

Ethics in seafood - Seafish role

Definition

Social responsibility is paramount to Seafish and to the entire seafood industry. For us social responsibility encompasses concerns about labour and human rights issues. This includes human trafficking, labour abuses, child labour, bonded labour, forced labour, migrant workers, and slavery, across the whole supply chain. Social responsibility is a complex, global issue affecting many countries and a wide range of products.

Focus on the seafood supply chain

Since around 2006, various 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.

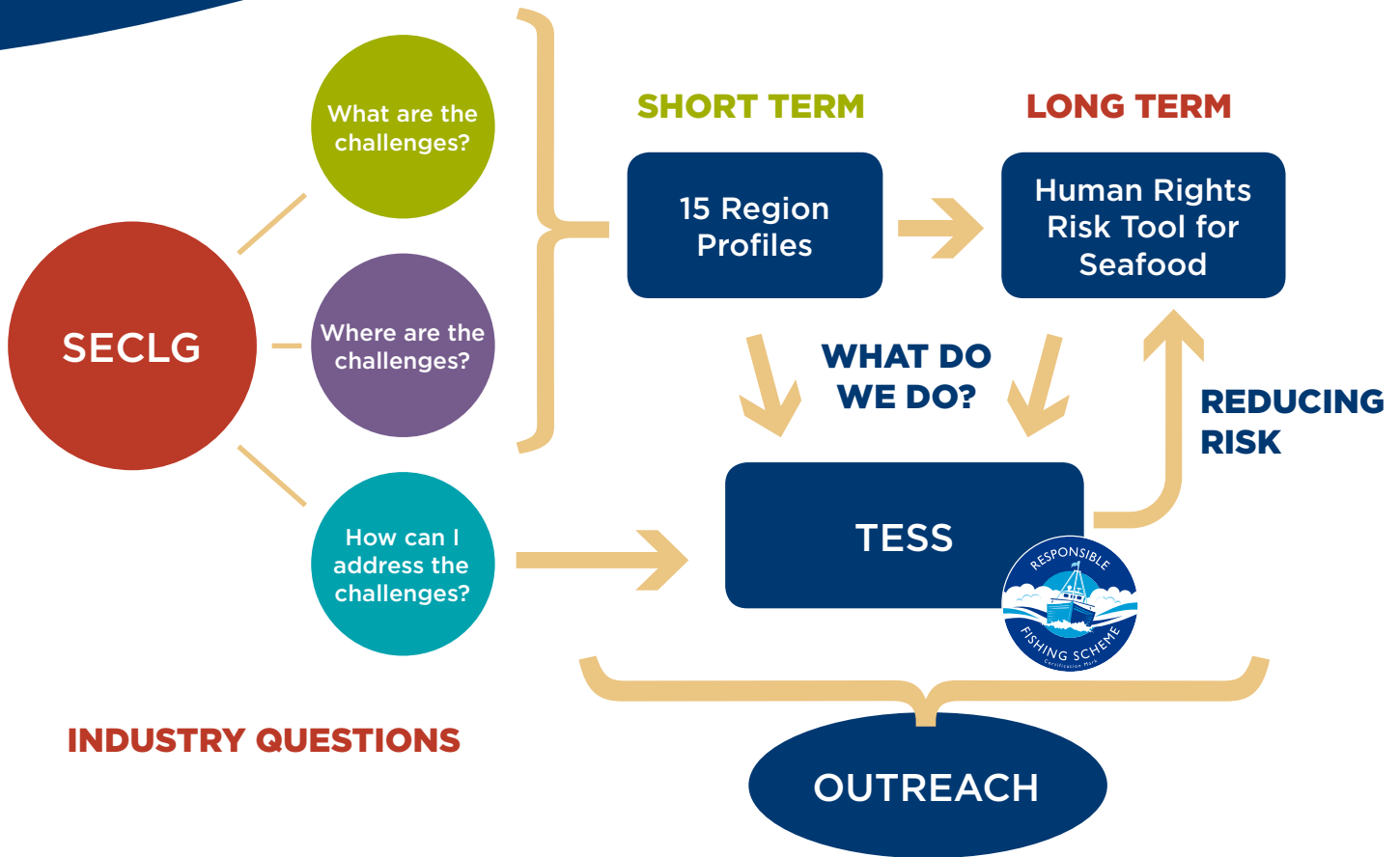
For Seafish this complex issue encompasses concerns about labour and human rights issues, it affects many countries and a wide range of products and it challenges the reputation of the seafood sector. This issue is too big and too complex for any individual company or organisation to tackle on their own. Since summer 2014 Seafish has become actively engaged in this area and has adopted an integrated approach which supports the need to identify the risks and where they may be found and then, if a risk has been identified, look for ways to address it.

Seafish has introduced a series of work areas, which are supported by Seafish's three Sector Panels to help the industry achieve the ultimate goal of eliminating unethical practices from UK seafood supply chains.

