Sustainable
Seafood
Coalition

Guidance

Voluntary codes of conduct

The Sustainable Seafood Coalition (SSC) is a progressive partnership of businesses cooperating to address important issues in fish and seafood sustainability.

Contents

This document is designed to support the implementation of the Voluntary Code on Environmentally Responsible Fish and Seafood Sourcing (herein the Sourcing Code) and the Voluntary Code on Environmental Claims (herein the Labelling Code).

Overview

This guidance is intended to help SSC members in the interpretation and implementation of the codes, and includes best practice advice. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of individual businesses to ensure alignment with the Codes. This guidance will be reviewed on an annual basis.

The Sourcing and Labelling Codes cover all own-brand wild and farmed fish and seafood. Hereafter, 'fish' refers to any wild captured or farmed fish, crustacean, mollusc or other aquatic invertebrate used for any purpose. The Codes apply to food for human consumption. SSC Members who sell other products containing fish will collaborate to bring them in line with the Codes.

Common terms and abbreviations are underlined throughout, with definitions listed in Appendix 4 (glossary).

Visit us at www.sustainableseafoodcoalition.org [↗]

Note on use of the SSC logo

The SSC logo is available for use by SSC members to demonstrate their affiliation with the SSC and/or to promote the work of the SSC.

The SSC logo is not an ecolabel. It cannot be used to 'certify' the environmental status of fisheries or aquaculture sources for particular products and therefore cannot be used on pack or anywhere else it could be deemed an ecolabel (such as on individual tickets at a fish counter, or next to specific items on a menu) or mislead consumers.

It can, however, be used to show whether a company is an SSC member and/or to promote the work of the SSC.

Use of the logo is not mandatory. Examples of how the logo should or shouldn't be used are shown in Table 1 below. Use of the SSC logo will be accompanied by a link to the SSC website, and in the case of use in store/restaurants, must include a statement that '[Name] is a member of the [logo]'. Members may also wish to demonstrate their affiliation in relation to the following:

- On a menu (in a restaurant); or

- On public facing or business to business communications (such as a leaflet or website).

- Examples of suitable wording include:
  - [MEMBER] is a member of the Sustainable Seafood Coalition (SSC). Find out more at www.sustainableseafoodcoalition.org [↗]
  - [MEMBER] is a member of the Sustainable Seafood Coalition. We are working with like-minded businesses towards a sustainable future for fish. Find out more at www.sustainableseafoodcoalition.org [↗]

These examples are not exhaustive and if a member wishes to use their own wording this must be approved by the secretariat. Guidelines on logo use are further detailed in the Terms of Reference.

Table 1: Examples of proper and improper use of the SSC logo

Sector	Proper use	Improper use
Brand	On a website; exhibition stands; posters; Corporate Social Responsibility reports.	On a specific product; in advertising relating to specific products.
Foodservice	At the bottom of a menu; on a website; posters.	Next to specific food items on the menu; on takeaway food boxes.
Retailer	On a website; leaflets; magazines.	At point of sale where it could be associated with specific food items; anywhere on pack.

Part 1
The Voluntary Code of Conduct on Environmentally Responsible Fish and Seafood Sourcing

1. Introduction

The Voluntary Code on Environmentally Responsible Fish and Seafood Sourcing ('the Sourcing Code') commits members to following five good practice principles. These are traceability; transparency; a risk assessment or audit; sourcing decisions based on the risk assessment or audit; and an appropriate response.

Members should apply the general principles of good practice encompassed by the spirit of the Sourcing Code. These include cooperating and collaborating with other SSC members, where appropriate, and ensuring consistency of sourcing behaviour with the SSC aims, vision and other codes.

Members should take measures to avoid both fish and marine ingredients for fish feed, that is likely to have been sourced from illegal fishing activities or derived from threatened, endangered or protected (TEP) species.

1.1 Traceability

Members will have sufficient measures in place to trace fish from the source fishery or farm to its point of sale. Members should be aware and follow any legal requirements on traceability, for example under the Common Organisation of the Markets [7] (CMO – see Appendix 3).

Members should ensure that suppliers also have robust traceability and risk assessment protocols in place. For farmed fish, this includes traceability of the marine ingredient components of fish feed back to the source fishery or to the feed processing factory. However, members do not need to conduct an audit on marine ingredients directly.

Some of the considerations listed in the guidance under risk assessments and audits will already be in place for food safety requirements and included as part of a member's quality management system (QMS). They are included here as best practice and to ensure all members have access to the same guidance.

