaged in the seafood industry have steadily attracted more attention, from the media and civil society advocacy groups. The main concern has been the coercive treatment of certain categories of both sea and land-based workers, through abusive labour and recruitment practices variously referred to as slavery or slavery-like practices, forced and bonded labour, human trafficking, as well as serious forms of child labour.

This complex issue encompasses concerns about labour and human rights issues, it affects many countries and a wide range of products and it challenges the reputation of the seafood sector. This issue is too big and too complex for any individual company or organisation to tackle on their own.

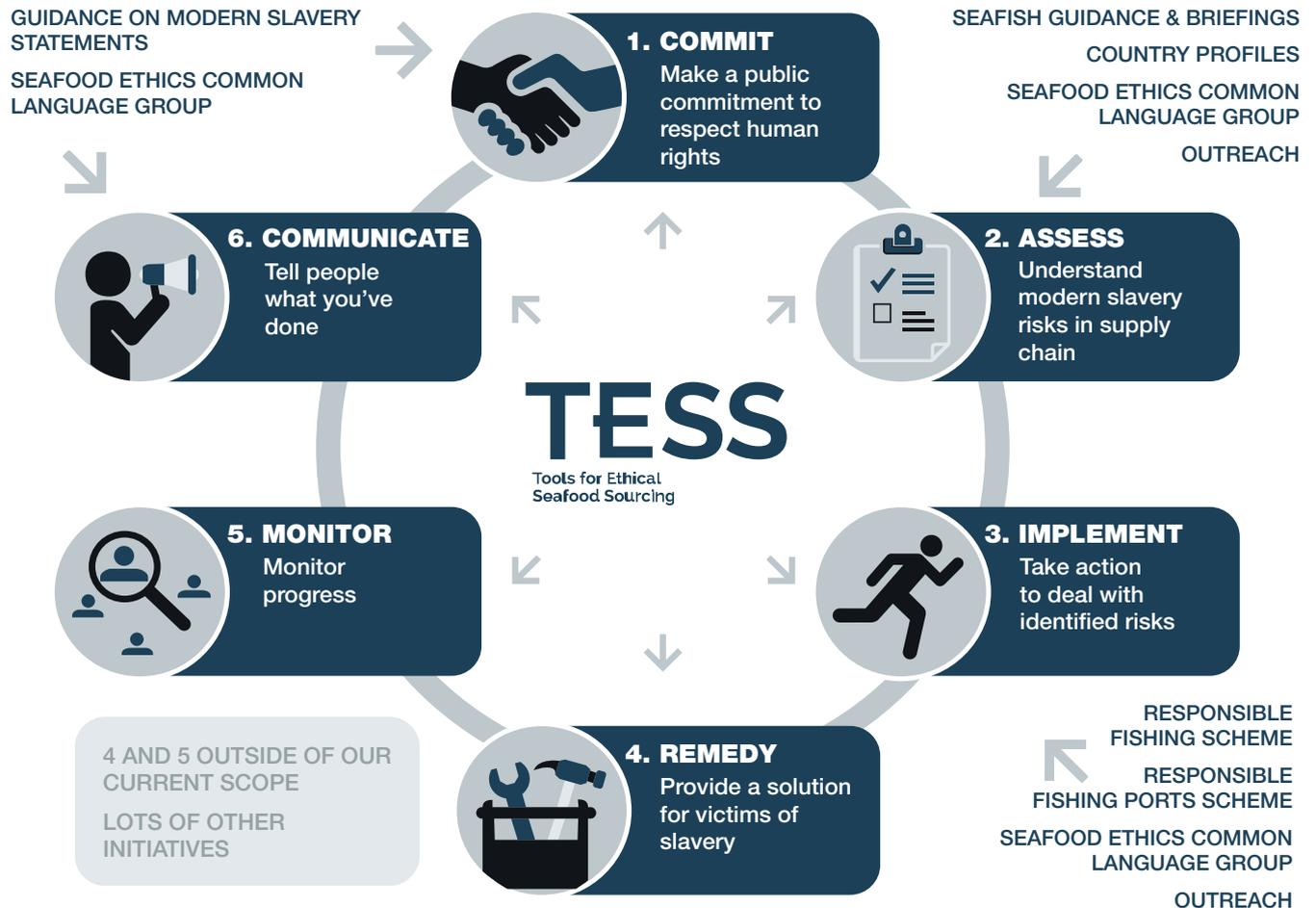
Since 2014 Seafish has worked proactively to improve supply chain integrity across the seafood

sector. We have introduced different work areas to support the seafood industry including:

- Established the Seafood Ethics Common Language Group (SECLG) to bring industry and other stakeholders together to collaboratively understand how ethical issues can be addressed across the supply chain.
- Produced 15 profiles identifying social risks in regions supplying the UK market. These profiles were aimed at informing purchasing decisions in seafood businesses.
- Raised industry awareness of ethical issues and supporting seafood businesses to comply with UK Modern Slavery legislation.
- Developed Tools for Ethical Seafood Sourcing (TESS) to signpost stakeholders to resources to help manage and reduce risks associated with labour issues and worker welfare in seafood supply chains.
- Developed and implemented the voluntary Seafish Responsible Fishing Scheme (RFS) certifying high standards of crew welfare and responsible catching practices on fishing vessels.
- Worked with the supply chain to develop the voluntary Responsible Fishing Ports Scheme which includes worker welfare.
- Produced and disseminated briefings to improve knowledge of the issues and inform key stakeholders about the latest initiatives.

