

MSC Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements



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The official language of this requirement is English. The definitive version is maintained on the MSC website ([msc.org](https://www.msc.org)). Any discrepancy between copies, versions or translations shall be resolved by reference to the definitive English version.

The MSC prohibits any modification of part or all of the contents in any form.

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Responsibility for these requirements

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) 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 website ([msc.org](https://www.msc.org)).

Versions published

Version no.	Date	Description
1.0	26 October 2022	First version issued.
2.0	18 December 2025	Removed requirements pertaining to 3 rd party labour audits. Changed document name from MSC Labour Eligibility Requirements to MSC Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements.

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 program 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.

General introduction

The MSC has developed standards for sustainable fishing and sustainable seafood chain of custody assurance. The MSC Fisheries Standard sets out requirements that a fishery must meet to enable it to claim that its fish comes from a well-managed and sustainable source. The MSC Chain of Custody Standard ensures that fish and seafood sold with the blue fish label has come from fisheries certified as sustainable against the MSC Fisheries Standard. The CoC Standard is made available for use by selected organisations that operate certification schemes. At this time the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) has elected to use the CoC Standard for all certified seafood products originating from ASC certified farms.

Implementation timeframes

Effective date of the MSC Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements v2.0

Publication date: 18 December, 2025

Effective date: 18 June, 2026

CABs shall confirm that fishery and Chain of Custody applicants and certificate holders meet the MSC's forced and child labour eligibility requirements using the MSC's Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements v2.0.

CABs shall use the MSC Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements v2.0 as of the effective date. CABs may use these requirements as of the publication date if they and their clients are ready to do so.

Review

The MSC welcomes comments on this document. Comments will be considered as part of the next review process. Please submit comments to socialpolicy@msc.org.

About this document

Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements

This document contains requirements for all CABs that carry out MSC assessments, and mandatory forced and child labour eligibility requirements for fisheries and supply chain organisations seeking MSC Fisheries and/or Chain of Custody certification.

Guidance

Non-mandatory guidance has been included to help interpret and apply the requirements. Guidance that relates to a section, or relates to the content of a specific clause, appears in a box at the end of the section or clause.

Derogations

Derogations are temporary normative measures that allow for an MSC requirement to be applied differently or disregarded. Derogations are provided in response to editorial errors, in response to force majeure, where intent is no longer fit for purpose and threatens MSC credibility, or as a provision to test a policy change or to modify the implementation timeframe when publishing a revised version of the normative document. Derogations are posted on a public log on the MSC's website. The MSC requires CABs to follow relevant derogations.

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MSC Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements

1 Scope

Any entity that wishes to be assessed and/or audited, and certified to the MSC's Fisheries and/or Chain of Custody (CoC) standards shall comply with the relevant sections of this document.

2 Normative documents

The documents listed below contain provisions that, through reference in this text, become part of the MSC Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements v2.0

For documents listed, the latest effective version of the document applies.

The documents are:

- a. [MSC At Sea Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template](#)
- b. [MSC Chain of Custody Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template](#)
- c. [MSC Fisheries Certification Process](#)
- d. [MSC General Certification Requirements](#)
- e. [MSC-MSCI Vocabulary](#)

3 Eligibility requirements for all MSC applicants and certificate holders

3.1 No conviction for forced or child labour

- 3.1.1 An applicant or certificate holder for MSC Standards shall not have been convicted for a forced or child labour violation in the last 2 years.

Guidance 3.1.1

Forced Labour: The International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition of forced labour comprises 2 key elements:

- Work or service is exacted under the menace of a penalty, which can imply monetary sanctions, physical punishment, or the loss of rights and privileges or restriction of movement (e.g. refusing to allow free access to identity documents).
- Work is not voluntary.

Other unethical practices considered by the ILO to fall under the category of forced labour include debt bondage, human trafficking, and other forms of modern slavery.

Child Labour: The ILO refers to child labour as work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children, or work that interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school, obliging them to leave school prematurely or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

Conviction in this respect refers to a formal outcome from legal proceedings which confirms guilt in respect of violation of a forced or child labour law.

- 3.1.1.1 An applicant or certificate holder for MSC Standards shall:
- a. Not include an entity that has been convicted for a forced or child labour violation in the last 2 years.