> **Best practice advice:**
>
> • Examples of traceability compliance are provided in two ISO standards 'Traceability of finfish products' for wild capture and farmed fish (12875:2011 and 12877:2011, respectively) and members may wish to refer to those.
>
> • Traceability back to vessel, or group of vessels, is best practice for wild capture fish.
>
> • Providing consumer facing traceability can enhance credibility and reputation. This could be done through the use of QR, bar codes or blockchain technology.

1.2 Transparency

General sourcing policies should explicitly state that they cover both wild and farmed own-brand fish and, if applicable, other branded fish. As a minimum, non-commercially sensitive information on sourcing policies will be made available on request. This should include information on:

- Traceability systems and controls; and

- Species and the source of fish, such as stock, fishing/farming area, capture/farming method.

Members should be able to assure any challengers that they have met the commitments in either the Sourcing Code or Labelling Code as relevant. Members should respond to challenges if the individual(s) making the challenge present reasonable evidence as to why they believe the member is not adhering to either Code. The secretariat is available for support and advice regarding challenges.

> **Best practice advice:**
>
> - Make your sourcing policy publicly available and consider/solicit feedback.
>
> - Communicate sourcing policies back to the supply chain, to help drive adoption of better environmental practices.
>
> - Provide a summary of the results of your risk assessment and your corresponding response (e.g. the improvements that you are supporting).

2. Sourcing wild capture fish

For wild capture fish, the Code requires members to risk assess the status of all the fisheries from which they source. A checklist of considerations and where to find more information within the guidance is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Checklist for sourcing wild capture fish

	Action	Section
What species do I buy?	Make list of all the species	-
Where do I buy from?	For each of the species above, list the fishery [flag country of vessel(s), FAO fishing area, or more detailed if possible such as ICES area, and whether EEZ or high seas]	-
How much do I buy?	Add quantity purchased per year to species listed above	-
For each fishery:		
Is the fishery certified to a responsible or sustainable fishery standard?	If yes, record who certifies the fishery	2.2
Does this certification meet the requirements of the SSC?	If yes, bullet point why, or have a document that justifies this elsewhere (see Table 3). If there is no certification, you need to find other evidence of the status of the fishery to make a judgement	2.2

If needed, seek advice from an organisation with sufficient knowledge to assess the fishery or to validate your risk assessment (best practice)		2.1
Assess the fishery status and categorise the fishery as low, medium or high risk	Purchase from low risk fisheries without further engagement	2.3.1
	Purchase from medium risk fisheries if the trend is positive and / or engage in improvement according to your influence	
	Do not purchase from high risk fisheries without further engagement	
What improvements are needed in the fishery?		4 / 4.1
Can my suppliers or I influence these improvements directly, is it a priority (e.g. high risk), and do we have the required resources?		4 / 4.1
Who else can I work with to influence the fishery?	Identify partners such as NGOs, government and industry partners	4 / 4.1
Can I join or support an existing Fishery Improvement Project (FIP)?		4 / 4.1
Can I help start a new FIP or other forum to explore potential improvement actions?		-

To assess the fishery's status, members need to have access to a suitable risk assessment of each fishery. Members can use publicly available fishery risk assessments, or carry out their own. Risk assessments should be updated at least annually.

Fisheries that are certified to a third party environmental standard would be considered low risk if the standard meets the criteria detailed in Table 3 (Section 2.2). Appropriate responses and sourcing decisions are dependent on the risk assessment outcome as illustrated in the decision tree (Figure 1 in the Sourcing Code).

2.1 Risk assessment

A risk assessment is a systematic process of evaluating the potential risk that may be involved in a supply chain. Information can be gathered from the supplier, fishery or through the help of a third party (e.g. an NGO). A risk assessment will mean the member reviews the fishery against the criteria listed in the Sourcing Code to arrive at a low, medium or high risk outcome, as described in Section 2.3.1.

However, equivalent outcome ratings, such as red, amber or green on a traffic light system are acceptable, as long as they demonstrate the level of risk for each consideration. Members can choose to use a risk assessment created by another body, such as the Sea Fish Industry Authority's Risk Assessment for Seafood Sourcing 'RASS' tool, which also covers the criteria listed in the Sourcing Code.

