



Sustainable Seafood Symposium

SAFEGUARDING SEAFOOD

FOR OUR FUTURE

**HARD TRUTHS, CHALLENGES
AND SOLUTIONS**

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SUMMARY

Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing (IUU) is a major threat to business as usual for the seafood industry. It brings legal and reputational risks in the near-term as well as long-term systemic risk to the industry as a whole. Seafood supply chain integrity is generally poor (particularly in Asia) and estimates are that 15-30% of all seafood is associated with IUU, undermining efforts towards sustainable fisheries management.

The United Nations has called for an end to IUU by 2020, and while consumer awareness of the issues is growing and the sustainable seafood movement centered in Europe and North America is gaining momentum, self-regulation by industry is crucial if the risks are to be mitigated sufficiently and quickly.

The Symposium reported here was targeted at the seafood industry in Hong Kong (seafood suppliers, buyers, restaurateurs and retailers) and designed to examine and highlight some of the key sustainability issues given Hong Kong's dependence on imported seafood. The presentations and discussions made it clear that continuation of the status quo in Hong Kong, whereby traceability in seafood supply chains is minimal and where awareness of sustainability is low, is not an option if we are to address the pressing environmental and business risks. A number of commitments were made by participants and a working group is being formed to address the establishment of a Voluntary Code of Conduct (VCOC) and agreed common language for the local seafood industry.



THE CONTEXT: HONG KONG'S DEPENDENCE ON IMPORTED SEAFOOD

1.1 Safeguarding Seafood for our Future

Seafood is a vital food and economic source for hundreds of millions of people living and working in Asia. Its fisheries are crucial for supporting coastal livelihoods, food security and global export trade in countries that represent some of the fastest-developing economies in the world. Overfishing, extensive IUU fishing and the associated declining fish stocks mean that demand for these resources cannot be met unless fisheries management is significantly improved. Today, one in five wild-caught fishes are estimated to be IUU, meaning that large quantities of IUU fish continue to be sold in local supermarkets and served in restaurants worldwide. Despite its small size, Hong Kong is the tenth largest global importer of seafood by value (US\$3.7 billion in 2012), importing as much as 90% of its seafood from over 170 countries and territories around the world. Presently, however, Hong Kong lags behind other developed economies, notably the EU, the US and Australia, in the traceability and sustainability of its seafood supply chains.

In May 2017, a **Seafood Symposium in Hong Kong, Safeguarding Seafood for our Future: Hard Truths, Challenges and Solutions**, identified the internal/external challenges and barriers faced by commercial buyers when it comes to sourcing and selling sustainable seafood. Presentations by experts and dialogue with participants identified actions the industry can take to address concerns over unsustainable fishing practices and IUU fishing. Partly through voluntary commitments, it aimed to gain some consensus on the way forward.

This report summarises the proceedings of the Symposium. By means of a brief overview, it aims to capture key issues raised by the speakers and the subsequent dialogue. In doing so it identifies a series of commitments and recommendations for the industry. An agenda of the event and all speaker PowerPoint presentations can be found on the Choose Right Today website: www.chooserighttoday.org.

1.2 Hong Kong Seafood Supply Chains Lack Traceability and Sustainability

With few exceptions, seafood available in Hong Kong is not supplied from sustainable sources. The demand for cheap seafood coupled with complex supply chains and limited legislative framework to enforce traceability of seafood mean that fish being sold in local supermarkets, restaurants and hotels have a high probability of being illegally caught and/or unsustainable.

The involvement of Hong Kong's seafood-related industry (seafood suppliers, buyers, restaurateurs and retailers) is thus fundamental to steering the city away from a seafood market that depends on unsustainable or IUU products, to one that contributes positively to the sustainable management of fishery resources both regionally and globally.

Market-based measures, such as certification of wild-caught and farmed-fish products, have a significant contribution to make in shifting awareness and influencing the purchasing behavior

of consumers. However, this requires an engaged industry coupled with consumer education around certification standards and sustainability issues. With the publication of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 14

SGD 14

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

concerning exploitation of the oceans, the role of retailers, supermarkets and the food service industry goes beyond simply supporting and enabling this shift in consumer awareness

to exercising choice. Hong Kong consumers should be provided with one choice – sustainable, legally-caught, ethically-sourced seafood that is traceable to the ocean or farm of origin. Without such traceability, consumers could unwittingly purchase products that are the result of unsustainable or IUU fishing.

