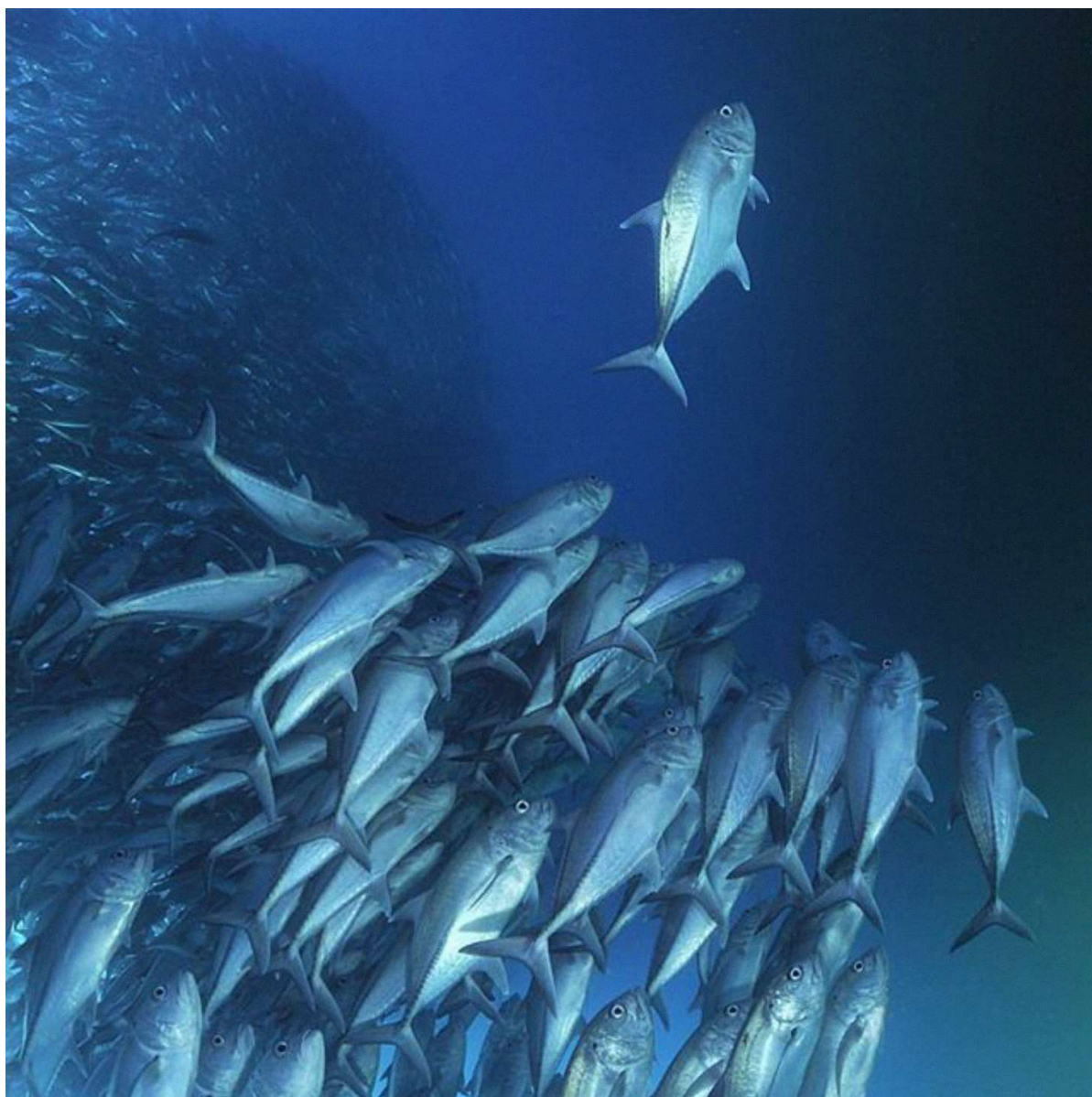


May 2022

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework





Mission

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) program aims to monitor and evaluate global wild capture fisheries and chain of custody that have been certified against the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Standards. The mission of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) program is to increase the understanding of the environmental, organizational, social, and other impacts of Marine Stewardship Council certification.