- b. Declare any association to entities that have been convicted for a forced or child labour violation in the last 2 years.
- c. For Fisheries and at-sea-CoC applicants and certificate holders, document in Section 1 (Conviction for Forced and Child Labour) of the [MSC At Sea Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template](#) whether there has been a conviction for forced or child labour in the last two years.
- d. Exclude, render invalid, or remove from the certificate, Unit of Assessment (UoA) or Unit of Certification (UoC), for 2 years, any entity that becomes convicted for a forced or child labour violation.
- e. Inform their Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) immediately if they have excluded (or rendered invalid) any entity.

Guidance 3.1.1.1

This requirement applies to individual vessels or sites, or groups of vessels or sites, which are implicated in the conviction of legal entities (e.g. individuals or companies) for forced or child labour violations. It is aimed at ensuring that the applicant or certificate holder does not include an entity that has been successfully prosecuted for violations against forced or child labour laws.

The offence resulting in the conviction does not need to have occurred in the UoA.

“Entity” in this instance refers to any site or vessel that is part of an applicant or certificate holder, either belonging to or being contracted or subcontracted by a site and/or member of an MSC CoC or fishery certificate holder (client or client group).

3.1.1.2 The CAB shall:

- a. Confirm at initial application, and subsequent surveillance/recertification, that the applicant or certificate holder does not include an entity that has been convicted for a forced or child labour violation in the last 2 years.
- b. Consider an applicant or certificate holder as ineligible for audit, assessment or certification if:
 - i. An entity that belongs to the applicant or certificate holder (client or client group) has been convicted for a forced or child labour violation in the last 2 years, and;
 - ii. The entity is not withdrawn (or their certificate membership status is not rendered invalid) from the application or certificate.
- c. If an entity that has been part of a certificate is convicted for a forced or child labour violation:
 - i. Review and confirm that the certificate holder has excluded the convicted entity, and that the entity remains excluded from the certificate or their certificate membership status remains invalid, for 2 years from the date of the conviction.

Guidance 3.1.1.2.c.i

Examples of information that could be used to confirm removal of a convicted entity may include the updated vessel list or updated client group membership information.

For Chain of Custody, an entity may be excluded from a certificate by rendering the certificate status of the entity invalid.

- ii. For fisheries, review and update the key traceability factors and associated risks as required in the [MSC Fisheries Certification Process \(FCP\)](#).

- iii. For fisheries, confirm that traceability risks are managed and mitigated as required in the [FCP](#).
- iv. For fisheries, review and update determination of traceability systems as required in the [FCP](#).

Guidance 3.1.1.2.ii-iv

The latest version of the FCP applies:

- For requirements on traceability factors see FCP section 7.5.10.
 - For requirements on management and mitigation of traceability risks see FCP section 7.17.
 - For requirements on determination of traceability systems see FCP section 7.17.
- v. For fisheries, update the vessel list as appropriate and upload to the scheme database.
 - vi. For fisheries and CoC, update the certificate status on the scheme database as appropriate.
 - vii. For fisheries and CoC, update any other relevant certification documents.
- d. Suspend the certificate holder as per the MSC General Certification Requirements (GCR) Section 7.4 (Suspension or withdrawal of certification), if the certificate holder cannot withdraw a convicted entity from the certificate, or render the status of a convicted entity as invalid.

4 Additional eligibility requirements for at-sea applicants and certificate holders

4.1 Submission of forced and child labour policies statement by at-sea applicants and certificate holders

Guidance Section 4.1

“At-sea applicants and certificate holders” refers to fishery applicants and certificate holders, including fisheries operating on lakes and rivers, and to CoC applicants or certificate holders operating at sea.

- 4.1.1 The applicant or certificate holder (client or client group) shall:
- a. Document in section 2 (Certificate Holder Forced and Child Labour Policies, Practices and Measures) of the MSC At Sea Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template, the policies, practices, and measures in place to ensure the absence of forced and child labour. Submit the [MSC At Sea Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template](#) with section 2 complete to the CAB at the same time that they submit the Client Document Checklist for fisheries, or, by or before the day of the audit for at-sea CoC entities.
 - b. Ensure that the information provided in the template covers all entities, sites, and contractors within scope of the certificate.
 - c. Update section 2 of the [MSC At Sea Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template](#) whenever there are changes affecting their labour practices and provide this to the CAB for upload to the scheme database.
 - d. Review the information in the ‘MSC Certificate Holder Forced and Child Labour Policies, Practices and Measures’ section of the of the [MSC At Sea Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template](#) during each surveillance audit and update, if there are any changes.

