

MSC CHAIN OF CUSTODY STANDARD

Training Guide

May 2026



MSC AT A GLANCE

Globally-recognized seafood certification and labeling program for wild caught fish and seafood.

Our vision is of the world's oceans teeming with life, and seafood supplies safeguarded for this and future generations.

Our mission is to use our ecolabel and fishery certification program to contribute to the health of the world's oceans by recognizing 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.



OUR THEORY OF CHANGE



FISHERIES
that meet the
MSC Standard
are
independently
certified as
sustainable

**RETAILERS AND
RESTAURANTS**
choose MSC
certified
sustainable
seafood

**A TRACEABLE
SUPPLY CHAIN**
assures
consumers that
only seafood
from an MSC
certified fishery
is sold with the
MSC blue fish
label

CONSUMERS
preferentially
purchase
seafood with the
MSC blue fish
label

**MARKET
DEMAND**
for MSC certified
seafood
increases

**MORE
FISHERIES**
choose to
improve their
practices and
volunteer to be
assessed to the
MSC Standard

WHAT DOES THE MSC BLUE FISH LABEL MEAN?



The MSC blue fish label means wild, certified, environmentally sustainable seafood, harvested from healthy populations, with minimal ecosystem impact.

GOOD FOR YOU AND THE OCEAN TOO.

Supports environmentally sustainable fishing practices.

STRICT STANDARDS.

Fished from healthy populations, and minimizes impact on surrounding marine life.

LOOKED AFTER.

Seafood is tracked and recorded throughout the supply chain from the fishery to the shelf.

WILD- CAUGHT.

It's fished from the ocean, lakes, or rivers from wild fish and shellfish populations.

CHAIN OF CUSTODY

Chain of Custody (CoC) is the sequence where ownership of a product is transferred from one company to another in the supply chain.



THE MSC COC STANDARD

Certification to the MSC CoC Standard ensures all seafood sold with the MSC ecolabel or ASC (Aquaculture Stewardship Council) label comes from a certified source.

Every company along the supply chain must be certified for products to be sold with the ecolabel.



WHERE DOES COC START?

➤ At or before the first sale from the fishery client group

An independent assessor determines if the fishery traceability systems are sufficient, where product ownership changes and where CoC begins.

WHERE DOES COC END?

➤ Product is in Consumer Ready Tamper-Proof Packaging (CRTP)

- Product is intended to be presented to the ultimate consumer
- e.g. retail packages of frozen

WHO NEEDS COC CERTIFICATION?

➤ All companies that take legal ownership of MSC/ASC certified seafood

Depending on your facilities operations, the certification process may be limited to only your processing facilities, excluding co-packers* and storage units. (Check with your CAB if you feel your operations may fall under these circumstances).

*Co-packers will be visited during the factory audit

COC CAN BEGIN:

- At catch (onboard the vessel)
- At landing
- After landing e.g. storage or auction facilities

Start of CoC is defined in the traceability section of the Fishery Public Certification Report



THE MSC COC STANDARD

Provides assurance throughout the supply chain and ensures an unbroken chain where certified seafood is:

- Easily identifiable
- Can be traced back to another certified business.

Every organization in the supply chain must meet our Standard through:

- Implementing relevant systems and procedures
- Independent audits to verify compliance

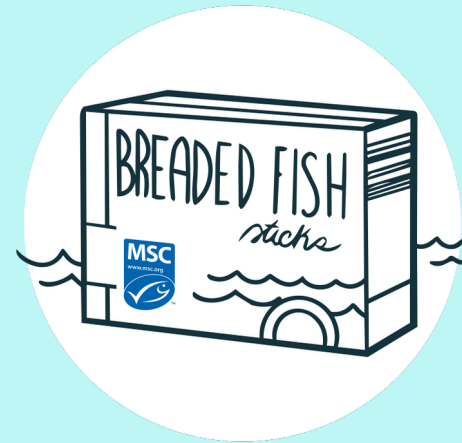


PRINCIPLES OF THE STANDARD



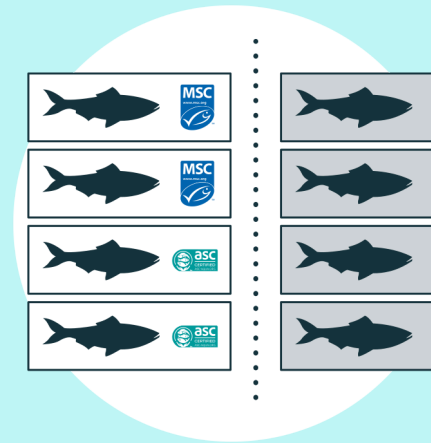
PRINCIPLE 1

Companies must purchase certified product from a certified supplier



PRINCIPLE 2

Certified products are clearly identifiable



PRINCIPLE 3

Certified products are separated from non-certified



PRINCIPLE 4

Certified products are traceable and volumes are recorded



PRINCIPLE 5

The company's management system addresses the requirements of the CoC Standard



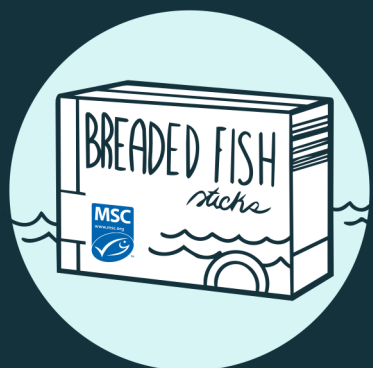
PRINCIPLE 1

PURCHASING FROM CERTIFIED SUPPLIERS

- Only buy certified products from certified suppliers, fisheries or farms
 - Companies must have a process to confirm certified supplier and product status upon receipt
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ACCESS CERTIFIED SUPPLIERS