The ongoing M&E program provides the scientific foundation for a transparent, impartial, consistent, and inclusive program, and enhances the understanding, value and transparency of MSC activities. The M&E framework reflects a commitment to rigorous, systematic and transparent methods of tracking and evaluating the impacts of the MSC program. This approach is a cornerstone of the MSC's commitment to accountability, learning and continual improvement.

Purpose and scope

The purpose of the M&E program is to measure the achievement of MSC objectives through the assessment of results, effectiveness, and processes of the organisation, and performance within both MSC certified entities and the environments in which they operate.

Monitoring is a continuous function that utilises the systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and stakeholders with information on the extent of program progress and the achievement of objectives.

Evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of activities. It provides information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into decision making processes. Evaluation determines the worth or significance of the MSC program in the context of direct impacts to assessed attributes of participating organisations, to the environments in which they operate and to broader societal benefits that eventuate.

The M&E program is an integral component of the MSC's global operations. The current scope of the M&E system covers all fishery and chain of custody certificate holders, and all ecolabelled products, from the inception of the program up to the present moment. Data are collected that pertain to the:

- certification of fisheries assessed against the [Fisheries Standard](#), including outcomes of assessments against the Fisheries Standard, with scores relating to the:
 - status and harvest strategies of wild-caught fish stocks;
 - environmental impacts of fishing activity;
 - management of fisheries;
- certification of supply chain companies assessed against the [CoC Standard](#);
- distribution, recognition and sale of MSC eco-labelled products;
- assurance systems for providing confidence in the application of the Fisheries Standard and CoC Standard;
- records of online and in-person training activities focused on the MSC Standards;
- feedback from stakeholders through fishery assessments and external consultations.

Recent work has also examined economic and social benefits of MSC certification.



Objectives

The M&E program focuses on critical information needs and research gaps associated with the environmental impacts and commercial reach of MSC certification. Data and information gathered and analysed are used to inform management decisions; promote the benefits of the MSC program to stakeholders, funders and consumers; underpin continual improvement; and, demonstrate credibility of the MSC program. Monitoring and Evaluation is also targeted to ensure that the MSC conforms to the ISEAL Alliance Code of Good Practice for Assessing the Impacts of Social and Environmental Standards (the ISEAL Impacts Code).

Overarching objectives

- Assess and promote accountability for the achievement of MSC objectives through the examination of outcomes, the effectiveness of processes within the MSC, and of the performance of fisheries and supply chain actors involved in the MSC program.
- Promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing with respect to outcomes of the MSC certification program as a basis for decision making on policies, strategies, program management, and future projects.
- Improve management effectiveness and accountability by defining realistic results and targets, monitoring progress toward the achievement of expected results and targets, integrating lessons learned into management decisions, and reporting on performance.

Specific objectives

- Maintain credibility by producing scientifically robust analysis and evidence of the environmental impacts of MSC certification;
- Provide accountability to donors and stakeholders on the contribution of MSC certification to the sustainability of fish stocks globally;
- Promote effectiveness by facilitating evidence-based decision making and reporting on organisational achievements and performance;
- Enhance organisational efficiencies and cross-organisational learning;
- Reinforce research capacity and information transfer to the global scientific understanding of fish stocks, fisheries management best practices and seafood certification;
- Link environmental improvement and the underlying meaning of the MSC ecolabel to broader societal benefits such as social and economic resilience of fishery and seafood operations;
- Generate regular reports, both internal and public such as the M&E technical report; and
- Provide content for reports and promotional material produced by other departments of the MSC, for example the organisation's Annual Report and information produced for outreach staff use in promoting the benefits of MSC certification.