Looking ahead, our primary focus will be to provide the seafood supply chain with information and guidance, and to support the existing schemes and initiatives we have developed. In addition we will help the supply chain understand the landscape of risk assessment tools, provide updates on key issues affecting the supply chain and support other initiatives working in this space.

Seafish activities and how they relate to a business improvement cycle



Seafood Ethics Common Language Group

Following media reports in 2014 there was significant interest from the seafood industry and other stakeholders working in this area to collaborate on a way forward. Whilst ethical issues had previously been addressed by the Seafish Common Language Group (CLG), in July 2014, Seafish formed the Seafood Ethics CLG.

The Seafood Ethics CLG demonstrates an integrated, interdisciplinary and collaborative approach to address ethical and social issues relating to responsible seafood production. The industry needs to collaborate to consolidate messages and activities if ethical issues across the supply chain are to be addressed. Seafish manages this group to foster open and honest dialogue. The group convenes seafood stakeholders including major supermarket chains, smaller retailers, processors and catching sector representatives

throughout the whole supply chain, with government, NGOs, development organisations and charities in a 'safe' environment. This provides the opportunity for discussion and debate to establish a common understanding of the issues, and to communicate the work currently going on to address them.

To increase engagement and understanding there is a web page for the group and news alerts and briefing documents are circulated on a regular basis. There is also a dedicated ethics in seafood web page. The members of the Seafood Ethics CLG inform ongoing and future Seafish work in this area.

www.seafish.org/responsible-sourcing/discussion-forums/the-seafood-ethics-common-language-group

Supporting the supply chain

The Seafish approach to promote responsible sourcing across the supply chain is to educate, improve understanding and develop capability within the seafood sector. Seafish is working with the industry to identify where there are risks and how to address them.

A shared understanding

We have produced a series of guides and briefings to help improve knowledge of the issues and how to address them. Guides are aimed at developing a shared understanding across the seafood industry and avoid misinformation across the supply chain and more widely, with other key stakeholders.

In 2015 Seafish commissioned a study to assess the ethical issues impacting on seafood species landed into, and imported to the UK. The outputs from this project include a fully referenced literature review, 15 risk mapping regional profiles highlighting countries to watch, and an analytical report with strategic recommendations.

Guidance on drafting a Modern Slavery statement

To help the seafood industry better understand the reporting requirements under the new Modern Slavery Act Seafish has produced guidance on drafting a Modern Slavery statement, as well as running an interactive workshop, to show how companies in the seafood sector might think about the content of their statement.

www.seafish.org/responsible-sourcing/ethics-in-seafood

TESS

Tools for Ethical
Seafood Sourcing

Tools for Ethical Seafood Sourcing

Tools for Ethical Seafood Sourcing (TESS) is a signposting tool proving a gateway to a range of useful resources to help businesses address issues in their supply chains.

There are many different sources of information available on ethical issues in the seafood supply chain, from identifying issues through to international standards and 'on the ground' initiatives working on the issues. It can be challenging for seafood businesses to understand this complex landscape and what they need to do to identify issues and make improvements.

TESS helps companies address social responsibility challenges by providing: an overview of the issues; a step by step approach to systematically tackle issues in seafood supply chains (see diagram opposite); and a fully searchable database of information, initiatives, standards, organisations and other resources that will help support businesses to make improvements. TESS launched in March 2017.

The site has been populated with content that we have identified as useful including information, initiatives, standards, organisations and other resources to help support businesses in tackling social issues.

www.seafish.org/tess



Responsible Fishing Ports Scheme

Since 2015, we have been working with the UK fishing ports sector and wider supply chain to develop the Responsible Fishing Ports Scheme, which includes a module on the working environment covering worker welfare. This will launch in 2018.

www.seafish.org/responsible-sourcing/responsible-fishing-ports-scheme



Skipper of the Admiral Grenville, Dave Shimell, Fleet Superintendent Mark Bell & Rachel-Anne Mate Ian Tanner



Responsible Fishing Scheme

The Responsible Fishing Scheme (RFS) is a global scheme that audits compliance on board commercial fishing vessels to certify best practice in responsible catching and the safety and welfare of crew.

RFS audits fishing vessels against five core principles including crew health, safety and welfare to ensure the seafood is harvested responsibly. The standard is independently audited against international accreditation criteria providing a transparent, robust and credible endorsement for seafood sourced from RFS certified vessels. In January 2018 RFS certified vessels accounted for 27% of landings by UK registered vessels by weight and 19% by value¹.

A growing number of major UK retailers, market leading processors and foodservice sector suppliers have made commitments to feature the RFS scheme within their sourcing policies. The RFS is complementary to existing fishery and processing certification schemes.

All the latest information can be found on the Seafish RFS website. The site includes everything you need to know about RFS including 'How to Join' and a database of certified vessels.

The standard has been designed to be globally applicable to all types of commercial fishing vessels and work is progressing to enable the RFS to be used globally. An RFS Vessel Improvement Programme (VIP) framework and associated documentation has also been created, to be allied to the core scheme and which can be run in tandem with Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs).

www.seafish.org/rfs/

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¹ Based on 2016 landings data.