



2025 CASS Conference Day Zero Session:
The Future of NGO–Seafood Industry Partnerships
October 21, 2025
Executive Summary

Purpose of the Session

- Define the purpose and shared vision of NGO–industry partnerships.
 - Identify barriers to progress and opportunities to strengthen collaboration.
 - Discuss and prioritize actionable solutions to improve efficiency and impact of partnerships going forward.
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Supporting Elements of a Shared Vision

- Partnerships leverage complementary strengths: NGOs bring credibility, science, advocacy; industry brings operational scale, market access, and practical implementation.
 - Goals include measurable progress toward environmental sustainability, social responsibility, human rights, and broader ESG commitments.
 - Partnerships should be built on trust, pragmatism, mutual accountability, and continuous improvement, with producers, workers, and local communities included as co-creators.
 - Alignment with universal frameworks (UN SDGs, SBTi, GHG Protocol, SBTN) is critical.
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Key Barriers

NGO–industry partnerships are not broken and have met many laudable milestones over the past 20+ years. However, both industry members and NGOs have raised

concerns over the numerous barriers, both within and external to these partnerships, that may impede their success.

1. Capacity and Coordination

- Businesses and NGOs face limited resources amid increasing ESG demands (climate, labor, welfare, deforestation).
- Multiple, overlapping requests and uncoordinated initiatives create inefficiency and overburden partners.

2. Misaligned Incentives and Expectations

- Companies focus on risk reduction, efficiency, and market advantage; NGOs focus on mission goals and funder requirements.
- Lack of clarity on roles and ROI leads to stalled or ineffective collaboration.

3. Structural and Systemic Gaps

- Partnerships often compensate for weak or absent regulation.
- Certification fatigue, duplicative audits, and inconsistent standards erode trust, especially with producers.
- Limited shared metrics and transparent data systems hinder measurement of progress.

Opportunities & Priority Focus Areas

**Build Alignment
& Clarity**

Develop a baseline of expectations and equivalency across NGO–industry collaborations that align with universal sustainability frameworks (e.g., UN SDGs, SBTi, SBTN, Human Rights Due Diligence) and help set clear goals and measurable outcomes that ladder up to these universal frameworks.

Prioritize and consolidate asks - Align and bundle NGO requests across ESG topics to reduce duplication and confusion. Create joint agendas where possible.

**Measurement +
Verification
System**

Create common metrics and digital infrastructure for measuring progress/ impact and reporting outcomes transparently.

Map & Coordinate NGO Capabilities and Initiatives	Develop a searchable, shared database cataloguing NGO focus areas, geographies, and ongoing projects—while serving as a matchmaking platform to prevent duplication and enhance collaboration.
Expand Industry Collaboration Forums	Establish, or utilize existing, industry roundtables and working groups for joint planning, solution-building, and policy alignment—particularly across regions.
Cross-Sector Learning Exchange	Adapt proven approaches from apparel and agriculture sectors (e.g., worker voice, regenerative sourcing, traceability finance).
Assurance Innovation	Support pilots using technology for simpler, cheaper, and more credible verification of sustainability and social performance.

Actionable Next Steps

- Publish guidance on minimum expectations and align with universal sustainability frameworks.
 - Coordinate and consolidate NGO asks
 - Establish shared impact measurement frameworks and digital platforms for monitoring and reporting.
 - Create a searchable database cataloging NGO initiatives, geographies, and expertise to connect companies and NGO specialists and prevent duplication.
 - Expand cross-sector exchanges to scale learning and innovation.
 - Continue integrating producers, workers, and local communities into the design and implementation of partnerships.
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Session Summary:

NGO–industry partnerships are crucial for driving sustainable seafood outcomes, but their effectiveness depends on better alignment, shared standards, coordinated asks, measurable impact, and inclusion of the people closest to production. Strengthening these elements can unlock greater, more scalable progress across environmental, social, and governance goals.