Defining the intended change

The MSC's **vision** is for the world's oceans to be teeming with life, and seafood supplies safeguarded for this and future generations. The **mission** of the organisation is to use its certification and ecolabel program to contribute to the health of the world's oceans by recognising and rewarding sustainable fishing practices, influencing the choices people make when buying seafood and working with our partners to transform the seafood market to a sustainable basis. The MSC works collaboratively with

the fishing industry, seafood business sector, governments, scientific community, environmental groups and others to give retailers, restaurants and consumers an opportunity to choose and reward sustainable fishing through their seafood purchasing choices.

The MSC's Theory of Change describes how the MSC program intends to create market incentives to reward sustainable fishing practices (Figure 1). MSC and its partners encourage processors, suppliers, retailers and consumers to give priority to purchasing seafood from MSC certified fisheries and to demonstrate this through use of the MSC logo. Globally, buyers in major markets have made strong commitments to purchase up to 100% of their wild-capture fish products from MSC certified fisheries, and these commitments are increasing. These purchasing preferences increase the global demand and market access for certified sustainable seafood and provide the critical incentives needed for fisheries to undergo the rigorous and transparent assessments required in the MSC program.

The same incentives also influence many fisheries that currently operate below the requirements set by the MSC Fisheries Standard (see the MSC's [Theory of Change](#) and [strategy](#) for more information). If such fisheries want to benefit from these market rewards, they will need to reduce their environmental impact and improve their management practices to become eligible for certification. In turn, the need for all supply chain actors to become certified against the CoC Standard in order to reap the market benefits of the ecolabel creates an incentive to document and ensure that only seafood sourced from certified sources ends up with an ecolabel, and gives confidence to consumers that the MSC ecolabel is credible. The intention is that this "pull" towards certification will improve the stewardship of the world's oceans and enable many fisheries to better compete in a global marketplace that increasingly demands proof of sustainability.



Figure 1. Steps in the MSC's Theory of Change.

- 1) Fisheries** that meet the MSC Fisheries Standard are independently certified as sustainable.
- 2) Retailers and restaurants** choose MSC certified sustainable seafood.
- 3) A traceable supply chain** assures consumers that only seafood from an MSC certified fishery is sold with the blue MSC label.
- 4) Consumers** preferentially purchase seafood with the blue MSC label.
- 5) Market demand** for MSC certified seafood increases.
- 6) More fisheries** choose to improve their practices and volunteer to be assessed to the Fisheries Standard.



MSC sustainability and strategy outcome objectives

The MSC Theory of Change is reflected in the MSC sustainability and strategy outcome objectives.

Sustainability outcome objectives

These outcome objectives are based on fishery health and the MSC's core aim:

- 1.1 The MSC program should encourage fisheries to make such improvements as necessary to meet the MSC's sustainability standard
- 1.2 The MSC system should be accessible to all fisheries worldwide

Sustainability outcomes

The short and medium-term outcomes we expected to see in MSC certified fisheries as a result of compliance with the MSC Standard are:

- More fish stocks (retained and bycatch) considered to be at sustainable levels
- More fish habitats and ecosystems considered to be in a sustainable state
- More fisheries management entities using principles of fisheries management designed to achieve sustainable fisheries and fishery ecosystems
- Increased supply and demand of sustainably produced and traceable seafood products
- More engagement (awareness, involvement and commitment) by fishing communities and the fishing sector in the pursuit of ecologically sustainable fisheries
- Increased public awareness of, involvement in, and commitment to seafood sustainability issues

Strategy outcome objectives

These outcome objectives are based on how the program is working to deliver the sustainability outcome objectives:

- 2.1 The MSC program should be rigorous, credible, effective and efficient and the supply chain has high integrity
- 2.2 The MSC program should grow the demand for and supply of MSC certified fish to reward sustainable fishing practices

Strategy outcomes

Fishery outcomes

- A greater number and diversity of certified fisheries and supply chain organisations
- A greater number of fisheries undergoing pre- and full assessment
- Greater accessibility of the program to fisheries, regardless of their size, scale, intensity or geographical region.

