



Fisheries Standard Review
Reviewing Principle 1 with a focus on harvest strategies
Consultation document
May 2021

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Gutteridge, A. 2021. May 2021 Consultation document: Reviewing Principle 1 with a focus on harvest strategies. Published by the Marine Stewardship Council (www.msc.org), <https://www.msc.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/stakeholders/consultations/survey/consultation-surveys-2021/msc-fisheries-standard-review-harvest-strategies-consultation-supporting-document---may-2021.pdf>, 7 pages.

Purpose and scope of this document

This document supports the 2021 consultation on the topic of [reviewing Principle 1 with a focus on harvest strategies](#). This document details the following:

- Background to the topic
- Proposed revisions to the Standard
- Proposals for consultation
- Next steps in the review process

This document supports the online survey which is open from 18 May – 17 June 2021. The survey can be accessed through the [MSC website](#).

The MSC values authenticity, fairness and inclusiveness, and through our consultations, we aim to secure strategic insight and build consensus and credibility. 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](#).

Consultation purpose

This consultation seeks input from stakeholders on a proposed option to revise the MSC Fisheries Standard to address issues that some fisheries may face in resolving conditions of certification set on harvest strategies.

Who can comment

This consultation is open to all stakeholders. An understanding of the MSC Fisheries Standard and knowledge of developing and implementing harvest strategies will help you effectively participate in this consultation.

Glossary

HCR – Harvest Control Rule

HMS – Highly Migratory Species

MSE – Management Strategies Evaluation

1. Background

Sustainable fish stocks are at the heart of the MSC program. Ensuring that the world's fish stocks remain healthy is vital for marine ecosystems and global food security.

To meet the requirements of Principle 1 of the MSC Fisheries Standard, sustainable fisheries should have a robust and precautionary harvest strategy in place. A harvest strategy is the combination of monitoring, stock assessment, harvest control rules (HCRs) and management actions that are required to bring about the sustainable management of the fishery.

The MSC are currently reviewing Principle 1 requirements, to address issues that fisheries may face in resolving conditions of certification set on harvest strategies, when the MSC Unit of Assessment represents only part of the fishing activity taking place on a stock. This is a challenge faced primarily by fisheries targeting shared¹ or highly migratory stocks² (HMS).

Relevance and challenges of implementing harvest strategies

Robust harvest strategies are an integral part of managing fish stocks to a sustainable level. All MSC certified fisheries are required to implement harvest strategies that include well-defined HCRs that are informed by stock assessment and monitoring. However, for certain stocks, such as shared or HMS that are managed in a multi-jurisdictional context, the development and implementation of harvest strategies is particularly challenging.

Fisheries management authorities responsible for multi-jurisdictional fisheries have started developing and implementing effective harvest strategies to manage the resources under their mandate. However, there is a lack of urgency and in many cases political influence results in decisions that benefit short term economic gains and favour historic catch levels. Not addressing long term objectives in an appropriate time frame, may have negative impacts on the sustainable use of the stocks. There is a need for those responsible to focus more on long-term sustainability, to follow best practices and guarantee stocks are managed at an appropriate productivity level with robust management measures.

Specific to MSC certified fisheries, fisheries management authorities responsible for managing multi-jurisdictional fisheries are not developing and implementing effective harvest strategies for all stocks they are responsible for within one certification cycle. Such a situation limits and/or prevents fishery clients from closing conditions related to harvest strategies and/or HCRs. The imposition and closure of conditions is a central component of the MSC's Theory of Change.

2. Proposed revisions to the Standard

The MSC has developed and tested a number of options to revise the Fisheries Standard to address the harvest strategy challenges posed to MSC certified fisheries that target shared and HMS and are

¹ Shared stocks are defined in the MSC Fisheries Standard as: stocks where the fishery management framework may exist at a local, regional or national scale within the jurisdiction of a single State (see Table GSA10 of the [MSC Fisheries Standard v2.01](#)).

² Shared/HMS are defined in the MSC Fisheries Standard as: stocks that are exploited by two or more States, with international law possibly becoming relevant (see Table GSA10 of the [MSC Fisheries Standard v2.01](#)).

managed within a multi-jurisdictional framework. The MSC's proposed approach is a phased condition pathway which involves meeting conditions with pre-defined milestones over two sequential phases. The phased condition pathway would allow more time for the development and adoption of stock-wide harvest strategies and HCRs but will require a higher level of performance at the end of the process. A schematic diagram outlines the proposed phased conditions pathway below ([Figure 1](#)).

3. Proposal for consultation

Under the proposed phased condition pathway approach (see [Figure 1](#)), to maintain certification each fishery would need to demonstrate progress and complete the first phase prior to moving into the second phase. The first phase is focused on the scientific process of building the knowledge base for decisions. The fishery needs to demonstrate it has started then completed a management strategy evaluation (MSE) for the development of a harvest strategy. Once complete, the second phase of the condition pathway would focus on the policy process of decision making, allowing time for the agreement and adoption of management measures by fisheries managers to take place.

