



Business profile:
Hampshire County Council Catering Services (HC3S) supplies school meals to 444 primary and special schools in southern England. The organisation buys MSC-certified fish from a national foodservice company, and saw getting MSC Chain of Custody as the logical way to communicate its sustainable sourcing policies to children and parents.

John Foskett, Principal Buyer – Food: “In Hampshire, sustainability is linked into every buying decision we make. We were already sourcing some MSC fish, and we wanted to show parents and children by using the MSC logo on menus. Our distributor, 3663, has MSC Chain of Custody certification – which ensures traceability of the MSC fish through their business – and carries a range of school-friendly MSC choices.”

To put the logo on our menus, we needed to get certified for Chain of Custody too. This is an independent audit of traceability, to make sure that all MSC fish with the label on can be traced back to a certified fishery. We got several quotes for the audit. In the end, we went with the same auditor as our distributor”.

Setting up the Chain of Custody

Evelyn Cook, Food Development Manager: “John and I work together – sourcing all the food and managing its distribution. I checked that our traceability system did all it needed to starting with the example provided by MSC, and amending it to suit our business.

Traceability is easy for school meal supply because our headquarters have complete control of what products go into the schools using the order form linked to 3663’s database. The first thing we did was write to 3663 and tell them which MSC fish options we would like to have on our menu. We also set up alternatives in case the first choice was out of stock. There will always be an MSC option to serve on the days when the MSC logo appears on the school menu.





Chain of Custody in the kitchens

On delivery day, the cook collects the products from the delivery van and puts them in the freezer. They check that the delivery note corresponds to the delivery of MSC fish and that both the delivery note and the box of fish are clearly labelled with the supplier's Chain of Custody number. Wherever possible, we store the fish in its original box. If the box is getting empty, the cooks keep the MSC details and batch number with the fish in the bag they use to store it.

Staff training

Staff involvement is crucial. We briefed our Managers on the MSC and explained the slight changes in the ordering system. We put some information on the MSC products into the weekly and monthly bulletins for all staff. We also gave the Units an 'Information Sheet for Cooks' that we adapted from an MSC template to suit our schools. The Units all signed to confirm they had all the information they needed.

Audit

I was quite anxious about the audit, but I needn't have worried. The auditor was very nice and I had answers for all of the questions she asked. She visited our head office to audit our system and then four schools to test that the system was working. Each school visit was really quick and unobtrusive. We were left with only a couple of things to do - I think the auditor was quite impressed!"

Using the MSC logo on the menu

John Foskett: "In order to use the MSC logo, we had to sign a Logo Licence Agreement – a contract that protects the logo from misuse. Because we're supplying school meals to state schools, we don't need to pay for use of the logo. MSC checks the design of the menu before it gets printed to make sure it displays the logo properly and has the necessary information."

Top tips:

- Companies that offer MSC products aimed at the education market include 3663, Brakes, Crown Foods, Green Gourmet, Pure Organics and Young's.
- Staff training is important because it gives everyone a sense of responsibility. Make sure you include MSC in the induction process for new staff.
- You can apply for your logo licence before you are certified and get it out of the way. Once you get Chain of Custody certification, you'll be sent the logo by email.
- Once you have the MSC logo on your menus, the MSC will send you a teacher's resource pack for every school in your area.
- There is a lot of helpful information and downloads on www.fishandkids.org and the MSC's main website www.msc.org



Photos by Andrew Aitchison.