Guidance 4.1.1

The applicant or certificate holder may find it more convenient to use separate templates where there are differences in practice across a fishery. There are no restrictions to a client doing this and the scheme database allows multiple templates to be uploaded.

4.1.2 The CAB shall:

- a. Confirm that section 2 of the [MSC At Sea Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template](#) is complete.
- b. Confirm with the applicant or certificate holder that the content in section 2 of the [MSC At Sea Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template](#) covers all entities, sites, and contractors within scope of the certificate.
- c. Upload the completed [MSC At Sea Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template](#) (inclusive of section 2) to the scheme database, and (for fisheries only) for publication on the MSC website at the same time as the Public Certification Report.
- d. Consider an applicant or certificate holder as ineligible for assessment or certification if the 'MSC Certificate Holder Forced and Child Labour Policies, Practices and Measures' section is not completed and submitted to the CAB.

Guidance 4.1.2

The CAB is not required to audit information contained in the completed 'MSC Certificate Holder Forced and Child Labour Policies, Practices and Measures' section' that has been submitted by the applicant or certificate holder.

While the MSC At Sea Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template (inclusive of the 'MSC Certificate Holder Forced and Child Labour Policies, Practices and Measures' section) for fisheries must be submitted at the same time as the Client Document Checklist for fisheries, the template will only be published on the MSC website when the Public Certification Report is published.

Template reports for at-sea CoC are not published to the MSC website.

5 Additional eligibility requirements for land-based Chain of Custody applicants and certificate holders

Guidance Section 5

If the applicant or certificate holder is an at-sea operation (e.g. a processing vessel), refer to Section 4 of the MSC Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements (Requirements for fisheries and at-sea supply chain applicants and certificate holders).

5.1 Submission of forced and child labour policies statement

5.1.1 Requirements in Section 5 apply to any applicant or certificate holder with one or more of the following activities in the scope of their CoC certificate:

- a. Contract processing
- b. Packing or repacking
- c. Processing primary
- d. Processing secondary
- e. Processing preservation

f. Processing other

Guidance 5.1

CoC applicants or certificate holders that do not have any of the activities a – f in scope are not required to meet the forced and child labour eligibility requirements in this section.

For non-certified subcontractors, only subcontractors that perform any of the scope activities b – f are required to meet the forced and child labour eligibility requirements in this section.

5.1.2 The applicant or certificate holder shall:

- a. Use the 'MSC Chain of Custody Forced and Child Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template' to detail the policies, practices and measures in place to ensure the absence of forced and child labour.
- b. Complete one (or more, as appropriate) template per certificate.
- c. Ensure that the information in the template covers all applicable sites, and subcontractors within the certificate scope.

Guidance 5.1.2.c

A separate template may be completed by subcontractor(s) when it is impractical or impossible for the subcontractor to be included with the applicant or certificate holder.

- d. Follow the instructions in the reporting template and complete all sections.
- e. Complete the reporting template by or before the day of the CoC audit.
- f. Review the information provided in the template annually as part of the CoC audit process and update if there are any changes.
- g. The content should reflect any changes such as engagement with a new social audit program or changes in CoC certificate scope.

5.1.3 The CAB shall:

- a. Send the applicant or certificate holder a copy of the reporting template as soon as possible, in advance of the CoC audit.
- b. Confirm that the reporting template is complete by or before the day of the CoC audit.
- c. Document in the scheme database that the applicant or certificate holder has completed the reporting template.
- d. Upload the completed reporting template to the scheme database.
- e. Consider the applicant or certificate holder ineligible for a CoC audit or certification if 5.1.2 is not met.
 - i. The CAB shall not continue the audit process if the applicant becomes ineligible for a CoC audit.
 - ii. The CAB shall suspend the certificate holder and follow the process in GCR Section 7.4 (Suspension or withdrawal of certification), if the certificate holder becomes ineligible for CoC certification

Guidance 5.1.3

The reporting template should be sent in advance to the applicant or certificate holder to ensure they have enough time to complete the form prior to an audit. The CAB is not responsible for verifying the accuracy of the responses provided in the template only for ensuring that it is complete, and information is provided in response to all the questions.

End of document
