



2019 Global Impacts Report update: methods

For more information, please contact standards@msc.org

What is the Global Impacts Report update?

The Marine Stewardship Council's (MSC) global impact reporting examines the progress and improvements of MSC certified fisheries around the world. In this report, we analysed data from all 369 fisheries certified as of 31 December 2018.

This analysis studied how MSC certified fisheries have improved their sustainability performance through completing conditions. The 2019 analysis also looks in detail at conditions closed between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2018 under Principle 2 of the MSC Fisheries Standard: Minimising environmental impact.

What is a condition?

To become MSC certified, fisheries are assigned a score for 28 Performance Indicators (PI) that sit under the three principles of the MSC Fisheries Standard. To become certified, a fishery must score at least 60 for each of the 28 Performance Indicators as well as an average score of 80 across all Performance Indicators under each of the three principles.

Conditions are set whenever a Performance Indicator is scored between 60 and 79 during the assessment of a fishery, requiring the fishery to improve the score for that PI to a minimum of 80 within the period of the 5-year certification cycle. A condition is applied to all fishery components (i.e. target stock(s), the fishing method/gear, and practice (including vessel/s) pursuing that stock) that do not meet a score of 80 for each PI.

Global Impacts Report method overview

This report update analyses the actions fisheries have taken in closing conditions to improve their performance and meet best practice. For the publication of the 2019 Global Impacts Report update (GIR), the MSC has transitioned to a new way of counting conditions.

Under the new method of counting conditions, the definitions for the following terms are:

Condition: A requirement for a fishery to take action to improve performance in order to maintain certification. One condition can impact multiple species and generate multiple improvements.

Action: The main change made by a fishery to close a condition. While a fishery may undertake multiple actions to close a condition (or one action may close multiple conditions), this analysis assigns one main action to each condition. See the 'categorising conditions' section for more information.

Improvement: The result of an action taken to close a condition. There could be multiple improvements generated by the same action e.g. a spatial closure could impact multiple species.

How conditions are counted in the 2019 report update

Previously, conditions were counted manually as a total of the number of fishery components under each PI that scored below 80 during assessment (e.g. if 3 different gear types scored below 80 for PI 2.4.1, this was counted as 3 conditions). Now, conditions are counted as a total number of PIs that score below 80 during assessment (e.g. if 3 different gear types scored below 80 for PI 2.4.1, this is counted as 1 condition). This number can be generated from fishery report data without needing to be counted manually.

How improvements are counted in the 2019 report update

The method used to count conditions in the MSC’s global impacts reports prior to 2019 is now the method used to count improvements. An improvement is counted when the score of a fishery component (stock, method/gear, practice/vessels) is increased to a minimum score of 80 through closing a condition. One condition can therefore have multiple improvements as numerous fisheries components have made changes to lift their score. Improvements are only counted when a condition has been fully closed.

Categorising conditions

The 2019 analysis focuses on the improvements MSC certified fisheries have made to reduce their environmental impacts. This report update includes an in-depth analysis on all conditions closed (288) between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2018. The information analysed was drawn from independent public certification reports and annual surveillance reports.

We recorded the actions taken to improve fishery performance for each condition and categorised them by type based on observed similarities in the procedures implemented, analysis or research undertaken, and/or technical modifications made. Principle 2 includes ‘outcome’, ‘management’ and ‘information’ indicators for all species, habitat and ecosystem-level impacts. Categories identified here did not follow this existing conceptual framework, but are based on the expert opinion of the MSC’s Strategic Research Team so we could perceive similarities in the actions taken for different performance indicators.

Table 1: Categories determined through actions to close conditions

Category	Description	Possible actions
Research	Improvements in ongoing data collection systems or a research project that contributed to the better understanding of the species or habitat involved or the interactions of the fishery with that element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing nutrient deposition • Bycatch estimates • Habitat mapping or habitat recovery assessments • Mapping location/intensity of fishing • Knowledge reviews, gap analyses and short-term research projects • Population analysis • New monitoring systems such as bycatch sampling programs, logbooks, observers, tracking systems, and video surveillance • Training of crew members in species ID or handling and the production of species ID guides

Impact assessment	Analysis of information, to answer specific questions about the certainty (likelihood) that a fishery does not have a negative impact on a bycatch species or habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing gear loss • Impact analyses (quantitative) • Risk assessments (semi-quantitative or qualitative) • Spatial overlap assessments
Technical actions (leading to change on the water)	Alteration or additions to technical specifications of fishery gear or operations with the aim of decreasing unwanted impacts on species or habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporal or spatial avoidance measures • Encounter protocols or move-on rules • Full retention policies • Gear modifications • Implementing bycatch procedures to improve survivability • Licensing restrictions • Quota implementations • Spatial closures
Governance actions	Improvements in fishery operations or governance structures which help to avoid or better manage impacts on species or habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New advisory body or panel of experts • Provide forum for sharing new research and experiences • Signing international agreements

Identifying actions taken to close a condition

For this analysis each condition was assigned one category to reflect the actions taken to close that condition. If a fishery took multiple actions to close a condition, the action category assigned was selected based on the overall outcome of the actions taken. In this analysis no governance actions were carried out.

The following definitions reflect how a category was determined for conditions that were closed through one or multiple actions:

Research: The fishery completed research to close a condition, but this did not lead to an impact assessment or technical action.

Impact assessment: The condition was closed through an impact assessment or the fishery completed research which was then used to inform an impact assessment.

Technical actions: The condition was closed through a technical action or the fishery completed research that led to a technical action.

Species and habitat analysis

Information on the species affected by each condition was extracted to provide an understanding of the diversity of fauna and habitats benefitting from fishery improvements. Where possible, all species and habitats mentioned in either the condition text or condition closure rationales were noted, and species were categorised into different taxonomic groups based on class (e.g. marine mammals or seabirds). If a condition referred to a taxonomic class but not a specific species, this was recorded as other under the relevant taxonomic group. Where a bycatch species list was produced, only the main bycatch species were noted.