The purchasing practices of supermarkets, hotels and restaurants thus impact the health of seafood products, the health of the marine environment and the well-being of the fishers that harvest the resources. Understanding these issues and the increasing risks to which businesses are exposed throughout their seafood supply chains can be challenging. Significant progress needs to be made in Hong Kong so that seafood buyers are fully aware of the risks involved in seafood purchasing and the general trends towards due diligence and supply chain integrity seen elsewhere in the world, for example Europe, Australia, Japan and the US. Furthermore, consumers need to be better informed and retailers and restaurants should take a more active role in informing their patrons.

1.3

The Symposium: Safeguarding Seafood for our Future: Hard Truths, Challenges and Solutions

The Symposium was attended by 77 commercial seafood buyers and sustainability executives in Hong Kong. A broad cross-section of the industry was represented, including retailers, hotels, restaurant chains, wholesalers, distributors and suppliers. Fifteen speakers with expertise across the spectrum of seafood sustainability shared insights into:

- **Consumer behavior**, highlighting findings from a 2017 consumer survey in Hong Kong;
- **The extent and nature of the risks and the need for responsible sourcing**, by framing the issues for industry due diligence including human health, the state of the seafood industry (overfishing, illegality), and its environmental and social impacts; and
- **Possible solutions**, including traceability, improvement projects, certification standards and sourcing policies that are already being implemented by fishing companies and food service providers in Hong Kong.

The presentations, questions and answers stimulated interactive discussion that identified the challenges that local retailers and buyers face in sourcing sustainable seafood and how to move toward building consumer trust. A series of Voluntary Commitments were further made by a number of participants regarding sourcing sustainable seafood. This also provided the basis for the development of next steps.

2

KEY SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED

2.1 Hong Kong's Seafood Consumer Attitudes, a Snapshot - Bertha Lo Hofford¹

According to a 2017 survey of seafood consumers in Hong Kong²:

- 44% would consume less in order to preserve the environment for future generations;
- 44% would be willing to pay more for an eco-friendly product;
- 57% would like to learn more about how eco-friendly some companies are;
- 60% agree that Hong Kong restaurants are an important channel for promoting sustainable seafood;
- 55% agreed that supermarkets in Hong Kong should always have to ensure sustainable seafood is available; and
- While freshness, taste, health and cost are the most important to Hong Kong seafood consumers, country of origin and environmental impact were important to 74% and 72% respectively.

2.2 Framing the issues for industry due diligence

2.2.1 Farmed Fish Health and Consumer Concerns - Dr. Howard Wong³

- Seafood is one of the least-regulated commodities entering the Hong Kong market, yet aquatic food products, both wild-caught and farmed, are generally some of the highest-risk products produced or imported into Hong Kong.
- Though sustainability is a relatively new concept in Hong Kong, health and quality have always been important considerations when choosing any food item.
- Increasing food prices and consumers' reluctance to pay more mean aquaculture producers feel the pressure to cut corners in terms of vaccines, sustained use of antibiotics and the use of growth promoters to maintain their margins.
- Aquatic animal disease is the greatest limiting factor impacting aquaculture worldwide.
- Value-adding processes mean the consumer is even further removed from the source. They also increase the length of the supply chain, creating more opportunities for contamination and other health hazards.
- Tracking seafood from "farm to fork" is the basis for safe food.

HEALTH RISKS OF DIFFERENT SEAFOODS

Live or raw ready-to-eat molluscan shellfish is considered high risk as it may contain toxins such as neurotoxic shellfish poisoning (NSP) and diarrhetic shellfish poisoning (DSP)

Processed not-ready to eat fish products including chilled and frozen whole fish is considered medium risk in terms of post-harvest and manufacturing contamination, such as histamine poisoning

Ready-to-eat fish and non-molluscan shellfish products (raw, cooked or processed) including sashimi is considered medium-to-high risk as there could be contamination during the manufacturing process, especially as food is not cooked before consumption, such as botulism in dried fish

Live cultured fish and shellfish also poses medium risk in terms of farming practices especially drug residues, such as antibiotics

Live wild-caught fish and non-molluscan shellfish is considered low risk and unlikely to contain drug residues but they may contain natural toxins such as ciguatera

Importers: need to ensure best management practices are in place (genetics, nutrition, environmental impacts, biosecurity, handling and welfare), in addition to encouraging the use of integrated aquaculture, vaccination health programmes and certification, and a reduction in the use of chemicals as well as maintaining proper control over the use of antibiotics.

