



40th Meeting of the Marine Stewardship Council's Technical Advisory Board

Public Summary

Meeting Date: 29 – 30 November 2023

London

This summary contributes to the transparency of MSC's governance. Readers should note that recommendations made by the MSC Technical Advisory Board (TAB) are reviewed by the MSC Executive and only those recommendations that are formally endorsed by the MSC Board of Trustees and Executive will result in changes to the program. The MSC Executive may not always immediately consider the TAB's recommendations, especially in instances where more research or consultation is required. Project pages on msc.org will be updated to reflect final decisions, including rationales.

The TAB meeting was attended by [members of the TAB](#). Apologies were received from TAB Members Dr Florian Baumann and Mr José Augusto Pinto de Abreu.

Dr Werner Kiene (MSC Chair) attended (Day 1) on behalf of the MSC Board of Trustees.

Ms Heather Brayford (Stakeholder Advisory Council Chair) observed the meeting (Day 1).

Dr Rob Blyth-Skyrme (Consultant) observed part of the meeting (Day 2, morning session).

The following MSC staff attended; Dr Rohan Currey (Chief Science and Standards Officer), Mr Nicolas Guichoux (Chief Program Officer), Mr Rupert Howes (Chief Executive Officer), Ms Ishbel Matheson (Chief Communications Officer), Ms Tanya van Niekerk (Governance Secretary), Dr Alene Wilton (Chief Operating Officer)

The TAB was also joined by a number of relevant MSC staff on a project-by-project basis.

MSC's Assurance System

The TAB received a general overview and update on **MSC's Assurance System**. MSC's assurance system is a series of safeguards that make sure assessments of fisheries and supply chains are fair and accurate. These safeguards include assessments conducted by appropriately qualified independent auditors; oversight by [Assurance Services International](#) of the activities of certification bodies; ensuring certification bodies follow International Standards so assessments are consistent and impartial; and having fisheries assessments peer-reviewed by independent scientists.

The TAB noted and discussed the improvements to the assurance system and program activities from 2011 to 2023.

The TAB welcomed the MSC Executive's plans to continue to evolve accessibility to and understanding of the MSC's assurance system.

MSC's Supply Chain Standards

In September 2023, MSC launched a review of the **MSC Chain of Custody Standard** to make sure MSC's assessment process and certification scheme remain relevant and credible. The Supply Chain Standard assures consumers that seafood sold with the blue MSC ecolabel comes from fisheries that are MSC-certified as sustainable. It also provides assurance that products sold with the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) label have come from ASC certified farms.

The TAB welcomed the sharing of insights from the Chain of Custody Review Public Stakeholder Survey, which ran from 13 September – 15 October 2023. The survey, which aimed to gather feedback on stakeholders' engagement and implementation of the current Chain of Custody Standard to help shape the review and identify potential improvements for the program, had been well received by stakeholders.

The TAB noted that the new digital **Supply Chain Audit Platform**, which aimed to deliver improved visibility of audit processes, efficiency of audit recording, and data access and insight, had been well received by Conformity Assessment Bodies following its launch on 16 October 2023.

The TAB also received a general update on the MSC's **Traceability Enhancement Program**, which sought to strengthen traceability requirements and digitise data collection throughout the MSC Program and to use this enhanced traceability to strengthen the integrity of the MSC ecolabel further.

In-Transition to the MSC Program

The TAB received a general update on the MSC's **In-Transition to the MSC Program (ITM)**. The ITM program is an important step for fisheries that are improving and still need time to reach a level of ecological performance that would allow them to enter into formal assessment, ensuring both their continued engagement with MSC and that verified progress is made towards the certification. Critically, ITM fisheries are more likely to drive credible and time bound improvements in the water and hence contribute to the delivery of MSC's vision of healthy and productive oceans.

Fisheries Standard v3.0

The TAB received a general overview and update on the roll out of the new **MSC Fisheries Standard v3.0**. The roll out activities associated with the new Standard encompassed a set of global workshops; several training sessions for assessors, fisheries clients, and NGOs; the translation of the Fisheries Standard to several languages; the publication of a special issue of Marine Policy; and the initiation of several projects to support the implementation of the Fisheries Standard Review.

The TAB welcomed the opportunity to provide advice and insights about how MSC could respond to feedback from its partners about the new Fisheries Standard.

Climate Change

The TAB received a general overview and update on research work that MSC is carrying out to identify fisheries and regions where predicted climate impacts threaten their ability to meet MSC benchmarks for sustainable management.

Fisheries face growing challenges to operate sustainably as our climate becomes more variable and extreme. Changes in water temperatures and seasonality are increasingly disrupting ecosystems, altering the distribution of fish stocks and impacting the growth, development, and survival of many marine species.

These changes highlight weaknesses in existing management measures and monitoring systems. The inability to adapt and respond to climate change can increase the risk of overfishing, biodiversity loss, and conflict between fishing nations. To ensure fisheries become more resilient to climate

change MSC needs to understand where issues are likely to arise and the severity of their respective impacts; and to incentivise adoption of best practice management measures.

To achieve this, the MSC is carrying out the **Assessment of Risks posed by Climate Change project (the ARC project)**. The study will evaluate vulnerability to climate change in fisheries currently certified to the MSC Fisheries Standard, fisheries working towards certification and those that have been suspended from the MSC program. This includes over 500 fisheries, representing approximately 19% of global wild catch.

The TAB welcomed the opportunity to provide scientific and technical views and advice on this important area of work.

Meeting Close

The TAB thanked the MSC Executive for its informative updates on the aforementioned topics.