

# MSC General Certification Requirements v2.2 – summary of changes

## Overview

The General Certification Requirements (GCR) set out requirements that conformity assessment bodies (CABs) must follow when they assess applicants and certificate holders against the MSC Fisheries and Chain of Custody Standards. In this release, CAB auditor training and competencies (section 6.1) and fishery certificate suspension and withdrawal (section 7.4) have undergone the most significant change.

For each section of the GCR that has been revised, summaries show the nature of change, the rationale for the change and the MSC response to stakeholder comments. Changes in other sections of the GCR are restricted to minor editorial corrections which do not affect the intent or interpretation of the requirements.

The General Certification Requirements v2.2 were published 1 March 2018, and are effective from 1 September 2018.

## Summary of changes, rationale, and MSC responses to feedback, by affected section

### 4.3 – Conformity with ISO 17065 and MSC requirements

#### *Change*

- Superseding of requirements relating to the transition from ISO Guide 65 to ISO 17065:2012
- New requirement for the CAB to make specified information on assessment fees available on request, in accordance with 4.6 b) of ISO 17065. CABs will need to have processes in place to facilitate this.

#### *Rationale and the MSC response to stakeholder feedback*

To help ensure that costs for CAB clients are transparent and fair, in alignment with the GSSI Global Benchmarking Tool (component B.2 02).

The MSC worked with CABs to develop a framework for presenting appropriate information on assessment costs. CABs were concerned that the great variation in fisheries assessments made costs difficult to standardise and publicising fee structures was of limited value to potential clients.

### 4.7 – Communication with the MSC

#### *Change*

- Removal of requirement for the CAB to submit contact details for all participating fishery clients and stakeholders following issue of a fishery certificate.

#### *Rationale and the MSC response to stakeholder feedback*

The surveys sent to fisheries clients and stakeholders have been withdrawn to be replaced with more effective tools. Additionally, the request for personal information was not in alignment with forthcoming changes to EU regulations.

Targeted consultation with CABs found widespread support for the change.

## 5.1 – Mechanism for safeguarding impartiality

### Change

- Insertion of guidance to 5.1.3 and 5.1.4 on the CAB's ongoing management of impartiality.

### Rationale and the MSC response to stakeholder feedback

To help ensure consistent application of these requirements by CABs, in accordance with ISO 17065:2012.

Targeted consultation with Accreditation Services International on this change did not highlight any concerns.

## 6.1 – Personnel

### Change

- New requirements for fishery team leaders and CoC auditors to have taken a course on ISO 19011 auditing techniques (or equivalent), as well as for fishery team leaders to mentor and/or train their fishery team members on such auditing techniques.
- New requirements specifying the content that ISO 19011 courses taken need to include are given in Table 1. Changes in section 6.1 expand upon requirements currently contained in 5.1.1 of the [MSC Chain of Custody Certification Requirements](#) and extend the requirements to fishery team leaders.

### Rationale and the MSC response to stakeholder feedback

To ensure robust auditing processes during fishery assessments and CoC audits.

Consultation feedback in September 2017 supported some improvements in CAB auditing skills, but not to the point of requiring that all CAB team members take a full 3-day ISO 19011 training course. The Executive proposed that CABs should have at least one CoC auditor and one Fishery Team Leader trained in ISO 19011 auditing skills who would mentor/train their colleagues prior to any assessments. The Technical Advisory Board strengthened the requirement in their final recommendation to the MSC Board of Trustees such that all CoC auditors and all Fishery Team Leaders should be trained in ISO 19011, with the latter also training their colleagues on assessment teams.

## 7.4 – Suspension or withdrawal of certification

### Change

- Significant change to requirements related to fishery certificate suspension, such that fisheries will have a 30-day notice period before a fishery suspension comes into effect and they must stop selling certified seafood into the supply chain. During the notice period products from the fishery can still be sold as certified.
- Clarification to the process of how a CAB may suspend a fishery following a fishery client request to self-suspend the certificate.
- Clarification to the process for the CAB to confirm identification of fish based on date of capture.
- Clarification to required CAB actions when a fishery certificate is withdrawn.

### *Rationale and the MSC response to stakeholder feedback*

To improve the timing and communication of fishery certificate suspensions.

By receiving sufficient forewarning of a suspension, these changes will ensure more consistent and transparent communication of fishery suspensions. Additionally, supply chain organisations will have time to remove the MSC ecolabel from affected product and secure alternative supplies of MSC certified product.

Many of the stakeholders engaged in the consultation processes were supportive of a notice period for suspensions, and the decision to introduce a 30-day notice period provides a compromise on the length of time needed for supply chains to adequately prepare. However, some stakeholders cited concerns over increased complexity in the requirements and changes in behaviour of the fishery during the notice period. The MSC has endeavoured to minimise these concerns when developing the requirements and will be closely monitoring the impact of these requirements.

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