2.2.2

IUU Products in Global Supply Chains

- Huw Thomas⁴

- One in five wild-caught fish is estimated to be caught outside of regulations, which equates to 11-26 million tonnes of fish per year.
- IUU fishing can include activities such as fishing without a license, exceeding quotas, unauthorized transshipments, failing to report catches/false reporting, keeping fish that are otherwise protected by regulations, fishing in closed areas or during closed seasons, and using prohibited fishing gear.
- Globally, up to US\$23 billion revenue is lost per annum from IUU fishing.
- IUU undermines food security, global nutrition, employment and supply volumes, and penalizes compliant and responsible members of the seafood industry.

- The reasons why IUU continues include lack of enforcement, insufficient or nonexistent laws, lack of consistent port controls and the lack of vessel tracking and identification.
- The burden of responsibility falls on brands and retailers and no matter how much investment is made in certification, health and ethics of seafood purchases, if there is IUU in seafood supply chains, it undermines seafood sustainability.

Brand retailers: have a duty to source responsibly so their products are legal, as well as sustainable by:

- Making a clear policy commitment to avoid IUU;
- Asking suppliers to use IUU risk assessment tools;
- Tracking and tracing supply chains – mapping each link, identifying people, product and process interactions;
- Requiring traceability to vessels & ports, review public lists of authorized vessels, consider if trans-shipment is happening;
- Considering the use of technology, e.g. for vessel behaviour analysis (such as Pew's Project Eyes on The Sea); and
- Sharing information with other industry players and seeking advice or help from e.g. NGOs when needed.

2.2.3

Unsustainable Fishing Practices and Overfishing in Asia

Boom and Bust Cycle - Duncan Leadbitter⁵

- Since the 1960s, the availability of marine products has increased rapidly along with population growth and the rise of technology.
- Environmentally-damaging fishing methods are rife, e.g. about 40-50% of Asia's seafood comes from trawls, used for catching fish and shellfish (especially shrimp).
- Although marine catches generally show an increasing trend over time driven by expansion of fishing activity further into the Pacific Ocean, these mask underlying depletions at the species level and a declining Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE).
- The fishing industry develops a wide variety of seafood products ranging from fresh/frozen (snappers, groupers, squids, shrimps), processed foods such as fish pastes (surimi, fish balls) and fish sauces, dried fish, fermented fish and animal feeds.
- Overfishing, take up of juvenile fish and habitat alteration from trawling methods present huge risks to seafood supply chains.
- The problems are not being driven by industrial-scale fishing vessels alone, but also by the tens of thousands of small-scale vessels with small nets in nearshore areas.
- There has been significant growth in fish paste production for surimi and other products such as fish balls across Asia. Yet half of the surimi species are overfished, while the rest range from moderately to fully fished. Some of these fisheries have also been identified as IUU hot spots.
- These issues are not limited to trawl methods alone, with excessive fishing effort being found in all types of fisheries in Asia.

A Risky Business, Supplying Hong Kong with Live Reef Food Fish (LRFF) - Prof. Yvonne Sadovy⁶

- The LRFF trade (LRFFT) consists of a low volume of high-value fish species, posing an even higher risk to retailers and hospitality sector when these species are overfished.

- In most cases, catches of larger species are declining while those of smaller species are increasing.
- Hong Kong is the major global hub for the LRFFT, which primarily consists of groupers, many of whose populations are in decline from overfishing.
- The Humphead/Napoleon Wrasse legally requires possession licenses to be sold in Hong Kong, as well as permits to import or export. It is a high-profile endangered species, posing a reputational risk for retailers.
- Aquaculture helps fill the demand/supply gap, but it does not prevent overfishing. It can actually increase it as carnivorous species such as groupers require fish as feed, much of which is taken from the wild.

Suppliers and retailers need to:

- Know what they are buying in terms of the species and source areas, and be sure it is legal;
- Contribute to fishery and aquaculture improvement projects and 'fair trade' arrangements directly connecting producer to retailer;
- Educate consumers about best choices, facilitating the demand for sustainable and responsible seafood; and
- Appreciate the role of governments and the value of working through trade associations to make improvements on the ground.