Product & market outcomes

- A greater number of seafood products from certified fisheries available in the market
- Greater volume and diversity of MSC ecolabelled seafood product sales.



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Systemic outcomes

- Greater catch sector and supply chain involvement in, and commitment to sustainable seafood and the MSC's certification and ecolabelling program
- Greater stakeholder involvement in, and long-term engagement with, the MSC's certification and ecolabelling program
- Maintenance of consistency with and influence on international best practice in certification and effective ecolabelling program delivery
- Wider public awareness of, involvement in, and commitment to seafood sustainability issues and the MSC's certification and ecolabelling program.

Supporting strategies

The strategies the MSC employs to increase the use of standards-compliant practices include:

- Providing fisheries and chain of custody Standards, as well as supporting verification (certification) systems to assess compliance with those Standards
- Providing incentives for stakeholders in the value chain to comply with the Standards by recognising and rewarding sustainable fishing practices and traceability systems through the use of the MSC ecolabel
- Conducting outreach and communication activities to promote the MSC program to potential users within the fisheries supply chain (from capture to plate), governments, broader stakeholder community and the public
- Developing and conducting online and face-to-face training for CABs
- Developing and delivering capacity building tools through our technical and developing world fisheries programs
- Building organisational capacity, including funding, to support all the above activities
- Collaborating with stakeholders to support the above activities

Indicators

Indicators are measures that aim to describe how well the program is achieving its objectives. Indicators can be both quantitative and qualitative in nature. A list of the M&E indicators is shown in Table 1.

A series of key indicators has been developed in consultation with MSC staff and stakeholders including:

Indicators of program reach

Reach indicators illustrate the success of the MSC in encouraging fisheries and supply chain business to participate in the program, for example by monitoring the number of certified fisheries or number of ecolabelled products. These indicators do not directly measure the environmental impacts of certified entities, but are of course vital to understanding the fundamentals for program growth. The ongoing monitoring of a wide variety of meta data associated with certified entities is also a prerequisite of being able to conduct environmental impact evaluations.

Strategy indicators

The MSC employs a range of strategies to ensure that the program produces its intended outcomes. Central to the credibility of the MSC and the successful implementation of the program is the 3rd party



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certifier system. Certifiers are independently accredited by Accreditation Services International, and selected fisheries assessment reports are subject to independent peer review. Fishery reports are also subject to technical oversight (TO) by the MSC Fisheries Team. TO findings and non-conformities are recorded by the MSC Fisheries Team and by ASI (respectively), and these are reported on internally an annual basis to inform continuous improvement of certifier performance.

The MSC also seeks to promote consumer awareness of the ecolabel in order to further the mission, and actively encourages stakeholder engagement in fishery assessments and standard development. Stakeholder participation through objections and comments on assessment reports and is tracked on a regular basis, and independent assessments of consumer awareness, opinions, and purchasing behaviour are conducted every 2 years.

Environmental and fisheries management indicators

Performance of all certified fisheries is tracked against the MSC performance indicators on an ongoing basis. Improvements in scores are used to illustrate the influence of certification in incentivizing sustainability improvements in certified fisheries. The M&E team also collects stock data from external sources in order to directly assess improvements in biological status of stocks in the program.