Before conducting the risk assessment members should map out supplies in terms of what species they buy, where they are from, and how much is bought annually. This can help your business determine the leverage and resource you might have to engage in improvement work if needed. A gap analysis template could contain this information, as well as the risk rating for each product/supply, to give a quick overview of all your supply chains.

2.1.1 Risk assessment considerations

The fishery should be assessed to understand the following:

- Species - common and scientific name (e.g. North Atlantic cod, *Gadus morhua*).
- Catch area (e.g. FAO Area 27: the North East Atlantic, ICES subdivision IV: the North Sea); and whether in a country's EEZ or the high seas.
- Flag of the vessels
- Management authority (e.g. Marine Scotland, IATTC).
- Fishing methods used (e.g. pole and line).

To ensure the fishery meets the requirements in the SSC sourcing code, the risk assessment should include each of the following considerations:

2.1.1.a Fishery certification status

This is where a fishery carries an independent third party certification or it is undergoing an assessment for certification.

It may also be possible to consider other independent ratings where either the fishery, or species, is rated by a reputable independent organisation whose assessments are based on scientific evidence. This approach may be appropriate where a fishery is considered inherently responsible by both the reputable independent organisation rating it and industry, and there are strong practical reasons

> **Best practice advice:**
>
> Have the risk assessment structure endorsed by an independent competent party. Examples of independent competent parties include, but are not limited to: The Sea Fish Industry Authority (Seafish; www.seafish.org); Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP; www.sustainablefish.org and www.fishsource.com), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF; www.wwf.org.uk); Marine Conservation Society (MCS; www.mcsuk.org); and private consultancies.

> **Best practice advice:**
>
> The risk assessment could additionally align with best practice standards, such as the AIPCE-CEP Principles for Environmentally Responsible Fish Sourcing.

for it not being certified. If the outcome of the independent rating is of environmental concern, the precautionary approach would be for the member to treat this as having a high risk outcome. If using NGO advice to support sourcing decisions a record should be kept of the evidence that supports that decision.

2.1.1.b Biological status of the fish stock

The following should be considered in relation to the health of the fish stock:

- The health of the stock is considered relative to reference points, for example, by checking that the stock biomass is above Maximum Sustainable Yield; and fishing levels are below Maximum Sustainable Yield
- The most recent scientific advice on stock health is reviewed, including whether or not the stock is overfished;
- The most recent scientific advice is reviewed to check whether overfishing of the stock is occurring; and
- The species or stock status is checked against a conservation red list.

2.1.1.c Fishery management practices, including legality and compliance

The member should review the fishery to ensure that appropriate documentation is in place to verify the fish is from a legal source. This may include a review by the member or their supplier of documents such as catch certificates, product specification and landing declarations to provide assurance that the source is traceable and legal.

Considerations of stock management practices would include reviewing whether:

- Effort or catch limits and reference points (or proxies) are in place for the stock, where applicable;
- Catch or effort levels follow best available scientific advice;
- Management of the fishery is in accordance with the precautionary principle, where relevant; and
- Management of the fishery is in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (Appendix 2).

> **Best practice advice:**
>
> Seek guidance on possible risks in fishery supply chains and the types of checks over and above conforming to all existing legal obligations in fish trading. Find out what can be done to help reduce the risk of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fish in your supply chain. Collaboration by WWF, the Environmental Justice Foundation and the British Retail Consortium produced "An advisory note for the UK supply chain on how to avoid Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishery products".

> **Best practice advice:**
>
> Conduct regular spot checks of documents to ensure the source is traceable, legal and adheres to your own sourcing requirements.

The member's risk assessment should ensure that:

- Measures are in place to prioritise research and data collection to improve scientific knowledge of the stock. If the stock is data deficient, measures are in place to improve data collection;

- The potential impacts of the fishing activity on the habitat, ecosystem and wider environment are reviewed; and

- Appropriate measures are in place to avoid and/ or combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and those measures include identification and implementation of port state control and enforcement.

The existence of a yellow card will indicate a higher risk of IUU fishing, and details of those risks will be listed in the European Commission's document outlining why the yellow card has been given. It remains legal and legitimate to trade with a country that has a yellow card. Indeed, the yellow card is not intended to stop trade; it is intended by the EU to act as a catalyst to faster change, particularly by the authorities of the nation concerned. Further, it may well be advisable to continue to trade with a yellow card country since it would not be best-practice to drop a supplier without due warning and establishing the facts with that supplier, and most importantly, the market and industry has significant influence that can and in best practice should be used to encourage improvements to a fishery. The existence of a red card means that you will not be able to import products from vessels carrying that country's flag to Europe, because they have been banned.