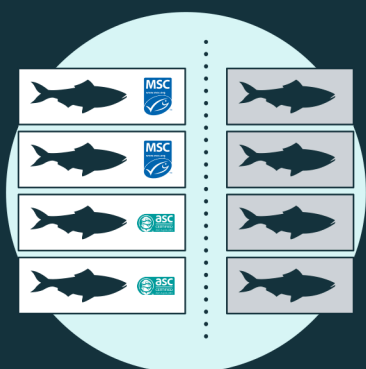
- **MSC Supplier Directory:** cert.msc.org/supplierdirectory
 - **MSC certified fisheries – Track a Fishery:** [Fisheries.msc.org](https://fisheries.msc.org)
 - **ASC Supplier Directory:** asc-aqua.org/find-a-supplier
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PRINCIPLE 2

PRODUCTS ARE IDENTIFIABLE AS CERTIFIED

- At all stages including purchasing, storing, processing, packing, labelling, and delivery
- On the physical product and traceability records (e.g. invoices)
- System in place to ensure correct use of packaging and no mislabeling of species or origin
- License agreement required for promotion of products as certified



PRINCIPLE 3

CERTIFIED PRODUCTS ARE SEPARATED

- No substitution or mixing of certified and non-certified seafood if product is to be sold as 'certified'
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APPROVAL FROM MSCI REQUIRED TO:

- Mix MSC and ASC certified products
- Use small proportions (up to 5%) of non-certified seafood in certified products (Also known officially as the **95% Rule**).



PRINCIPLE 4

CERTIFIED SEAFOOD IS TRACEABLE AND VOLUMES ARE RECORDED

- Certified seafood is traceable and volumes are recorded
- Traceable from certified supplier to sales invoice and point of sale
- Traceability records link certified product at every stage in the supply chain covered by the CoC certificate
- Records maintained and allow volume of certified inputs and outputs to be calculated (Otherwise known as Mass-balance Calculation)



PRINCIPLE 5

MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

- Policies and procedures in place covering all elements of the standard
- Responsible personnel trained on competency and subcontractor compliance
- Staff handling MSC products must be trained, competent, and compliant. They need to understand the basic MSC protocols defined by their certified company.
- System in place to deal with non-conforming products
- Respond to traceability records and product sampling requests for assurance purposes
- Designated MSC contact



CHAIN OF CUSTODY CERTIFICATION AND AUDIT TIMELINE

AUDIT PREPARATION

TRAINING STAFF

All responsible personnel need to understand their role in maintaining CoC and product integrity.



AUDIT
PRE-CHECKLIST

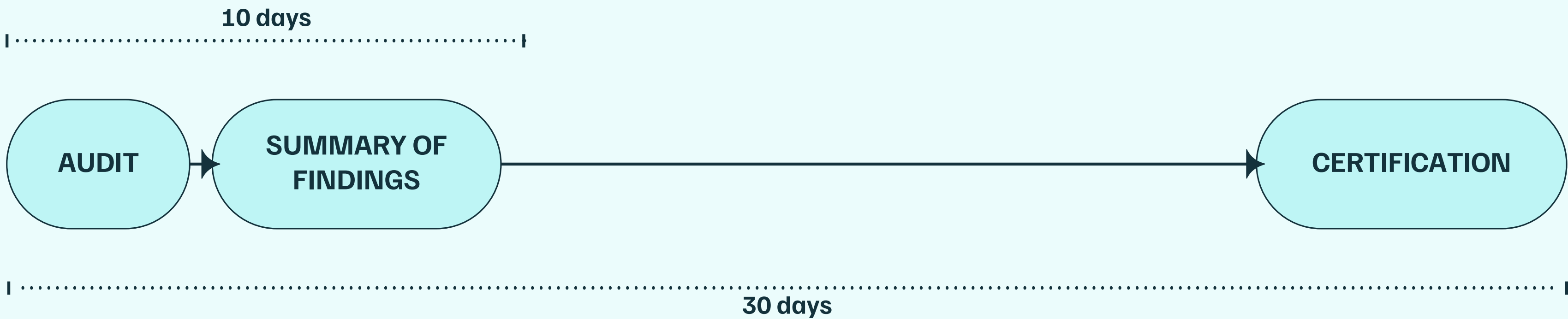


CERTIFICATION
REQUIREMENTS



INITIAL CERTIFICATION

- CAB decides whether to grant certification or not and must share audit findings within 10 days.
- Auditors can raise ‘non-conformities’ (deviations from requirements), which must be addressed to achieve certification.
- Certified status appears on MSC/ASC “Find a Supplier” directories.