2.2.4

Forced Labour as a risk in seafood supply chains - Dr. Katrina Nakamura⁷

- Goods produced using forced labour often enter the global market.
- Forced labour is defined by the International Labor Organization (ILO) as "work or service exacted from any person under the menace of penalty and for which the person has not offered himself voluntarily".

- Companies should be aware that seemingly sustainable seafood with high-risk origins, such as Thailand, may not meet the ethical and minimum risk requirements expressed in their buying policies – this is an inherent reputational risk⁸.
- The US State Department recognizes 55 countries, including several in Asia, with significant trafficking risks in fishing, information that is available online⁹.
- Seafood imports into the US can now be inspected by the Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement for links to slavery¹⁰.
- Today's commercial fishing fleets are multicultural workplaces staffed by professional crew recruited from seafaring countries, such as the Philippines, Chile or Ukraine, and less-skilled crew from developing countries, such as Myanmar, Vietnam and Cambodia.
- Migrants contribute significantly to the seafood labour pool and are particularly vulnerable to forced work without pay.

Seafood buyers: have leverage in product supply chains and can screen for contracts, regulatory oversight and grievance mechanisms. They can ask suppliers to define the terms of work such as payment, costs and recruitment.

For multinational food companies purchasing items across many fisheries and fish farms, ethical sourcing is achievable by screening products for the actual working conditions producers take on. The private sector can screen any product for forced-labour risk and should do so, because continuous monitoring is practical and accessible.

The Labour Safe Screen can be used to screen any product for forced-labour risk.¹¹

2.3 Solutions in Practice

2.3.1

Traceability and transparency - Daughin Chan¹²

- Traceability provides companies with confidence that its products are not mislabeled and therefore engenders trust that you get what you pay for and that the product is healthy and not contaminated.
- There is a growing desire for transparency among consumers who want to know where their food comes from and how it was produced – the seafood's 'story' can help with this.
- Social audits facilitate traceability and can include vessel crew lists, employee work hours, fishers' work agreements, payment, provision of basic facilities at sea such as food, water, medical care, health and safety, etc.

2.3.2

Catering en masse, ensuring traceable and sustainable seafood supply - Aaron Claxton¹³

- 58% of all seafood purchased by Cathay Pacific Catering Service (CPCS) is certified sustainable by accredited bodies (MSC, ASC, BAP, GAP) .
- The CPCS sustainable sourcing policy lists seafood items to be avoided, including abalone (South Africa, wild-caught), Bluefin tuna (global, wild-caught), Humphead Wrasse (Southeast Asia, wild-caught), Shark fin (global), Sturgeon/paddlefish caviar (global, wild-caught) and soft/hard-shelled turtle/tortoise (global, wild-caught).
- Constraints include limited supply, limited range of supply and cost.

2.3.3

Sourcing from Fisheries Improvement Projects (FIPs) - Duncan Leadbitter

- The vast majority of fisheries have no governance structure in place so FIPs have an important role to play in addressing this and thus sustainable seafood supply.

- A FIP is a multi-stakeholder effort to address environmental and social challenges in a fishery – all stakeholders should have an interest in the responsible management of their fishery over the long term.
- These projects utilize the power of the private sector to incentivize positive changes toward sustainability in the fishery and seek to make these changes endure through policy change.
- Some key elements in any FIP process are to: have clear goals and objectives; mobilize commercial players in the supply chain to improve a fishery; be based on an initial assessment of the problems in the fishery and address as a priority those issues in greatest need of improvement; create a public workplan with measureable indicators and an associated budget; encourage a public commitment by the participants in the FIP to make improvements according to the workplan; have a willingness by participants to make the investments required by the workplan and budget; and create a public system for reporting and tracking progress.

Suppliers and retailers: should consider sourcing from FIPs, especially if there are no certified options available.

2.3.4

Mobilising Uptake of FIPs - Dr. Pongie Kichawen¹⁵

- PNG has a long history of fishing for sea cucumber since the 1800s, targeting some 22 species. But in 2009, the harvesting of sea cucumbers was closed down due to overfishing, affecting livelihoods in 13 Maritime Provinces.
- In 2013, the National Bêche-de-mer (BDM) Fishery Management Plan was formed based on scientific studies of the population levels and a sustainable governance system of islands managing their own marine resources.
- The management plan was ratified into law in 2016 and in 2017, the export ban on sea cucumbers was lifted.