2.1.1.d Wider environmental impacts of the fishing activity

Member's risk assessments should consider whether appropriate measures are in place to:

- Mitigate potential impacts of the fishing activity on the habitat, the ecosystem and wider environment;

- Avoid the capture of threatened, endangered, and protected (TEP) species and ensure any interaction is reported; (note that reporting is sometimes not mandatory but it is best practice to do so)

- Increase fishing selectivity to reduce the incidence of catch of non-target species, where possible;

- Review the potential impact of fishing activities that take place within the boundaries of a Marine Protected Area;

- If ghost gear is known to be an issue in the fishery, then mitigation measures are in place; and

- Minimise or avoid discarding.

Best practice advice:

As part of your risk assessment, it is a good idea to review whether the flag of the vessel you source from is that of a country that has been issued with a yellow card or even red card by the EU under its EU IUU regulation.

Best practice advice:

Consider the cumulative impacts of bycatch across all the fisheries operating in a given area, rather than on a fishery-by-fishery basis.

2.2 Third party certification standards

A fishery that has been certified to an independent third party standard does not require further assessment. However, if relying on third party certification only, the member should ensure the certification standard meets the assessment criteria (Table 3) so that the certified fishery would achieve a low risk outcome in the member's risk assessment.

The criteria for best practice and the ideal scope of wild capture certification standards relevant to the Sourcing Code are shown in Table 3. They can be used as guidance in the selection of suitable certification standards.

Table 3: Best practice (assessment criteria) for scope of wild capture third party certification standards

Elements of a certification standard	Best Practice
Certification	*Is consistent with the principles of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries[1] (see Appendix 1).*
	Is consistent with the principles of the FAO Ecolabelling Guidelines, and compliant with FAO Private Standards for Certification of Fisheries and Aquaculture.
	Is consistent with ISO, or equivalent, guidelines on product labelling.
	Meets the 10 ISEAL credibility principles.
	Is accredited to the appropriate standard by recognised international accreditation bodies (e.g. to ISO 17065 or equivalent).
	Covers all stages of production.
Auditor	*Is independent to the standard setter.*
Standard Setting Development Process	*Is transparent; including defined environmental scope, accreditation and certification mechanisms, being participatory and open to formal input and review.*
	Provides opportunities for stakeholder comment and objection.
The Standard	*Has criteria which have measurable indicators enabling effective and consistent auditing.*
	Allows for revisions that include a multi-stakeholder process guided by clear governance rules, thus preventing minority opinions from dominating.
	Uses updated and credible science.
Standard Setters	*Have a strong monitoring and evaluation system, which contributes data to measuring impacts on the environment.*
	Have clear policies on claims and labelling that ensure accuracy.

1. The FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries is not considered to be an independent standard, but a voluntary code designed to 'ensure that all people working in fisheries and aquaculture commit themselves to its principles and goals and take practical measures to implement them'.

To ascertain whether a certification standard meets these assessment criteria there are a number of avenues you can take:

- Speak with the certification standard holder and enquire if these criteria are met and ask them to provide evidence in writing.

- Review the outcomes of the GSSI assessment once completed.

Please note that to make sustainability claims, extra criteria are required in addition to those listed in Table 3. (See Section 7.1 for more details).

2.3 Sourcing decision and appropriate responses

Members' sourcing decisions will be based on the outcome of their risk assessment. In some cases, particularly for high risk outcomes, the member may choose to take actions before sourcing; some of these are outlined below (Section 2.3.2).

2.3.1 Risk assessment outcomes

Risk assessment outcomes will be categorised as **low, medium** or **high risk**.

> A **low risk** outcome identifies a fishery that is either:
>
> - Certified to a third party responsibility standard; or
>
> - A stable and productive low impact fishery with good management and a confidence that the status will either be maintained or further improved.
>
> A **medium risk** outcome identifies a fishery which:
>
> - Has a stable status (neither optimal nor poor); and
>
> - Requires improvement to reduce the environmental impact, and/or to improve the management/stock status. It may be a data deficient fishery with stable catches.
>
> A **high risk** outcome identifies a fishery which either has:
>
> - No data available; or
>
> - A proven poor fishery status and/or high risk of decline to poor status without appropriate management and/or high environmental impact.