Seafish has introduced a series of integrated work areas to support the seafood industry including:

- Establishing 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.
- Producing 15 profiles identifying social risks in regions supplying the UK market.
- Working in partnership with Seafood Watch, the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP) and Liberty Asia to develop the Human Rights Risk Tool for Seafood (HRRTS).
- Developing a Tool for Ethical Seafood Sourcing (TESS) to signpost stakeholders to resources to help manage and reduce risk.
- Developing the voluntary Seafish Responsible Fishing Scheme (RFS) certifying high standards of crew welfare and responsible catching practices on fishing vessels.
- Disseminating briefings, updates and developments to stakeholders (via SECLG and broader outreach activities).

There is considerable interest in the work that Seafish and the UK seafood industry is doing.



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 suppliers throughout the whole supply chain, with government, NGOs, development organisations and charities. This has created a 'safe' environment for discussion and debate to establish a common understanding of the issues, to communicate the work currently going on to address them and agree future actions.

News alerts are circulated regularly, there is a dedicated [ethics in seafood](#) web page, and a web page for the [group](#), as well as a number of industry briefing documents. The members of the Seafood Ethics CLG help inform ongoing and future Seafish work in this area.

Contact Karen Green for further information. (See panel on last page.)

IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING RISK

Seafish has adopted an integrated approach with a clear process to identify the risk itself and where it can be found and then, if a risk has been identified, how to address it.

Assessment of ethical issues in the UK supply chain

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.

Human Rights Risk Tool for Seafood

The Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch programme, SFP, Liberty Asia and Seafish have formed a partnership to develop a risk assessment tool for social responsibility in fisheries, a first of its kind. The Human Rights Risk Tool for Seafood (HRRTS) is currently in development and is based on a decision tree that qualitatively assesses the potential risks of severe human rights abuses associated with the 'at-sea' part of the wild-caught seafood supply chain. The tool produces risk ratings by drawing on publicly available and verifiable evidence from multiple sources, including the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Labor Department, the U.N. International Labour Organization (ILO), national labour rights reports and credible media reports. The tool also incorporates measures that may have been implemented to mitigate such abuses, for example, whether vessels are certified by the Responsible Fishing Scheme or Fairtrade USA. Businesses will be able to use the risk rating produced as a baseline from which to explore their supply chains, to verify the level of risk in

their own supply chain and take action. Once developed, the website hosting the database of fishery profiles will be open access and free to use.

Contact Helen Duggan for further information. (See panel on last page.)

Tools for Ethical Seafood Sourcing

Tools for Ethical Seafood Sourcing (TESS) is aimed at seafood businesses who want to understand social responsibility and 'what to do' to address any issues in their supply chain. It is a 'signposting' tool providing a gateway to a wide range of helpful resources. Seafish has been working with industry stakeholders to develop a series of work areas to help support businesses in this area. We were asked to consider; what are the issues; where are the issues in the seafood industry and what can seafood businesses do to tackle them. TESS helps to answer the 'what can seafood businesses do' by providing: an overview of the issues; a step by step approach to systematically tackle issues in seafood supply chains; a glossary; and a fully searchable database of information, initiatives, standards, organisations and other resources that will help support businesses to make improvements. Launched in March 2017 this web resource is hosted on the Seafish website.

Contact Michaela Archer or Karen Green for further information. (See panel on last page.)



Responsible Fishing Scheme

The Seafish Responsible Fishing Scheme (RFS) is a voluntary vessel-based programme certifying high standards of crew welfare and responsible catching practices on board fishing vessels. The RFS was revised in accordance with the internationally recognised accreditation standard ISO 17065 and re-launched to the UK fleet in January 2016. The Scheme covers five core principles: Health, Safety and Welfare; Training and Professional Development; the Vessel and its Mission; Care of the Catch; and Care for the Environment.

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 including a [Guide to RFS](#) and films summarising the scope and objectives of the scheme. The [How to Join](#) page contains links to the application pack and the UK Compliance Support Guides.

The RFS is currently open to UK registered vessels and work continues to facilitate widespread engagement with the domestic fleet. The standard has been designed to be globally applicable to all types of commercial fishing vessels and there is a strong desire to see RFS utilised around the world. Two international feasibility studies were successfully completed in 2016 to test the international applicability of the standard with no concerns raised. An International Translation Process has been drafted through which international RFS audit methodologies could be developed to ensure the equivalence and credibility of the scheme is maintained. International Pilots are being undertaken in a range of locations to inform our approach to the international roll out which will begin during 2018. We have also created guidance for an RFS Vessel Improvement Programme (VIP), which will be allied to the core scheme, and could be run in tandem with Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs).

Contact Kara Brydson for further information. (See panel below.)

Contact us

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Seafood Ethics Common Language Group: www.seafish.org/responsible-sourcing/discussion-forums/the-seafood-ethics-common-language-group

Responsible Fishing Scheme: www.seafish.org/rfs

Risk Assessment for Sourcing Seafood (RASS): www.seafish.org/rass

Tools for Ethical Seafood Sourcing (TESS): www.seafish.org/tess

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

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Supporting a profitable, sustainable and socially responsible future for the seafood industry.