



Covid-19 Pandemic Derogation – Effective 28 September 2020

The MSC has closely monitored the impact of Covid-19 on the seafood supply chain and its certification program. The MSC recognises that the impact of Covid-19 will continue to persist. Mindful of the welfare of those participating in the MSC program, the MSC issues the following derogation.

This derogation allows for audit and assessment activities for Fisheries and Chain of Custody certificate holders to be undertaken remotely, rather than in person, according to the specifications below. The intent of this derogation is to ensure the welfare of those participating in the MSC program as they carry out audits and assessments to ensure that the requirements are met.

This derogation is effective from 28 September until 27 March 2021. The derogation put in place on 27 March 2020 expires on 27 September 2020, therefore the six-month extension to audit and assessment activities and timelines allowed under the previous derogation is no longer available. The derogation published on 6 May 2020 regarding labour audits remains effective.

Fisheries and Supply Chain Programs: This derogation applies in situations where national or local restrictions put in place to prevent the spread of Covid-19 prevent CABs, auditors or assessors or certificate holders from carrying out on-site audits. This derogation also applies in situations where CABs assess there is a health risk involved in conducting an on-site audit.

The CABs shall conduct on-site audits or assessments, subject to existing requirements, in situations where there are no Covid-19-related restrictions or health risks, affecting either the CAB, auditors/assessors, or certificate holder. CABs shall enable remote attendance for any other stakeholders who may be subject to Covid-19-related restrictions or health risks. If there are Covid-19-related restrictions or health risks affecting either the CAB, auditors/assessors or certificate holder, the CABs should conduct specified audit types remotely. These audits include the following: fisheries surveillance audits, expedited audits, scope extensions assessments and re-assessments, as well as all supply chain audits subsequent to initial audits.

CABs shall document in the assessment announcement and the assessment/audit report the information on the restrictions or health risks which have prevented the on-site audit. CABs shall maintain a list of certificate holders where this derogation has been applied and shall make this list available for MSC or ASI on request.

Certificate holders are still required to meet the requirements of the standards during the period this derogation applies.

Fisheries Program: CABs shall submit a variation request and complete a risk assessment in situations where Covid-19-related restrictions or health risks prevent them from carrying out an on-site visit as part of an initial assessment. The MSC will consider variation requests on a case-by-case basis. The MSC will require that the Client and Peer Review Draft Reports and Public Comment Draft Reports for initial assessments carried out remotely are subject to review by an additional member of the Peer Review College.

The requirements not referenced in this document or accompanying guidance shall remain applicable. CABs will not need to request a variation in cases where remote audits or assessments are conducted in accordance with this derogation. If extensions to audit and assessment activities and timelines are needed due to the impact of Covid-19 CABs shall request these by submitting a variation request.