2.3.2 Appropriate responses

An appropriate response to risk assessment outcomes will vary according to the level of influence the business can exert on a specific fishery. If the member sources from a fishery they will have either direct or indirect engagement. In the case of a medium or high risk outcome, improvements required

to reduce the risk outcome of the fishery must be identified and the appropriate actions in place for a member to be able to source the fish. The improvements may be informal or formal fishery improvement projects (see Section 4). Members will measure any progress made. Members will ensure that the appropriate actions continue as long as they are needed. For a low risk outcome, members will seek continual improvement of the fishery where possible.

Should there be insufficient improvement actions in place (for example a FIP that has not made any progress), an engagement plan must be developed. This should be based on the shortcomings identified during the risk assessment and may be undertaken collaboratively with other members or stakeholders. Any plan should be communicated to the fishery managers and the supply chain as appropriate.

If the fishery is rated as high risk then an effective improvement plan, including monitoring, must be established in order to reduce the risk rating. Engagement could include a formal Fishery Improvement Project (FIP; Section 4.1). Should a member choose to source from a high risk fishery, the business should be able to show it prioritises addressing any issues associated with that fishery. Members are likely to be under greater scrutiny and this should be a consideration in sourcing decisions.

It is always possible for a member to have an indirect influence on their supply chain. This could be by encouraging the supplier's engagement in the management of the fishery through a local trade body, export association, or representative body. Evidence of this should be kept.

2.3.3 Do not source

Where an engagement plan at the required level is not practical or is proving to be ineffective, members will not source from this fishery or will take the necessary steps to stop sourcing from this fishery. SSC members recognise that withdrawal from a problem fishery is not the only, or necessarily the best, response to a high risk outcome. For examples of ineffective management, see guidance from the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership and other organisations listed in Section 4.

For new suppliers, it would be more appropriate for the member to agree appropriate improvements over a timeframe and not engage with the high risk fishery unless it commits to these improvements. In this way, the member can provide a market incentive for improvement. For existing supply chains, the member should prioritise improving the fishery and withdrawal should only occur after exhausting all realistic and practical avenues for improvement.

If this process results in a decision to not source the fish, members may communicate the decision and reasoning to the fishery managers and indicate that changes could lead to future sourcing (if this is the case), thereby providing a market incentive for improvement.

3 Sourcing farmed fish (aquaculture)

Members need to ensure that the aquaculture source (considering feed mills, hatcheries, and farm sites) is a certified third party standard, or audited to a members own good aquaculture standard or code of practice.

A checklist of considerations and where to find further detail in the guidance is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Checklist for sourcing farmed fish

Consideration	Action	Section
What species do I buy?	*Make list of all the species.*	
Where do I buy from?	*Add the aquaculture source to the list (farms, hatcheries, feed mills... etc).*	
How much do I buy?	*Add the quantities sourced to the list described above.*	
For each aquaculture source:		
Is the product certified to a responsible farming standard that includes all of the SSC criteria?	*If so, record who certifies the aquaculture source.*	*3.3*
Has the aquaculture source passed an audit to a standard that includes all of the SSC criteria?	*If so, record the date of the audit of the aquaculture source.*	*3.1 / 3.2*
Do you have evidence of the above?	*Have access to copies of current certificates and/or audit reports.*	*3.1 / 3.2*
Are there any industry wide or zonal improvements that are needed that I can influence?	*Identify improvement needs and ascertain whether there are improvement processes in place.*	*4 / 4.2*
How can I influence improvements either individually or collectively with other stakeholders?	*Formulate a prioritised engagement plan either individually or with other stakeholders, which may be to create or join an Aquaculture Improvement Project (AIP).*	*4 / 4.2*
Who else can I work with to influence?	*Identify partners such as NGOs, government and industry.*	*4 / 4.2*

The scope of the audit should include all of the sections in the audit guidance (Section 3.1). Appropriate responses and sourcing decisions are dependent on the outcome, as illustrated in the decision tree (Figure 2 in the Sourcing Code).

3.1 Audit process

Sourcing decisions are dependent on the outcome of the audit. An audit of the source would include auditing their systems and could cover a selection of feed mills, hatcheries and farm sites. Audits to a member's own standard can be completed by first, second, or third party auditors. It is a pass or fail audit that allows a reasonable period in which to correct any non-conformances.