- Sustainable sea cucumber harvesting promotes sustainable livelihoods, fisheries and financing.
- Profits are invested and shared and the Council of Chiefs members decide on priority projects.

Issues and challenges included start-up capital, the cost of export licenses, establishing buying points in the communities and finding staff and buyers outside PNG.

2.3.5

Sustainable Aquaculture - Mark Kwok¹⁶

- Technology can revolutionize the mariculture industry.
- It is vitally important to source broodstock from reliable and healthy sources so as to ensure a healthy genetic pool, thereby minimizing risk of disease. This is can be monitored down seafood supply chains and incorporated into sourcing policies.
- Research is currently underway to test alternative feed proteins for farmed carnivorous species like groupers, as feed made from wild-caught fish poses a serious concern to the sustainability of fisheries.
- Sourcing sustainable Giant Grouper locally also reduces travel distance and therefore the carbon footprint.

2.3.6

Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Standards for Wild Catch - Sheryl Torres-Wu¹⁷

- Almost 10% of the total global wild-caught seafood supply is currently MSC certified and 13 of these species are found in Hong Kong retail stores.
- The top five countries with the highest number of chain of custody certificates include the US, Germany, China, the UK and the Netherlands.
- In Asia, the growth in certificate holders is being driven by overseas market demand (via China) and local sustainability commitments (Japan).

- In the food service sector in Asia, MSC-certified hotels include Hyatt Tokyo, Grand Hyatt Singapore, Shangri-La Hong Kong and Hilton Worldwide. Hilton Worldwide (43 hotels) has made a commitment to sustainably source 25% of its global seafood volume by 2022. In the retail sector in Asia, certified retailers include Coles supermarkets in Australia and AEON Japan. AEON's commitment by 2020 is to have 10% of their seafood MSC/ASC certified.
- Traceability throughout the supply chain involves tracing products: Fishery/Farm → Auction/Trader → Primary/Secondary Processing → Distribution/Transport → Retail/Restaurant.

2.3.7

Benchmarks – Asia's Seafood Industry

- Dr. Richard Welford¹⁸

- The 'Asian Sustainable Seafood Initiative Mapping' is a large-scale mapping of fishery improvement projects, aquaculture improvement projects, multi-stakeholder initiatives, certifications and consumer campaigns, benchmarking the sustainable seafood industry to date in Asia. It includes details of which companies and organisations are involved and how consumers are engaged.
- The major seafood producers and processors assessed appeared to lack commitments to procuring sustainable seafood and enhancing the social impact of their operations.
- The greatest restrictions revolved around the lack of disclosure by the large seafood companies.

- Strategic engagement with artisanal fishers and farmers is needed for securing more sustainable livelihoods and therefore the future of the industry.
- CSR Asia and Oxfam will be releasing their report shortly. Highlights include:
 - Cathay Pacific is the only airline in the region that has a clear policy towards the sustainable procurement of seafood.
 - Within the hotel sector, Shangri-La hotels have several seafood-sourcing commitments based on hotel location, but group-wide commitments are limited across the industry.
 - Within the financial sector, Standard Chartered has stated that they will prohibit the provision of financial services to operators in the fisheries sector that fail to mitigate negative social and environmental impacts.

2.3.8

Introducing Hong Kong Consumers to Sustainable Seafood - Doug Woodring¹⁹

- Consumer education is essential. The Kin Hong Seafood Festival will be taking place in September 2017 to promote awareness of sustainable seafood in the Hong Kong market.
- 'Kin Hong' means 'healthy', reflecting the safe-sourcing and preparation of sustainable seafood.
- Restaurants in key dining locations will commit to serving at least one dish containing sustainable seafood on their menus for the month. In addition, a range of activities will promote sustainable seafood.