Table 1. MSC M&E indicators

| Theme | Indicator number | Indicator name | Sustainability / strategy objective | Intended sustainability / strategy outcome, or unintended consequence |
|--------------|------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| Reach | | | | |
| | 1.1 | Number of, and landings from, MSC-engaged fishery Units of Certification | 1.2 & 2.2 | <p>More engagement (awareness, involvement and commitment) by fishing communities and the fishing sector in the pursuit of ecologically sustainable fisheries.</p> <p>A greater number and diversity of certified fisheries and supply chain organisations.</p> <p>A greater number of fisheries undergoing pre- and full assessment.</p> <p>Greater catch sector and supply chain involvement in, and commitment to sustainable seafood and the MSC's certification and ecolabelling program.</p> |
| | 1.2 | Reach of the Chain of Custody program | 1.2 & 2.2 | <p>A greater number and diversity of certified fisheries and supply chain organisations.</p> <p>Greater catch sector and supply chain involvement in, and commitment to sustainable seafood and the MSC's</p> |



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| | | | | certification and ecolabelling program. |
| | 1.3 | MSC-ecolabelled products in the market | 1.2 & 2.2 | <p>A greater number of seafood products from certified fisheries available in the market.</p> <p>Greater volume and diversity of MSC ecolabelled seafood product sales.</p> <p>Wider public awareness of, involvement in and commitment to seafood sustainability issues and the MSC's certification and ecolabelling program.</p> <p>Increased supply and demand of sustainably produced and traceable seafood products.</p> |
| Accessibility | | | | |
| | 2.1 | Uptake of the Fisheries program in developing economies | 1.2 & 2.2 | <p>Greater accessibility of the program to fisheries, regardless of their size, scale, intensity or geographical region.</p> <p>A greater number and diversity of certified fisheries and supply chain organisations.</p> |
| | 2.2 | Uptake of the Chain of Custody program in developing economies | 1.2 & 2.2 | <p>Greater accessibility of the program to fisheries, regardless of their size, scale, intensity or geographical region.</p> <p>A greater number and diversity of certified fisheries and supply chain organisations.</p> |
| | 2.3 | Uptake of MSC-labelled products in developing economies | 1.2 & 2.2 | <p>Greater accessibility of the program to fisheries, regardless of their size, scale, intensity or geographical region.</p> <p>A greater number and diversity of certified fisheries and supply chain organisations.</p> |
| | 2.4 | Technical consultants and training events in developing economies | 1.2 & 2.1 | <p>Greater accessibility of the program to fisheries, regardless of their size, scale, intensity or geographical region.</p> <p>Greater stakeholder involvement in, and long-term engagement</p> |

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| | | | | with, the MSC's certification and ecolabelling program. |
| Environmental performance and improvements | | | | |
| | 3.1 | Conditions of certification | 1.1 | More fisheries management entities using principles of fisheries management designed to achieve sustainable fisheries and fishery ecosystems. |
| | 3.2 | Principle scores of MSC-certified fishery Units of Certification | 1.1 | <p>More fish stocks (retained and bycatch) considered to be at sustainable levels.</p> <p>More fish habitats and ecosystems considered to be in a sustainable state.</p> <p>More fisheries management entities using principles of fisheries management designed to achieve sustainable fisheries and fishery ecosystems.</p> |
| | 3.3 | Closing conditions of certification | 1.1 | More fisheries management entities using principles of fisheries management designed to achieve sustainable fisheries and fishery ecosystems. |
| | 3.4 | Actions taken to close conditions related to fisheries bycatch or habitat | 1.1 | More fisheries management entities using principles of fisheries management designed to achieve sustainable fisheries and fishery ecosystems. |
| | 3.5 | Pre-certification improvements | 1.1 | More fisheries management entities using principles of fisheries management designed to achieve sustainable fisheries and fishery ecosystems. |
| Assurance | | | | |
| | 4.1 | Independent oversight of Conformity Assessment Bodies | 2.1 | Maintenance of consistency with and influence on international best practice in certification and effective ecolabelling program delivery. |
| | 4.2 | Technical oversight of fishery assessment reports | 2.1 | Maintenance of consistency with and influence on international best practice in certification and effective ecolabelling program delivery. |
| | 4.3 | Independent peer review of fishery assessment reports | 2.1 | Maintenance of consistency with and influence on international best practice in certification and |

