

Marine Stewardship Council

MSC Fisheries Certification Requirements and Guidance



Version 2.0, 1st October, 2014

Fisheries Certification Requirements

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Marine Stewardship Council
Marine House
1 Snow Hill
London EC1A 2DH
United Kingdom

Phone: + 44 (0) 20 7246 8900

Fax: + 44 (0) 20 7246 8901

Email: standards@msc.org

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Responsibility for these Requirements

The Marine Stewardship Council is responsible for these Requirements.

Readers should verify that they are using the latest copy of this (and other documents). Updated documents, together with a master list of all available MSC documents, can be found on the MSC's website.

Versions issued

Version No.	Date	Description Of Amendment
Consultation Draft	17 January 2011	First publication of consolidated MSC scheme requirements, released for consultation.
0.0	7 March 2011	First draft of revisions following MSC and CAB consultations.
0.8	19 May 2011	Draft issued to the MSC Technical Advisory Board for final review and sign-off.
1.0	15 August 2011	First version issued for application by Conformity Assessment Bodies.
1.1	24 October 2011	Version issued incorporating revised Group CoC requirements and correcting typos, page numbering, wrong and missing referencing and unreadable flowcharts.
1.2	10 January 2012	Version issued incorporating TAB 20 agreed changes regarding reassessment, objections procedure, modifications to the default assessment tree to assess bivalves, implementation timeframes and ASC requirements. Minor edits, wrong and missing referencing, typos and unreadable Figures were corrected.
1.3	14 January 2013	Version issued incorporating TAB 21 and BoT agreed changes. Minor edits and clarifications were also incorporated.
2.0	1 October 2014	Version issued incorporating changes to the standard as a result of the fisheries standard review and changes to CABs procedures as a result of the speed and cost review...

Marine Stewardship Council

Vision

Our vision is of the world's oceans teeming with life, and seafood supplies safeguarded for this and future generations.

Mission

Our mission is to use our ecolabel and fishery certification programme to contribute to the health of the world's oceans by recognising and rewarding sustainable fishing practices, influencing the choices people make when buying seafood, and working with our partners to transform the seafood market to a sustainable basis.

Focus

We will:

- Collaborate with fishers, retailers, processors, consumers and others to drive change forward;
- Never compromise on the environmental standard we set, nor on our independence;
- Continue to lead the world in wild-capture fishery certification, with the most trusted, recognised and credible seafood ecolabel.

General Introduction

Fisheries certification

With international consultation with stakeholders, the MSC has developed standards for sustainable fishing and seafood traceability. They ensure that MSC-labelled seafood comes from, and can be traced back to, a sustainable fishery.

MSC standards and requirements meet global best practice guidelines for certification and ecolabelling programmes.

The MSC fisheries standard sets out requirements that a fishery must meet to enable it to claim that its fish come from a well-managed and sustainable source.

Throughout the world fisheries are using good management practices to safeguard jobs, secure fish stocks for the future and help protect the marine environment. The science-based MSC environmental standard for sustainable fishing offers fisheries a way to confirm sustainability, using a credible, independent third-party assessment process. It means sustainable fisheries can be recognised and rewarded in the marketplace, and gives an assurance to consumers that their seafood comes from a well-managed and sustainable source.

The MSC standard applies to wild-capture fisheries that meet the scope requirements provided in [section 7.4](#).

The MSC fisheries standard comprises three core principles:

Principle 1: Sustainable target fish stocks

A fishery must be conducted in a manner that does not lead to over-fishing or depletion of the exploited populations and, for those populations that are depleted, the fishery must be conducted in a manner that demonstrably leads to their recovery.

Principle 2: Environmental impact of fishing

Fishing operations should allow for the maintenance of the structure, productivity, function and diversity of the ecosystem (including habitat and associated dependent and ecologically related species) on which the fishery depends.

Principle 3: Effective management

The fishery is subject to an effective management system that respects local, national and international laws and standards and incorporates institutional and operational frameworks that require use of the resource to be responsible and sustainable.

