



Making the MSC Fisheries Standard more efficient

Consultation Summary Report

October 2020

Table of Contents

Purpose and scope of this report	3
Background.....	4
Participation	6
Next steps.....	8
Annex I: Participation	9

Glossary of abbreviations and technical terms

CAB – Conformity Assessment Body

PI – Performance Indicator

This is a working paper, and hence it represents work in progress. This report is part of ongoing policy development.

The views and opinions expressed in parts of this report are those of stakeholders and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Marine Stewardship Council.

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Purpose and scope of this report

Every five years, the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) initiates a [Fisheries Standard Review](#) to help ensure our assessment and certification system remains the leading measure of fisheries sustainability. The current review began in 2018 and will conclude in 2022.

Stakeholders from all sectors are at the heart of our review, helping identify issues, develop solutions and test proposed changes. We have completed research into the topics identified in the Terms of Reference, and will next develop options for revisions. One of the topics identified is *Making the MSC Fisheries Standard more efficient*. We are holding a series of consultations throughout 2020 and 2021 for stakeholders to take part in the development of the Fisheries Standard.

This report details the following for the 2020 consultations on the topic of *Making the MSC Fisheries Standard more efficient*:

- Background to topics discussed
- Participation data
- Next steps in the review process
- Full transcripts and feedback tables

It is the goal of MSC consultations to value authenticity, fairness and inclusiveness, secure strategic insight and build consensus and credibility. Our core principle is that consultations should be useful to the MSC in achieving its mission and useful to the participants in seeing how their views are considered. To achieve this, the MSC's processes for consultation follow the [ISEAL Standard Setting Code of Good Practice](#) and the [FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries](#).

ISEAL requires that participation is open to all stakeholders, and that the standard setter proactively seeks contributions from disadvantaged stakeholder groups. This is to ensure that contributors represent a balance of interests in the subject matter and in the geographical scope to which the standard applies. Publishing raw consultation feedback is considered 'aspirational good practice' by ISEAL. We publish this feedback as part of our commitment to transparency in our consultation process.

Background

The [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) has a complex structure and scoring system. Applying it consistently in assessments can be long and costly. Through the [Fisheries Standard Review](#) project [Making the MSC Fisheries Standard more efficient](#) we want to simplify the Standard so it can be applied more efficiently. This will help to reduce the barriers for new fisheries seeking certification and help certified fisheries stay in the program more easily. We also want to improve the collection of data, to ensure rigorous monitoring of fisheries is taking place, and improve evidence-based decision making.

So far, we have:

- carried out qualitative and quantitative analysis to identify the structural components of the Standard – such as performance and scoring indicators – that may not affect the outcome of assessments,
- held workshops with Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs), assessors and independent experts to identify areas of the Standard that could be simplified without changing the intent, and
- commissioned independent research to investigate alternative, simpler, structures and scoring approaches that would enable us to maintain the same level of sustainability performance.

We have also consulted stakeholders on proposals to restructure the MSC Fisheries Standard and simplify the scoring system through the consultation activities detailed below.

Consultation launch conference

On 13 May 2020, the MSC held an online conference hosted on WorkCast to launch the Fisheries Standard Review. The conference was open to all and advertised via the MSC website and media channels including *Undercurrent News*, *IntraFish* and *Seafood Source*. Stakeholders who had subscribed to receive updates on the MSC program were directly informed. At the conference, the MSC provided stakeholders with information on all topics under review and upcoming consultation events, and participants had the opportunity to direct questions to the MSC project leads.

There were 11 sessions, one of which was titled *Making the Fisheries Standard more efficient*. MSC staff gave a presentation and then conference participants were invited to submit questions in a live Q&A. The Q&A session was recorded and subsequently transcribed using a third-party transcription service operating under a confidentiality agreement with the MSC. The full transcript and all questions submitted in the chat box, with any information that could potentially identify an individual, organisation or fishery removed, can be found in [Annex II: Transcript of Q&A session](#).

Online survey

A [survey on reviewing proposals to restructure the MSC Fisheries Standard and simplify the scoring system](#) was open to all on the MSC website between 26 June and 29 July 2020.

The survey was advertised at the [consultation launch conference](#), on the MSC website and to stakeholders subscribed to receive updates on the MSC program. Stakeholders were invited to register their interest through a registration portal.

The survey sought feedback on whether changes can and should be made to the way the three Principles and their individual Performance Indicators (PIs) are structured and defined, to remove identified inefficiencies while still delivering the same level of sustainability performance.

The MSC wanted to understand what magnitude of revision and restructure stakeholders support. We asked a series of questions regarding the options below, listed from smallest to largest in terms of revision magnitude:

- 1) Options for making the Standard structure more efficient
 - a) No changes, leave the structure of the Standard as it is.
 - b) Revise and restructure PIs while maintaining the three existing Principle(s).
 - c) Revise and restructure the definition and/or number of Principles, and the PIs within them.
 - d) Complete overhaul of the framework.
- 2) Options for making the scoring system more efficient
 - a) No changes, leave the scoring system as it is.
 - b) Retain the 60, 80 and 100 levels within PIs, but consider alternatives to aggregated Principle level scores.
 - c) Reconsider the scoring methodology, for example removing the 100 scoring guidepost and/or capping the number of conditions.
 - d) Complete overhaul of the scoring methodology, for example a pass/fail system.

Feedback was submitted both through the survey and via email during the consultation period. This feedback, with any information that could potentially identify an individual, organisation or fishery removed, can be found in [Annex III: Survey feedback tables](#).

Participation

This section presents participation data for the consultation activities detailed above.

Consultation launch conference Q&A participation

The consultation launch conference session on *Making the Fisheries Standard more efficient* had 96 external participants that attended live, eight of whom asked questions. Later, 26 more watched the recording online, and therefore could not participate in the live Q&A session.

