

26 September 2013 at Fishmongers Co. London

Minutes

Attendees: Andrew Kerr, Richard Fordham (Sweden), Arne Koops (Germany), Morten Lauritzen (Denmark), Marc-Adrien Marcellier (France), Alex Koelewijn (Holland), Jac Tijssen (Holland), Norbert Jeronimus (Holland), Peter Wood, Simon Soffe, Brian Knights, Peter Neusinger, Chris Leftwich, David Bunt.

Apologies: Andrew Morgan, Barry Bendall, Alistair Maltby, Matt Gollock, Paul Coulson, Miran Aprahamian, Corine Rozendaal, Roger Castle, John Van Doreen, Mogens Mathiasen, Armando Piccinini, Rodolfo Barerra and others.

Actions

1. Introduction

Andrew welcomed everyone and expressed his pleasure at seeing so many from different countries, including a representative from France.

He discussed that we would focus on the next 12 months business plan today as we must be clear on our overall direction over the next few years, and for the industry be clear on which parts of the market (mostly Holland) and supply chain (mostly France) that we should target to make further progress towards sustainability.

We had a successful outcome to the debate in the EU parliament, but there will be further challenges to come which we will need to be prepared for. There will be elections and new individuals to deal with, as well as further pressures from extreme views.

We must also consider how SEG is funded to enable us to continue championing the sustainable solution.

2. Business Plan

Simon Soffe presented the outcome of a survey of views of many SEG members in discussions over recent weeks to help create clarity for direction and priorities for the future.

- Summary:
 - Credibility is everything: Standard; Funding & alliances
 - Need to carry on building reputation
 - SEG needs to evolve its Structure & Funding retaining the 50/50 balance with industry
 - More support for communications
 - Takes time – keep going
 - *“The SEG model has to work - it has to be the model for the future and for other species and issues”*

Norbert Jeronimus presented the Dutch ‘polder’ thinking – ‘Co-operation despite differences’.

- Are the issues for the eel the same for all countries? For our clear communications, we need to know what unites us and focus on that, rather than what divides us.
- Dupan was established in 2010 in response to a very fierce and one-sided campaign against all consumption of eel. In order to accurately reflect the industry’s move to sustainability, it was crucial to establish a source of funding to run more projects that built sustainability, and enable positive communication to follow
- He described a timeline of planned initiatives to promote sustainability and facilitate communication

- The Message for the Dutch market at the moment is: Sell an eel product that contributes to the sustainability programme (the Dupan logo actually reads: Sustainability eel fund).
- The term sustainable is not defined legally, so is open to interpretation. It is up to SEG to present our interpretation simply and clearly to support our communications

Further points included:

- The industry needs the co-operation of science and NGO's, and needs to fix the missing link in the chain of custody (majority of glass eel fisheries and collectors).
- Sustainable initiatives need to be given time to establish and to convince opponents that they work, before sales forces rush to new outlets.
- Dupan believe that that the first link of the SES-chain of custody is currently based on a single party for the glass eel trade, which may have implications for transparency, appealing market conditions, and conflict with the European Competition Law.
- Andrew subsequently commented that this may be overcome over time as success of the Standard creates value and encourages more organisations to adopt its conditions, and that several new collecting organisations in France were in the process of assessment

Both presentations generated substantial discussion and debate supported by updates of news: ie:

France

Marc-Adrien reported that French regions will be much stricter with quotas, traceability and adoption of the Standard. Creation of *Organisation des Producteurs* (Loire). AGM has closed, but AA still exists. The French best practice guide would continue to be promoted.

Funding options

Discussion of options, including a graded v flat fee. Income of approx £120k is needed from the members next year to cover SEG operating costs. Consensus and agreement: 2000 euros flat fee per company until royalty income increases. Also seek sponsorship from eg. energy companies. Some country members will need to discuss this figure with their members.

Structure

Country membership feeding into SEG Europe is a preferred model to move towards. Separate working groups seen as a good model for science, conservation and the industry.

Planning

The presentations and discussions will be worked up into a plan which will be presented at the next meeting in January 2014. **Simon & Norbert**

Summary

Andrew summarised that we've come a long way and everyone has made a generous and valuable contribution, whether in money, effort or time. SEG's actions are benefiting the eel. The future will undoubtedly include marketing and communications challenges, so SEG must maintain sustainability at its core and remain very focused to identify and implement effective actions that support it.

3. Other Items

Glass eels for consumption

The group discussed the pros and cons of supporting the direct consumption of glass eels. Andrew asked that this be delegated to the Eel Standard Panel to consider and report back. **David**

Conservation projects update

Andrew gave an update on a significant conservation project being developed in Holland with Wetlands International.

Eel Standard Register

David briefly presented a paper that had been circulated to consider if and how we should present the Eel Standard Register. It was agreed to separate and make clear those who have passed the Standard, and those who have, in addition, been licensed to use the Sustainable Eel Standard Eco-label, and therefore have an auditable supply of certified sustainable eel. **David**

IUCN

Brian gave a brief update on progress with the IUCN listing. Whilst recent stock indices have shown increases in recruitment the past few years in Europe and America, this is still too early to suggest a sustained improvement according to IUCN criteria.