3

CHALLENGES FOR RETAILERS AND BUYERS SOURCING SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

3.1

Local Supply Chain Risks - Dr. Allen To²⁰

Seafood species imported into Hong Kong pose numerous risks. 180 seafood importers in Hong Kong face potential risks, including legal, reputational and food safety risks. Examples include:

- **Humphead wrasse, shark fin**
 - could be from illegal sources
 - may be supporting IUU fisheries unknowingly
 - some of the species are very vulnerable
- **South African abalone**
 - the actual catch exceeds the quota (illegally-sourced)
 - the South African abalone industry is often linked to gangs and criminal syndicates
 - serious vulnerability to IUU fishing
- **Shrimp**
 - trawling wild shrimp produces considerable bycatch and damage to ecosystems
 - farmed shrimp is often associated with forced labour abuses and excessive use of chemicals

Frontline Staff: have an important role to play in educating the customer. Staff should be familiar with the source of the seafood they are serving and why it is sustainable.

3.2

The Price Myth - Chris Hanselman²¹

- Despite concerns over supply, there is enough sustainable seafood in the market to satisfy consumer demand.

- Price appears to be a constraint to retailers choosing sustainable seafood, whereas, in fact, suppliers can sometimes yield savings through 'shopping around', which can include savings on certified produce.
- Certified seafood is in some cases 'a few dollars per kilo more' – the premium for certified is often minimal.

Brands: can play an important role in driving sales of sustainable products and educating the public.

3.3

Tracking and Tracing Supply Chains - Huw Thomas

- Information is needed to assess risks, yet around 80% of the available information does not get passed on from the supply chain.
- Regulation or Voluntary Codes of Conducts (VCOCs) are an opportunity to improve reputation and reduce the risk from food safety, legal and ethical issues.

The first step can be broken down into roughly as follows:

- **People:** What are the working conditions? Are they migrants? What systems are in place to ensure health and safety?
- **Product:** What happens to the product once it is caught?
- **Process:** Is seafood consolidated into batches?

For Buyers and Retailers: A step-by-step process to develop traceability is as follows:

1. Do you ask suppliers to provide visibility of steps in your chain? Is this a policy or supply requirement?
2. Do you have food safety or product recall requirements?
3. At a minimum, you should know: Fish name – Latin and common name, whether the fish is wild-caught or farmed, whether the fish is procured directly or via an agent, and how to trace back through to the vessel of origin or farm.
4. After steps 1-3, consider if there is third-party certification with Chain of Custody and ask about working conditions.
5. Work towards full risk assessments of IUU, sustainability & labour.

You might face resistance, but give forward guidance to management

3.4 Internal Challenges, Identified by Participants

The following internal challenges were identified during the dialogue:

- Miscommunication between sellers and buyers is driven mainly by lack of access to information about the product.
- The understanding of what the term ‘sustainability’ actually means.
- Price, sustainable seafood perceived as expensive and, for producers, does come at a cost.
- The hospitality sector finds it challenging:
 - i) when the menu needs to be updated daily or on an ad hoc basis;
 - ii) to get departmental consensus on how to present sustainable seafood on their menu; and
 - iii) to communicate the principles of seafood sustainability to the frontline staff.
- Limited choices in supply.
- Uncertainty over what certification really means and concerns over potential fake certification.

- Lack of infrastructure – businesses lacking the support from a government regulatory framework.
- Sustainable catch is not always consistent.
- Chefs can be difficult to engage.
- When purchasing seafood, the importance of quality, price and consistency outweighs sustainability.
- Communication: difficulty engaging CEOs with complex issues and terms surrounding sustainability.
- Seafood is not purchased centrally, but bought at country/city level and at fish markets where there are limited, if any, certified products available.
- Challenging to convince the finance department to endorse the extra cost in purchasing sustainably.
- Health is a stronger driver of consumer behaviour than sustainability.

3.5 External Barriers, Identified by Participants

The following external barriers in sourcing sustainable seafood were identified during the dialogue:

- The need to educate consumers through e.g. marketing campaigns.
- Limited channels by which consumers can receive information on sustainable seafood.
- Consumers being unwilling to change.
- Cultural preference for rare seafood, including live seafood.
- Limited supply of sustainable, particularly certified, products.
- MSC or ASC are not valued by consumers in Hong Kong.
- Terminology is an issue, e.g. the term ‘Gluten-free’ is more appealing than ‘sustainability’.
- Jargon problems, e.g. terms such as ‘endangered’ are too technical.
- Need to find easier solutions; there are too many different certification programmes.
- Pioneers in sustainable seafood communications will be vulnerable to criticism.

4

OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED BY PARTICIPANTS

The following opportunities were identified during the dialogue:

1

Health benefits (nutrition, balanced diet) – promoting sustainability from a health-risk perspective.

