

Herman Wisse, Program Director Global Seafood Sustainable Initiative (GSSI)

## “I am confident that GSSI recognition will soon be the norm when sourcing certified seafood”

**What is your evaluation of 2016 for the GSSI?**  
2016 is proving to be a landmark year for GSSI following the launch of the Global Benchmark Tool in October last year at the Conxemar Congress. There's been a lot of interest generated across the seafood sector, from industry to NGOs and certification schemes. At the COFI meeting in July, governments, from Japan to South Africa, also voiced their support for GSSI.

We reached another milestone in July, with GSSI's first recognized scheme - the Alaska RFM program. More schemes have signed up to go through the benchmark process, with the public consultation on Iceland Responsible Fisheries Management program just closed. It's been an impressive start to 2016 and we expect to announce even more results by the end of the year.

To add to this success, many large buying companies, including Ahold Delhaize, Darden, Kroger, Metro, Morrison's and Sodexo, have made a commitment to include the benchmark outcomes in their daily operations. They will be recognizing all GSSI-recognized schemes as acceptable when sourcing certified seafood.

I am pleased to report that GSSI is on track to ensure confidence in the supply and promotion of



certified seafood as well as to promote improvement in seafood certification schemes.

### **Has the GSSI received new members in 2016?**

Yes, GSSI is continuing to grow and in 2016 we've already welcomed on board five new members from across the seafood industry worldwide, including Conxemar.

GSSI is a powerful multi-stakeholder platform that is proven to deliver globally recognized solutions to the seafood sector.

NGOs, governmental organizations and industry partners agree that GSSI is the best platform we have to achieve vital change in the sector working together.

Find out more from our partners themselves in our GSSI voices on [www.ourgssi.org](http://www.ourgssi.org). It's a rewarding time to be part of GSSI and work

together to be at the forefront of this change.

### **Can you tell us which certifications have applied for GSSI evaluation to date?**

I am very encouraged by the fact that a number of schemes have now signed up to be benchmarked after the launch of the Tool last autumn.

Alaska RFM was the first scheme to be GSSI-recognized in July this year. Just now, the public consultation for comments on the draft GSSI benchmark report for the Iceland Responsible Fisheries Management program has closed. Details of the certification schemes going through the GSSI benchmark process are made public at the 30-day public consultation period on a scheme's draft benchmark report.

Given the support and levels of interest we've seen in GSSI benchmarking, from both aquaculture and fisheries schemes, we expect to share more of these developments in the coming months.

You can follow the latest benchmarking news on our website, Twitter feed or by signing up to our mailing list. You can also join us at a number of sector events worldwide to find out more.

### **What is your vision on the overall status of the fishing grounds at present?**

Twenty years on from the FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF), it's clear to me that a lot has already been achieved by having an international framework to strengthen the management of fisheries globally.

Through the CCRF and its associated guidelines, we have a pathway for fisheries to improve and we can also see examples of fish stocks recovering.

But are we where we want to be? The FAO's State of World's Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) 2016 report shows that there are challenges we must face together, with estimates of 30% of fish stocks still being overfished. Sustainable Development Goal 14 on the oceans gives us a target to end

unsustainable practices and to work now to restore fish stocks.

Certification is one of the tools that can help us get there, but only if we can ensure high levels of confidence in certified seafood by addressing the confusion that has existed till to date. GSSI's Benchmark Tool provides the sector with a unique solution and way forward.

#### What is your evaluation of the support that GSSI has achieved from the retailers?

GSSI counts on an impressive level of support from retailers across the sector. 19 companies have already pledged their commitment to recognize all GSSI-recognized schemes as acceptable when sourcing certified seafood.

That includes top ten global retail companies, such as Ahold Delhaize, Kroger and Metro Group, who have put GSSI at the heart of their sourcing policies for certified seafood.

A number of other retailers have indicated their interest in doing the same.

The first recognition and results of the benchmark process have created high levels of confidence in GSSI's robust benchmark process. With results starting to be made available across the seafood supply chain, credible choice is becoming a reality. For seafood buyers, it really does mean simpler, more consistent data to guide their purchasing decisions.

All this shows that we're focused on delivery. Now, with the support of our partners, we're reaching out further, asking more retailers and seafood companies to join the commitment.

I am confident that GSSI recognition will soon be the norm when sourcing certified seafood.

#### What role has the German Government played in the creation of the GSSI?

GSSI started back in 2013 as a unique public private partnership between leading seafood companies, NGOs and GIZ, the development agency implementing Germany's development policy on behalf of the

Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The German government's role has been invaluable. With BMZ support, GSSI has mobilized its global reach, bringing on board governments from developing countries to support the development of its Global Benchmark Tool.

With Germany's assistance, together with FAO, GSSI has raised awareness and built up understanding around seafood certification on a global scale. Going forward, the Tool can also support producing nations improve their market access.

Do you believe that in markets, such as Germany, certifications with the GSSI's recognition will be accepted by retailers and thus suppliers will have more options?

Yes, as more certification schemes are GSSI-recognized and the results are shared across the seafood supply chain, everyone stands to benefit.

Suppliers will have more options to choose the scheme that is right for

them, reducing the need for multiple audits, and retailers will have simpler, more consistent data to guide purchasing decisions based on benchmark outcomes.

GSSI is increasing its uptake in the European market including with Germany's internationally active retailers.

Metro Group is showing strong leadership in the German market and their new fish sourcing policy already highlights GSSI in their 2020 commitments. GSSI is also in discussion with a number of international retailers and I am convinced others will follow.

We look forward to showing what the Global Benchmark Tool can offer to suppliers, retailers, NGOs and producing nations and to growing GSSI's global partnership in the months ahead.

Find out more:

[www.ourgssi.org](http://www.ourgssi.org) and #GSSIseafood and get in touch: [secretariat@ourgssi.org](mailto:secretariat@ourgssi.org)