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| | | | | effective ecolabelling program delivery. |
| | 4.4 | Assurance in the Chain of Custody | 2.1 | Maintenance of consistency with and influence on international best practice in certification and effective ecolabelling program delivery. |
| Stakeholder input | | | | |
| | 5.1 | Objections to MSC fishery certification | 2.1 | Maintenance of consistency with and influence on international best practice in certification and effective ecolabelling program delivery. Greater stakeholder involvement in, and long-term engagement with, the MSC's certification and ecolabelling program. |
| | 5.2 | Stakeholder comments on fishery assessments | 2.1 | Maintenance of consistency with and influence on international best practice in certification and effective ecolabelling program delivery. Greater stakeholder involvement in, and long-term engagement with, the MSC's certification and ecolabelling program. |
| | 5.3 | Stakeholder consultation in the design of the MSC program | 2.1 | Maintenance of consistency with and influence on international best practice in certification and effective ecolabelling program delivery. Greater stakeholder involvement in, and long-term engagement with, the MSC's certification and ecolabelling program. |
| Unintended drawbacks and benefits | | | | |
| | 6.1 | Socioeconomic effects | N/A | Evidence of positive incentives and no negative (economic or social) unintended impacts. |

Unintended effects

The MSC standard system operates within a complex world with positive and negative unintended results occurring due to the MSC's activities; these results are neither expected nor planned. Many stakeholders are interested and have discussed within the Technical Advisory Board and Stakeholder Council the unintended effects of the MSC standard (listed in Table 2 broken down by areas of impact). Projects have been developed to investigate the unintended effects, which have been incorporated into

the MSC's Integrated Strategic Plan. We are therefore working on ways to monitor and evaluate the unintended effects through these projects to produce M&E program indicators on unintended effects.

Table 2. MSC Unintended effects

| Social Development | | MSC context |
|--|--|---|
| Labour Rights | The range of rights enshrined in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles & Rights at Work | The auditing requirements of MSC certification may create an environment that discourages egregious labour practices in fisheries (positive) MSC certification may provide market access to fisheries where egregious labour practices are present (negative) |
| Gender Equity | Access to opportunities and empowerment of girls and women, as well as the reduction of discrimination and inequalities based on gender | Not applicable |
| Access to Education | Access to, engagement in and attainment through education | MSC consumer facing campaign promotes public awareness and education on sustainability issues (positive) Improved infrastructure due to MSC certification of fisheries could enable better accessibility and availability of education to local communities. (positive) |
| Access to Health and Sanitation | Access to medical treatment and improved sanitation, notably through access to clean water and the availability of sewage treatment, for the benefit of human health | Achieving MSC certification often creates a sense of pride by government and central institutions resulting in infrastructure improvements at the local fishing community levels (for example, MSC certification of the Baja California, Mexico lobster resulted in several infrastructure improvements such as schools, electricity and sanitary improvements). (positive) |
| Cultural Identity | Respect for self-determination, intellectual property, benefit sharing and religious tolerance | MSC certification generates a sense of pride, stewardship and ownership promoting respect and self-empowerment (positive) |
| Environmental Integrity | | MSC context |
| Water | Water conservation and quality, for both fresh- and marine waters | Not applicable |
| Integrity for Biodiversity | Diversity of life at the level of species, genetic diversity and ecosystems | Minimizing environmental impacts of fishing promotes biodiversity integrity (positive). |
| Soil Fertility | Maintenance of organic matter, as well as conserving soil from all forms of erosion | Not applicable |