Implementation timeframes

Effective date

Release date: 1st October 2014

Effective date: 1st April 2015

The implementation timelines are different for the process requirements and the standard requirements. Although these requirements are found in the same document, the MSC fisheries standards are located in the S-Annexes, while the process requirements are found in the main document of the FCR and the P-Annexes.

First full assessments that commence after the effective date shall be conducted in accordance with the new standard requirements in FCR v2.0 in addition to using the new processes, including the RBF (Annex PF).

All other assessment processes (including first assessments, surveillance audits, certificate extensions and reassessments) in existing fisheries (in assessment or certified before the effective date) that commence¹ after 1st April 2015 shall be conducted in accordance with the new process requirements in FCR v2.0, with the exception of the RBF requirements (Annex PF). Existing fisheries still using the standard requirements v1.3 shall apply the RBF requirements as published in CR v1.3 (Annex CC), unless variation is requested and granted to allow use of the RBF process in FCR 2.0 (Annex PF). Such request shall confirm how the differences between CR versions are to be allowed for and which sections of Annex PF shall be applied. 

Existing fisheries (in assessment or certified) shall apply the new standard requirements in addition to the RBF (Annex PF) at their first reassessment commencing after 1st October 2017.

Any fishery may elect to use the new process and standard requirements as of the publication date (1st October 2014) if they wish and CABs can confirm their readiness to apply.

Fisheries which entered full assessment prior to 10 March 2012 and which have not published their PCDR by 1 December 2014 shall apply FCR 7.3.

CABs shall use the same version of the FCR process for each full assessment (i.e., from the start of announcement of the fishery through to certification), and for each individual surveillance, except in cases where the assessments are delayed, as covered by FCR sections 7.3.3-4, and allowing for the special case of the RBF process, as outlined above.

Review

Sections of the FCR 1 to Annex PF cover the processes by which fisheries are assessed by CABs. Changes may be made to these documents annually.

Annex SA–SD are the MSC fisheries standard. Changes to these annexes will only be made as part of a standard review conducted in accordance with the ISEAL Standard Setting Code. The next review of the standard will be in 2019.

¹ Commencing: announcing a full assessment, reassessment, or surveillance audit of a fishery, entering a contract for a CoC audit

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Additional audit considerations

- 7.23.21 Where there are IPI stocks within the scope of certification teams shall follow Annex PA during each surveillance audit.

Expedited audit

- 7.23.22 The CAB shall undertake an “expedited audit”, including as it determines necessary review of documents and an on-site audit if:
- 7.23.22.1 The CAB becomes aware of major changes in relation to the circumstances of the fishery, or of significant new information that may cause a major change. 
 - a. A ‘major change’ is one that is likely to be material to the certification status. A change in scope, a PI score falling below 60 or outcome PI score falling below 80, or a change that could bring about a Principle Level aggregate score to drop below 80, shall be considered material to the certification status.
 - b. To avoid unnecessary expedited audits, CABs shall ensure that an expedited audit is only triggered when the information available supports the conclusion that an actual material change has taken place in the status or management of the fishery.
 - c. Significant new information becomes available in relation to the circumstances of the fishery including during the period between the original assessment and the issue of a certificate which is likely to be material to the certification status.
 - 7.23.22.2 An expedited audit can be a review of information, off-site audit or on-site audit, based on what the CAB determines necessary.

7.24 Re-assessment

- 7.24.1 The CAB should commence the re-assessment of a certified fishery by the fourth anniversary of the existing certificate. Exact timing and planning of the re-assessment shall remain the responsibility of the CAB, in consultation with the client.

Full re-assessment activities

- 7.24.2 When conducting a re-assessment of a certified fishery, the CAB shall:
- 7.24.2.1 Apply all of the steps of the MSC Certification Requirements in force at the time of the re-assessment.
 - a. If a modified tree was used during the initial assessment, the CAB shall only have to consult on re-application of this modified tree where no appropriate new default tree has been released by the MSC.
 - 7.24.2.2 Take into account all surveillance reports, outcomes, and evaluate progress against certification conditions. 

Unless exceptional circumstances apply (7.11.1.3) or paragraph (b) applies, the fishery shall have met all conditions and milestones.