2

Helping customers understand more about what sustainability is overall, not just regarding seafood.

3

Buyers start doing their own checks and suppliers can provide more information.

4

'Chain of Custody' automatically means information is available and instils consumer confidence.

5

Creating mutually-beneficial relationships and strategies with different stakeholders, building trust in the long term.

6

Traceability enables a story to be told.

7

Need for a major consumer campaign to kick-start the above.

5

CONCLUSION, ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES AND NEXT STEPS

5.1 Changing the Status Quo

Demand for seafood exceeding sustainable supply, the prevalence of IUU and the lack of traceability in supply chains in Hong Kong present an increasing risk to the viability of the seafood industry itself. Nevertheless, and despite the potential opportunities to the industry and benefits environmentally, there remains some reluctance in addressing the status quo in Hong Kong. While consumers cite lack of information, the industry itself needs better information around the issues, the terminology and how to effect change.

It was agreed that ignoring the grave concerns about seafood sustainability is not in anyone's best interest, as producers, as retailers and as consumers of seafood. With this in mind a number of commitments were made:

Group Voluntary Commitments

- The organisers and many of the presenters committed to supporting the development of a Voluntary Code of Conduct (VCOC) in Hong Kong and in doing so, establishing a group to develop a common language for communicating sustainable seafood issues within the industry.
- A collaborative model similar to that in the UK (the Sustainable Seafood Coalition) will be explored with a view to development in the near future.

Individual Voluntary Commitments

- MSC committed to bringing the industry players together more frequently.
- MGM Macau and Hyatt Macau committed to supporting education in sustainable seafood by connecting with secondary schools and raising awareness on sustainability in general.
- The Peninsula Hotel shared its commitment to remove all Critically Endangered species from its menus by 2020.
- Pacific Rich Resources committed to working more closely with MSC on understanding multi-centre accreditation.

5.2 Next Steps

Despite Hong Kong's significant footprint as an importer and consumer of seafood, and the lack of traceability in general, the government is unlikely to address due diligence of seafood supply chains in the near to medium term. Self-regulation by industry is therefore the only means to address the risks highlighted.

To ensure momentum continues following the Symposium and to ensure the voluntary commitments outlined above are further explored and/or implemented, a Working Group is being established to assist the Hong Kong seafood industry develop a VCOC and agreement on common language.

ENDNOTES

1. Communications Manager at ADM Capital Foundation
2. APCO 2017, Seafood consumer survey for ADM Capital Foundation.
3. Executive Director at the School of Veterinary Medicine at City University of Hong Kong
4. Senior Officer for Business Partnerships & Outreach for the Ending Illegal Fishing Project at The Pew Charitable Trusts
5. Director of Fish Matter
6. Professor at the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Hong Kong
7. Founder of Sustainability Incubator and the Labor-Safe Screen
8. The classic example of a forced labour story that tainted the reputation of numerous US and UK-based retailers, was that of Benjina Island. In 2015 a year-long investigation by The Associated Press discovered dozens of men being held against their will on a remote Indonesian island called Benjina, which served as the base for a trawler fleet that fishes in the area. Most of the men were from Myanmar and it was discovered that they were being beaten, essentially enslaved and kept in cages to prevent them from fleeing. In total 682 vessel crew in association with the Benjina case have been repatriated to their origin country.
9. <https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2016/>
10. Department of Labor's "List of Goods Produced by Forced and Child Labor
11. The Sustainability Incubator has used its Labor Safe Screen to screen 118 shrimp, tuna, oyster and other seafood products for 18 participating companies so far. Its work suggests that human rights can be protected with clearly-defined work terms in actionable contracts and workplace codes in the seafood sector
12. Vice President of the Scandinavian Group (a subsidiary of Luen Thai Fishing Venture)
13. Head of Catering at Cathay Pacific
14. This includes Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) for wild caught seafood, and Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) and Global G.A.P. for farmed species
15. Director of the Mwanus Endras Asi Resource Development Network in Papua New Guinea
16. Founder of Aquaculture Technologies Asia
17. Program Director for Southeast Asia and Hong Kong at the MSC
18. Chairman of CSR Asia
19. Founder of Ocean Recovery Alliance
20. Assistant Manager of the Footprint Programme at WWF-Hong Kong
21. Managing Director at Pacific Rich Resources