3.2 Good aquaculture standard or code of practice

A good aquaculture standard or code of practice should assess aquaculture operations individually, with a scope that includes the following:

- Species' common and scientific names (e.g. Atlantic salmon, *Salmo salar*);
- Farming method (e.g. sea pens, or re-circulated closed system);
- Farming controls at the aquaculture source;
- Relevant legislation in the country of operation; and
- Feed supply.

Whether the member is using their own standards or a certification, the audit should include all of the following considerations:

3.2.a Legality: regulatory controls and compliance

The member's risk assessment should ensure that:

- The aquaculture source is licensed; and
- The aquaculture source actively complies with the local regulatory controls and inspection regimes. For example, aquaculture source(s) may be subject to licences, which include regular monitoring via inspections by the management authority.

3.2.b Farm site management practices

When considering the management practices of the farm site, the member should ensure that:

- An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is carried out at appropriate intervals, and the EIA includes assessing the suitability of the site location, water source, and discharge impacts;
- The ponds, cages and/or tanks are fit for purpose, and appropriate control and monitoring processes are in place to prevent escapes;
- Any required water treatment on intake and/or discharge is in place;

- A veterinary health plan is in place to address all aspects of fish welfare and food safety. Measures are also in place to prevent and control disease and/or parasites, such as vaccinations (where appropriate);

- The aquaculture source has suitable controls and records, and appropriate staff training;

- Biosecurity risk is assessed and suitable controls are in place for the species; and

- Predators are deterred or excluded from approaching and accessing the stock where practical; lethal control must be by trained staff and is only used where it is legal, humane and necessary.

3.2.c Wider environmental impacts of farming activity

Members' risk assessments should consider the following environmental impacts of the farming activity:

- Any sources of wild seed, fry and broodstock are assessed in line with the wild capture fishery risk assessment in the Sourcing Code;

- Appropriate measures are in place to control waste (such as pond sludge and deceased fish);

- The methods of transport of live fish and shellfish are assessed for acceptable environmental impact and biosecurity risk; and

- Appropriate measures are in place to control all chemicals and their use in the aquaculture source (such as anti-foulants and veterinary treatments).

3.2.d Marine feed ingredient sources

Members' risk assessments should consider the marine based ingredient sources of the fish feed and ensure that:

- There are feed manufacturing controls and traceability in place;

- The marine ingredients are sourced from fisheries that are certified to a responsibility or a sustainability standard, or come from responsibly sourced fisheries, where practical; and

- A risk assessment of the marine feed ingredient sources has been carried out to identify where there is a need for fishery improvements. This should guide members' own engagement plans (see Section 4).

3.3 Third party certification standards

The criteria for assessing a suitable third party certification scheme are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Best practice (assessment criteria) for aquaculture third party certification standards

Elements of a certification standard	Best practice
Certification	*Is consistent with the principles of the FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery products from Marine Capture Fisheries.*
	Is consistent with FAO Private Standards and Certification in Fisheries and Aquaculture.
	Is consistent with FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification (Appendix 2).
	Is consistent with ISO and/or ISEAL guidelines on product labelling.
	Where appropriate, is compliant with the EU Council Regulation on organic production and labelling of organic products (No 834/2007).
	Covers all stages of production.
Certification Bodies	*Are accredited to the appropriate standard by recognised international accreditation bodies.*
Auditor	*Is independent of the standard setter and work for the certification bodies.*
Standard setting development process	*Is transparent, participatory and open to formal input and review, and includes a defined environmental scope and accreditation and certification mechanisms.*
	Provides opportunities for stakeholder comment and objection.
	Has criteria which have measurable indicators enabling effective and consistent auditing.
The Standard	*Allows for revisions which include a multi-stakeholder process guided by clear governance rules, preventing minority opinions to dominate.*
	Uses updated and credible science.
Standard Setters	*Have a strong monitoring and evaluation system, which contributes data to measuring impacts on the environment.*
	Have clear policies on claims and labelling that ensure accuracy.

3.4 Sourcing decision and appropriate responses

The assessment process for aquaculture differs from fisheries in that it always requires an audit of the aquaculture source, and the outcome of this is either compliant or non-compliant.

3.4.1 Decision to source

If certified to a third party responsibility standard or a member's own good aquaculture standard or code of practice, members can source the fish. Members can source the fish provided the audit is compliant or all serious non-compliances are closed out in an agreed timescale. Timescales should be based on severity and impact of the non-conformance. For example, a critical non-conformance, such as one that would affect legal compliance, would not be sourced; a major non-conformance would need to be addressed as rapidly as possible and may require re-audit to check changes have been implemented. The process of regular review consists of an annual confirmation of certification status or an annual re-audit.