 - a. In the event that there are unmet conditions, the CAB shall apply 7.23.13.1 and 7.23.13.2 (except 7.23.13.2.b.) in determining the

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adequacy of progress against those conditions and milestones. If the CAB concludes that the client has made inadequate progress, it shall not grant a new fishery certificate. ☐

- b. For fisheries with conditions written against performance indicators in assessment trees which differ from those in the tree being used in the reassessment, CABs shall consider if the conditions as originally formulated are appropriate to meet the SG80 outcome for the PI, or the equivalent PI, within the reassessment tree; ☐
 - i. If the conditions are appropriate to deliver SG80 outcomes in the reassessment tree, progress against these conditions shall be evaluated according to paragraph (a) above.
 - ii. If the conditions are not appropriate to deliver SG80 outcomes in the reassessment tree, CABs shall consider what action is needed to deliver the outcome required at SG80 level, and evaluate whether this outcome has been achieved.
 - A If the SG80 level has not been achieved, such conditions shall be rewritten against the reassessment tree, with a timeline for completion of less than one certification period.
 - B If the SG80 level has been achieved, or if achievement of the condition would not affect the score of any PI which would otherwise score less than 80 in reassessment tree, these conditions shall be considered closed.

7.24.2.3 Maintain records of its consideration of the issues above, as well as any rationale for decisions made relating to these issues.

7.24.3 Where there are IPI stocks within the scope of certification, teams shall follow Annex PA.

7.24.4 The CAB shall note that the objections procedure in Annex PD applies in reassessment.

7.24.4.1 If an objection is made to the recertification of a client, a CAB may extend the expiry date of the existing fishery certificate by up to a maximum of 6 months to allow the objection process to be followed.

7.24.5 The CAB shall produce a Full Re-assessment Report that shall conform to the “MSC Full Assessment Reporting Template”. ☐

Reduced re-assessment activities

- 7.24.6 A fishery is eligible for reduced reassessment if:
- a. The fishery was covered under the previous certification or scope extension;
 - b. The fishery had no conditions remaining after the 3rd surveillance audit, and
 - c. The CAB confirms that all standard related stakeholder comments have been addressed by the 3rd surveillance audit.
- 7.24.7 If the fishery is eligible for reduced re-assessment, the CAB shall provide a detailed explanation of how the reduced re-assessment criteria (7.24.6) are satisfied at the time of announcing the re-assessment.
- 7.24.8 A reduced re-assessment shall follow the full reassessment requirements except

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that:

- a. The CAB may undertake the assessment with one assessment team member onsite and other team member(s) working from a remote location.
 - i. The CAB shall take into account any issues raised in previous audits by stakeholders, as well as availability of information on P1, P2 or P3, that would enable comprehensive review by an off-site auditor, in determining the competencies required of the on-site and off-site team members.
- b. Only one peer reviewer is required to review the re-assessment peer review report. 

7.24.9 Reduced re-assessment reports shall conform to the template “MSC Reduced Re-assessment Reporting Template”.

8 Management System Requirements for CABs

- 8.1 The CAB shall conduct and document a review of each fishery assessment completed to identify any corrective or preventive actions that would contribute to continual improvement. The CAB shall:
 - 8.1.1 Consider submissions and / or comments from stakeholders or other parties on the CAB's activities and processes in the review.

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Table SA8: Principle 2 Phrases