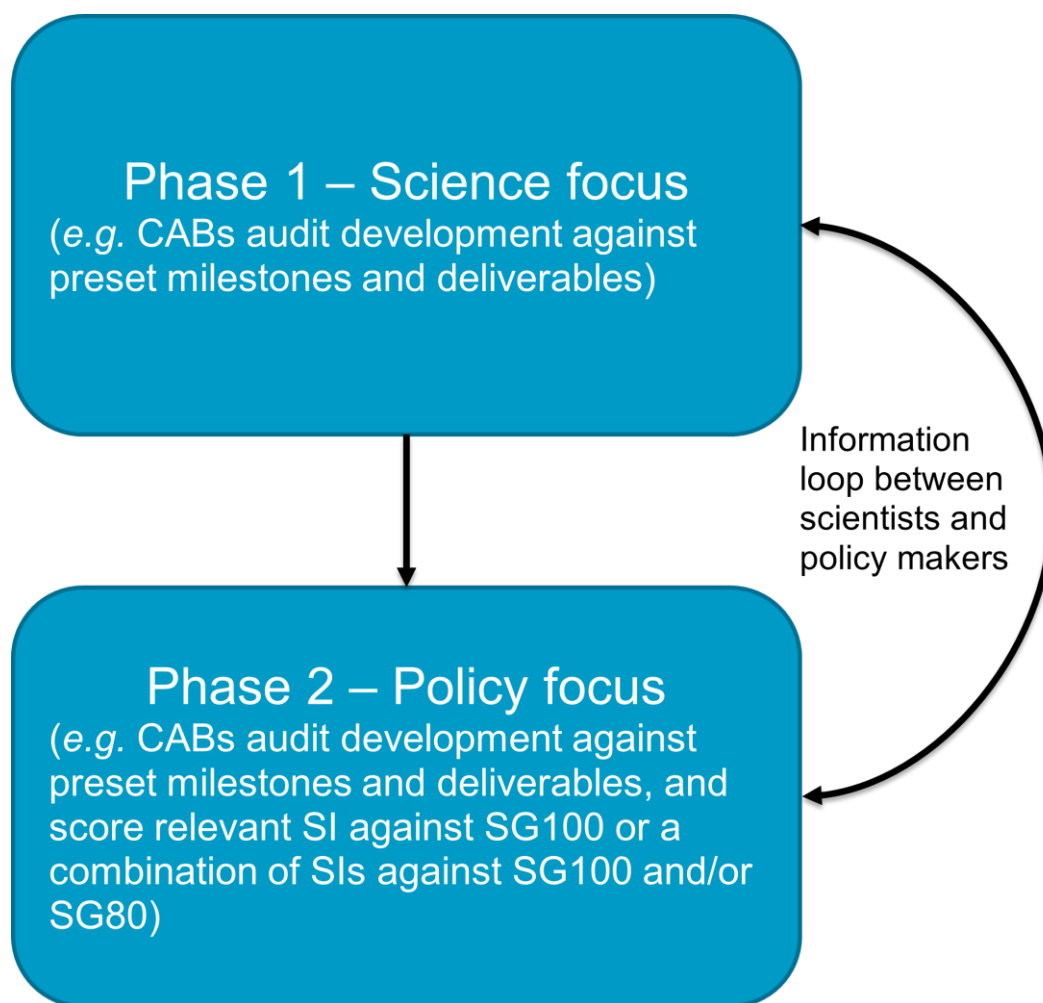


Figure 1: Schematic diagram of the phased conditions pathway. Each phase takes a maximum of one certification cycle.

This approach would separate the science aspects from policymaking as much as possible, while ensuring demonstrable progress is made during each phase. Furthermore, by setting distinct objectives in each phase, responsibility for progress and accountability becomes clearer. For example, the objectives for completing the first phase could include both the harvest strategy being developed but also evidence that the mechanism for implementing the harvest strategy and reducing catches is in place or in progress. Such a mechanism might include an allocation scheme or spatial and/or temporal closures.

It is worth noting that with the development of a harvest strategy under an MSE framework, the early stages involve policy inputs from decision makers to set performance objectives and management limitations. Further, during the second phase, decision makers may require updates of the knowledge base to evaluate harvest strategy alternatives to account for ongoing policy development. Thus, in each phase of the process, interactions between scientific experts, relevant stakeholders and policymakers are expected and welcomed. But the general structure of the proposed phased condition approach would remain as per [Figure 1](#).

It is proposed that each phase takes a maximum of one certification cycle (i.e., five years), making a total of 10 years maximum for the entire phased conditions pathway. Given that this pathway would extend the condition beyond the typical five-year certification, the expectation is that the end result

would meet a higher performance level than required by a regular condition³. Additionally, this pathway may be voluntary, with the decision to enter the pathway to be made when a fishery starts an assessment. In which case, if this pathway is not chosen, a fishery would have to complete conditions to the best practice level within five years, as per the existing requirements.

The full 10 years for the phased condition approach would only apply to fisheries that enter assessment for the first time. For previously certified fisheries, they could enter the phased approach, though a reduction in the time allowed for the first phase to develop an MSE tested harvest strategy would be highly likely.

Next steps

The MSC will use the information and knowledge gained through consultations to refine the options for revisions to the Standard. The proposed revisions will be reviewed by the MSC governance bodies in late 2021.

Following this consultation, the next opportunity to comment on proposed changes will be during the 60-day public consultation on the draft Standard in early 2022.

The new Standard will be released in 2022 subject to approval from the MSC governance bodies.

³ In MSC's terms, it would be the state of the art scoring level (scoring guidepost (SG) 100) instead of the best practice scoring level (SG80), against the harvest strategy performance indicator (PI) 1.2.1. The SG100 level would need to be achieved against the SG100 term 'designed' in scoring issue a, defined as "*a harvest strategy that includes a management procedure that has been developed through management strategy evaluation*". For all other aspects of the harvest strategy and HCR performance indicators, it is proposed that at the end of the phased condition pathway, the scoring guidepost levels of SG80 are attained.