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| Climate Change | Mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and strengthening the resilience and adaptation capacity of people, their livelihoods and ecosystems to climatic change | MSC certification may provide market access to fisheries and supply chains with a large carbon footprint (negative) |
| Natural Resource Management | Management of resources from production to post-consumption, by supporting the integrity of ecosystem services, maintaining harvesting levels that ensure regeneration, and the reduction and effective management of waste | Direct (intended) impacts |
| Economic Resilience | | MSC context |
| Secure Livelihoods | Understood as an economic concept incorporating income, wealth, poverty and employment, whether paid, voluntary, formal or informal | <p>MSC certification improves fishers' incomes, and contributes to the sustainability and economic viability of livelihoods (positive)</p> <p>MSC certification may create negative impacts for those fisheries that can't reach the sustainability standards, closing certain markets (negative).</p> <p>Cost of certification restrict small scale and/or developing world fisheries from accessing the benefits of MSC certification (negative)</p> |
| Social Capital | <i>Social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them¹. It includes the concepts of knowledge sharing and social safety nets</i> | MSC certification creates a sense of ownership and pride, resulting in more cohesive communities / groups working together for a common outcome (positive) |
| Resilience to Economic Risk | First and foremost the assurance of self-reliance, and secondly the ability to counter risk through economic diversification and access to finance | MSC certification creates new international market access and/or secures existent ones creating more economic stability and resilience compared to local/domestic markets (positive) |
| Inclusive Value Chains | Fairness and responsibility for all those involved in a value | MSC certification may create more transparent and fair value chains (positive) |

¹ Social Capital as defined by Robert Putnam www.infed.org/thinkers/putnam.htm#_Social_capital



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| | chain, so that they operate as one step within a longer chain | MSC certification may require effort and commitment at certain steps of the value chain without direct benefits to that particular step (negative) |
|--|---|--|

Data sources

The data sourced for these indicators can be classified as (1) internal, comprised of data from various functional areas of the MSC as well as MSC assessments and reports, including pre-assessments, Public Certification Draft Reports, Public Certification Reports and Surveillance Reports and (2) external or ancillary including technical reports from management agencies, global datasets on fisheries landings and stock assessments and scientific literature published in peer-reviewed journals. These data sources are used to develop, update and/or link specific databases for fisheries, Chain of Custody (CoC) and Logo Licensing (LL).

Databases (Internal)

- E-cert (Fisheries, Chain of Custody and Logo Licensing)
- Fisheries scoring database
- Pre-assessment database
- Conditions database
- Technical Oversight database
- Objections database
- Stakeholder comments database
- Spatial database
- Stock database

Databases (External)

- RAM Legacy Database
- FAO global capture production database
- ICES stock assessment database

Other Sources

- Management agency stock assessment reports
- Peer-reviewed articles

Reporting and Outputs

Dashboard and reviews (internal)

A dashboard showing near real-time data is available internally within the MSC. It includes graphs with downloadable underlying data tables relevant to fishery and catch data, Chain of Custody information, ecolabel licensing, and developing world activity.

Annual and Technical Reports (public)

Some M&E indicators are reported on in the MSC's Annual Reports. The remainder are published in technical reports such as the Global Impacts Report (up to 2019) and the upcoming M&E Technical Report (2022). The purpose of this report is to explore the impacts of the program on



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fisheries and seafood companies, using the data and indicators listed in the previous section. The target audience of the report includes the scientific community and other informed stakeholders.

Peer-reviewed papers (public)

When possible, specific research projects associated with M&E activities are submitted in scientific paper form to scientific journals for peer-review and publication. This expands the scientific reach of the MSC program and exposes information and analyses to external scrutiny.

Stakeholder Engagement

Transparency is an important part of the MSC's approach to sustainability, and applies to all aspects of the organisation. As such, the MSC is committed to consulting with stakeholders in the development, review and implementation of the M&E program. Any interested parties are encouraged to contact the M&E team at any time. During revision periods of the M&E system, relevant stakeholders will be contacted directly and encouraged to participate in surveys and workshops. The results of previous consultations can be found on the [MSC website](#).

Contact Us

For further information, you are welcome to contact the Research team by emailing standards@msc.org.