Term	Definition and discussion
Biologically based limits	<p>There is a benchmark against which status of a component can be evaluated, and the benchmark is chosen to provide a high probability of persistence of the species over time.</p> <p>For many fish species this will be equivalent to the point below which recruitment may be impaired (PRI). For others (e.g. out of scope species) this should have the same general intent but alternatives such as minimum viable population size (MVP), Potential Biological Removal (PBR) or other metrics which help determine the sustainability of a population, may be used.</p> <p>The benchmark should be derived from biological information that is relevant to the ecosystem feature and UoA, although the information does not necessarily have to come from the specific area.</p>
Broadly understood	<p>There is a general knowledge of the component's status, the UoA's impact on the component, the component's distribution or the key elements of the component. This general knowledge can be acquired from diverse sources that are relevant to the component and UoA but does not have to be locally derived information.</p>
Does not hinder	<p>The impact of the UoA is low enough that if the species is capable of improving its status, the UoA will not hinder that improvement. It does not require evidence that the status of the species is actually improving.</p>
If necessary	<p>The term "if necessary" is used in the management strategy PIs at SG60 and SG80 for the primary species, secondary species, habitats and ecosystems components. This is to exclude the assessment of UoAs that do not impact the relevant component at these SG levels.</p>
In place	<p>When a measure or strategy is "in place" the measure or strategy has been implemented, and if multiple measures have been identified to address an impact of the UoA, there is a specified process with a clear timetable and endpoint for implementation of all of the measures.</p>
Information is adequate	<p>"Adequate" refers to the quantity and quality of information needed to justify the level of risk or certainty associated with the specific Scoring Guidepost (SG). The adequacy of information may vary for the different information scoring issues and SGs, depending on what the information is used to support.</p>
Measures / Partial Strategy/ Strategy/ Comprehensive Strategy	<p>"Measures" are actions or tools in place that either explicitly manage impacts on the component or indirectly contribute to management of the component under assessment having been designed to manage impacts elsewhere.</p> <p>A "partial strategy" represents a cohesive arrangement which may comprise one or more measures, an understanding of how it/they work to achieve an outcome and an awareness of the need to change the measures should they cease to be effective. It may not have been designed to manage the impact on that component specifically.</p> <p>A "strategy" represents a cohesive and strategic arrangement which may comprise one or more measures, an understanding of how it/they work to achieve an outcome and which should be designed to manage impact on that component specifically. A strategy needs to be appropriate to the scale, intensity and cultural context of the fishery and</p>

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Term	Definition and discussion
	<p>should contain mechanisms for the modification fishing practices in the light of the identification of unacceptable impacts.</p> <p>A “comprehensive strategy” (applicable only for ETP component) is a complete and tested strategy made up of linked monitoring, analyses, and management measures and responses.</p>
MSC UoAs	Those UoAs that are in assessment or certified at the time the UoA announces its assessment or reassessment on the MSC website.
Objective Basis for Confidence	<p>“Objective basis for confidence”, as used at the SG80 level in the P2 management PIs (Management Strategy Evaluation scoring issue) refers to the levels of information required to evaluate the likelihood that the management partial strategy will work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SG60 level for these PIs requires “plausible argument” based on expert knowledge; • The SG80 level requires expert knowledge augmented by some information collected in the area of the UoA and about the specific component(s) and/or UoA; • The SG100 level requires all preceding information augmented by relatively complete information on the component, much of which comes from systematic monitoring and/or research.
Serious or irreversible harm to “structure and function”	<p>Serious or irreversible harm to “structure or function” means changes caused by the UoA that fundamentally alter the capacity of the habitat or ecosystem to maintain its structure and function.</p> <p>For the habitat component, this is the reduction in habitat structure, biological diversity, abundance and function such that the habitat would be unable to recover to at least 80% of its unimpacted structure, biological diversity and function within 5-20 years, if fishing were to cease entirely.</p> <p>For the ecosystem component, this is the reduction of key features most crucial to maintaining the integrity of its structure and functions and ensuring that ecosystem resilience and productivity is not adversely impacted. This includes, but is not limited to, permanent changes in the biological diversity of the ecological community and the ecosystem’s capacity to deliver ecosystem services.</p>
Within	“Within” means on the precautionary side of a limit, for example, above B_{LIM} or below F_{LIM} .

SA3.2 General requirements for outcome PIs

- SA3.2.1 If a team determines that a UoA has no impact on a particular component, it shall receive a score of 100 under the Outcome PI.
- SA3.2.2 The team shall consider both the current outcome status and the resilience of historical arrangements to function adequately and deliver low risk under future conditions when scoring outcome PIs.
- SA3.2.3 The definitions of required probability in P2 shall be those in [Table SA9](#).