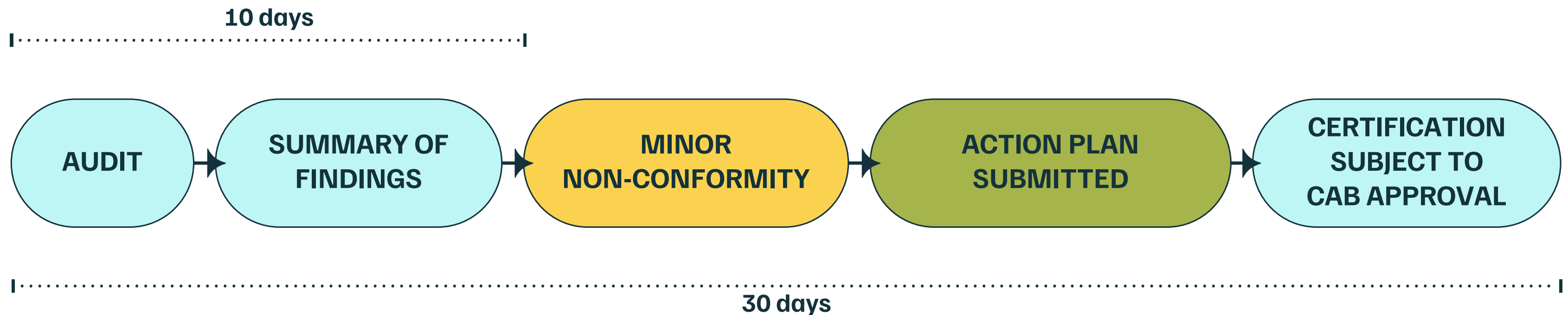


ADDRESSING MINOR NON-CONFORMITIES

Standard integrity **not** compromised

DEVELOP ACTION PLAN

- Proposing corrective actions
- Corrective actions to be implemented before next audit

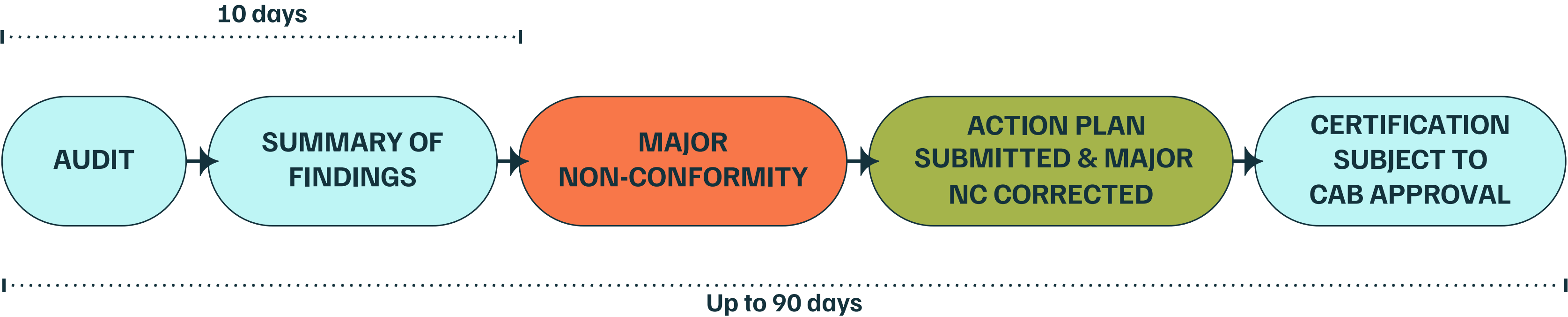


ADDRESSING MAJOR NON-CONFORMITIES

Standard integrity compromised

DEVELOP ACTION PLAN

- Root cause analysis
- Corrective actions
- Implementation timeframe
- Major NC corrected prior Certification within 90 days of audit, or further audit required.



CERTIFIED

Once you have achieved certification:

- You will receive a certificate and Chain of Custody code from your Auditor.
- Check to see that your company's status appears as 'valid' on the MSC/ASC supplier directories.
- Review all company details, including name, contact information, and certificate scope, to ensure all certified species offered are accurately listed. If you wish to add a species to your scope later, you may do so by contacting the CAB responsible for your certification.
- Certification is issued for a maximum of three years subject ongoing conformance and annual surveillance audit.

POST-CERTIFICATION: SURVEILLANCE AUDIT

Surveillance audits are performed annually every 12– 18 months depending on the breadth of your operations.

- Your certificate is valid for three years.
- During this period, your company needs to comply with surveillance audits.
- These are required to demonstrate continued compliance with the MSC Standards.



**DOWNLOAD
GUIDE**



The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is a global, science-based nonprofit dedicated to restoring global fish stocks and safeguarding seafood supplies.
[msc.org](https://www.msc.org) | AmericasInfo@msc.org