Table 1: Number of external participants that attended the live Q&A session representing each stakeholder group.

Stakeholder group	Number
Academic/scientific	14
Commercial wild harvest fisheries/aquaculture	19
Conformity assessment/accreditation	15
Governance/management	3
Non-governmental organisation	27
Seafood supply chain	9
Other	9
Total	96

Table 2: Number of external participants that attended the live Q&A session representing each geographical region.

Geographical region	Number
Africa	4
Asia	4
Europe	39
Latin America	19
Middle East/North Africa	1
North America	22
Oceania	2
Russia	0
South Asia	5
Total	96

There was broad and relatively even sectoral representation ([Table 1](#)). Most participants were based in Europe, North America or Latin America ([Table 2](#)). The lower numbers of participants from Asia, South Asia and Oceania could be explained by time differences. Recordings of the conference sessions were made available online to accommodate stakeholders in other time zones.

Online survey participation

There were 29 respondents to the survey. The full list of respondents, their organisations, stakeholder groups and country of work can be found in [Table 5](#) in [Annex I: Participation](#). For respondents that did not consent to their names being published, only stakeholder group and country is available.

Table 3: Number of individual respondents representing each stakeholder group.

Stakeholder group	Number
Academic/scientific	4
Commercial wild harvest fisheries	7
Conformity assessment/accreditation	5
Governance/management	1
Non-governmental organisation	8
Seafood supply chain	3
Other	1
Total	29

Table 4: Number of individual respondents representing each geographical region.

Geographical regions	Number
Africa	1
Asia	1
Europe	12
Latin America	2
Middle East/North Africa	0
North America	11
Oceania	1
Russia	0
South Asia	1
Total	29

The stakeholder groups with the highest numbers of respondents are non-governmental organisations and commercial wild harvest fisheries ([Table 3](#)). There are also several respondents representing academic/scientific, conformity assessment/accreditation and seafood supply chain, as well as one respondent representing governance/management.

The geographical representation ([Table 4](#)) is dominated by respondents based in Europe and North America. The low representation of stakeholders from other regions might be explained by a number of factors, most importantly language barriers, rate of certifications in relevant countries/regions and general interest in the topic. The MSC offered translated versions of the online survey on request.

Next steps

We are currently reviewing all feedback received from the consultation survey as well as independent research and our own internal data analysis. This will inform our decisions on the magnitude of changes to structure and scoring in this Fisheries Standard Review. We will also carry out an impact assessment on the proposed changes considering, among other things, the feasibility for all MSC stakeholders to make the changes, as well as the impact on the accessibility of the MSC program to existing and prospective fisheries. We will also seek the advice of our governance bodies on the proposed changes

In making changes to the MSC Fisheries Standard, we need to consider the following:

- a) Do proposed changes meet [strategic objectives](#)?
- b) Do proposed changes affect the ability to deliver on the [MSC's Theory of Change](#)?
- c) Do proposed changes to the Standard align with the [MSC's three Principles](#)?

We will engage with stakeholders in early 2021 to share any potential changes to the Standard and explain how we developed these changes. We will hold further consultations in 2021 and the revised Standard will be publicly reviewed in early 2022 to ensure changes are clear and that the new Standard delivers the intentions of our program.

To be notified of future activities and developments, [sign up to our Fisheries Standard Review update](#).

Annex I: Participation

Table 5: List of respondents to the online survey. For those respondents who consented to this, their names and organisations are included.

Name	Organisation	Stakeholder group	Country
David Japp	CapMarine	Academic/scientific	South Africa
Kun Xing	Dalian Ocean University	Academic/scientific	China
Mustafa Md Golam	Ecosystem Conservation Society	Academic/scientific	Bangladesh
Paul Medley	Independent	Academic/scientific	UK
Christina Burridge & Andrew Hough	Association of Sustainable Fisheries (ASF)	Commercial wild harvest fisheries	UK
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Commercial wild harvest fisheries	USA
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Commercial wild harvest fisheries	Canada
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Commercial wild harvest fisheries	Argentina
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Commercial wild harvest fisheries	Canada
Tor B. Larsen	The Norwegian Fishermen's Association	Commercial wild harvest fisheries	Norway
Mark Fina & Chris Oliver	United States Seafoods & Alaska Seafood Co-op	Commercial wild harvest fisheries	USA
Johanna Pierre	Did not specify	Conformity assessment/accreditation	New Zealand
Lisa Borges	FishFix	Conformity assessment/accreditation	Portugal
Gudrun Gaudian	Independent	Conformity assessment/accreditation	UK
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Conformity assessment/accreditation	UK
Samuel Dignan	SAI Global (MSC CAB)	Conformity assessment/accreditation	Ireland
William Galbraith	Fisheries First Ltd.	Governance/management	Canada
Peter H Flournoy	American Fishermen's esearch Founmdation	Non-governmental organisation	USA

Rory Crawford	BirdLife International	Non-governmental organisation	UK
Shannon Arnold	Ecology Action Centre	Non-governmental organisation	Canada
Kevin Fitzsimmons	F3 Future of Fish Feed	Non-governmental organisation	USA
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Non-governmental organisation	Mexico
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Non-governmental organisation	Canada
Jamie Gibbon	The Pew Charitable Trusts	Non-governmental organisation	USA
Karin Bilo	WWF	Non-governmental organisation	Netherlands
Jake Rice	Dept of Fisheries and Oceans (emeritus scientist)	Other: Scientific and Governance	Canada
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Seafood supply chain	UK
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Seafood supply chain	UK
Mathieu Carpentier	Whole Foods Market	Seafood supply chain	UK