



**Summary of “Making a Public Commitment to Socially Responsible Seafood”
Consultation with North American and European eNGOs
November 8, 2016**

1. Introduction and Purpose

Social issues and human rights are an important factor that companies consider when designing their sustainability and corporate social responsibility goals. In the past few years, investigative journalism, legislation, and environmental non-profit campaigning have drawn attention to social issues including human rights abuses in seafood. In this vigilant environment, companies are increasingly looking for guidance on how to develop social responsibility commitments that express their values and protect their workers and supply chains. In turn, eNGOs must be equipped to provide businesses with a road-map for taking the first step of social responsibility: making a public commitment. FishWise provided session participants with information and tools to help businesses establish public social responsibility commitments, and to gain greater familiarity with the elements of these commitments by practicing drafting a social commitment for a potential business partner.

2. Social Responsibility Commitments

To begin, FishWise delivered a structured presentation on the components of robust social commitments. FishWise introduced the definition of a social responsibility commitment, and identified the components of comprehensive, best practice commitments. For each component, an excerpt of a company’s public social responsibility commitment was provided to illustrate how the concept translates into language. Participants then heard perspectives from several eNGOs defining their organizational approaches to social responsibility. Participants also engaged in a brief comment/question period which generated points and topics for further consideration.

Participants then discussed ideas and concerns related to developing social commitments in groups. After sharing what questions they are hearing from businesses regarding social responsibility, each group also tackled the language of commitments using a work-packet provided by FishWise. Groups used this as a guide to practice crafting a sample commitment for a seafood business.

3. Results

Participants found exploring this new topic thought-provoking, and we received positive feedback about the exercise from many participants. The exercise of crafting a commitment raised several challenges relevant to conducting social responsibility work with seafood businesses. While commitments can be broad and generalized, such as a company’s



statement that it values the human rights of its workers, more robust commitments involve specifying implementation measures to ensure the commitment is met. Participants discussed the merits and content of general commitment statements as they explored the more granular questions of implementation and accountability, and emphasized that although commitments are an essential first step, follow-through on the commitment is most critical. Other themes surfaced included the challenge of verifying social responsibility down the supply chain and the need for tools to support that verification process. Lastly, discussion emphasized the importance of having an agreed upon definition of social responsibility to avoid confusion or inconsistency in how to pursue social commitments across the seafood sector. Questions were raised concerning the degree to which commitments should focus exclusively on the most egregious human rights abuses or expand their commitments to include more holistic elements of social and economic wellbeing.

4. Next Steps

The results of this session further underscore that eNGOs are looking for guidance on how to help businesses not only develop social commitments, but also to implement social responsibility in actionable steps. FishWise invited participants to provide thoughts or suggestions about useful tools, resources, and guidance that will assist businesses in implementing new social commitments. Participants can find additional resources about due diligence on the [Social Resource Center webpage](#) of the Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions.

FishWise will continue to act as a central liaison, thought leader and resource for NGOs and seafood businesses on social responsibility in seafood. FishWise will continue to host conversations, create resources, and take steps to cultivate leaders in human rights and promote awareness and adoption of new tools that will move the entire field along.