3.4.2 Appropriate responses

Where possible, members should continue to engage with non-compliant aquaculture operations to support and guide them on the actions required to become compliant. This may also lead to certification.

For new supply chains, it would be appropriate for the member to agree the necessary improvements over a timeframe and not engage with the aquaculture source unless it formally commits to implementing these improvements. In this way, the member can provide a market incentive for improvement.

Where members are engaging with their existing supply chains, the member should prioritise improving the aquaculture source, and withdrawal should only occur after exhausting all realistic and practical avenues for improvement.

Members may support the producer to participate in, or initiate, aquaculture improvement projects; see Section 4.2.

3.4.3 Do not source

For non-compliant audits; if serious non-compliances are not closed out within the agreed timescale the fish cannot be sourced.

Where engagement at the required level is not practical or is proving to be ineffective, members will not source from this aquaculture source, or will take the necessary steps to stop sourcing from it. SSC members recognise that withdrawal from a problem aquaculture source is not the only, or necessarily the best, response to a high risk outcome.

4 Improvement projects

If the member has taken the steps to ensure the fishery or aquaculture source they are sourcing from is engaged in an improvement programme (but this does not necessarily have to be a formal, collaborative FIP), this demonstrates compliance with the Sourcing Code and they may source the fish.

Fishery Improvement Projects (FIP) or Aquaculture Improvement Projects (AIP) can be an effective way of addressing concerns using a collaborative approach. Improvement projects have a defined goal, workplan and timescales.

Individual members have limited resources and need to prioritise engagement to where they can make the most impact. Engagement in improvement projects can either occur directly as individual companies or indirectly through suppliers, trade associations, and by cooperating with other seafood trading companies.

Indirect engagement is most likely to occur for either larger members that are already involved in other projects within the portfolio of fish they source, or for much smaller members that are resource restricted (financially or otherwise) and so are unable to directly engage.

4.1 Fishery Improvement Projects

Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) aim to resolve problems within specific fisheries and/or particular aspects of fisheries that require improvement. FIPs work through the engagement of a variety of stakeholders including fishers, processors, policy makers and regulators, and NGOs that push for improved policies and management whilst implementing voluntary changes to purchasing and fishing practices.

If a fishery risk assessment results in a high risk outcome, members are encouraged to engage directly with the fishery in a FIP. The improvement project should address the risks identified in the risk assessment to move to a medium or low risk outcome. The FIP may need to be formal, and/or involve several stakeholders (e.g. if national management of the fishery needs improving and is beyond the influence of one company alone) or it may only need to be improvement project between the supplier and SSC member (e.g. small modifications to the gear).

Improvements to a fishery could constitute a wide range of activities which may include, for example, gear changes to reduce environmental impacts or improve selectivity, increased data collection to improve research, or formal FIPs. Formal FIPs should be credible, including public communication of the aims, workplans, milestones and progress achieved to date; they can be industry, government or NGO led.

> **Best practice advice:**
>
> Collaborate with organisations that have experience in developing and implementing FIPs. Examples and more information can be found at: Sustainable Fisheries Partnership (SFP www.sustainablefish.org and www.fishsource.com); World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF www.wwf.org.uk); Marine Stewardship Council (MSC www.msc.org/documents/developing-world/fishery-improvement-projects); and Marine Conservation Society (MCS www.mcsuk.org).
>
> The Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions (a group of North American NGOs) has developed guidelines for 'Supporting Fishery Improvement Projects'; this document defines the characteristics a project should have to be recognised as a formal FIP.

4.2 Aquaculture Improvement Projects

Aquaculture Improvement Projects (AIPs) aim to improve policies, practices and management to reduce the environmental impacts of aquaculture either on a regional, farming system, or species level. AIPs work through engagement of stakeholders including farmers, suppliers, policy makers and regulators, and NGOs. Instead of being aimed at improving a particular aquaculture source, they are often aimed at an industry sector as a whole. For example, process improvements may be made in the transport methods to improve biosecurity.

During the assessment of an aquaculture source, the member may identify a need to address the environmental impacts of a group of farms, or improve the processes used by the industry in general to reduce their combined impact. To address wider industry improvements, an AIP may be established.

Some examples of regional environmental impact improvement programmes may be in area management of disease controls with common vaccinations, or by improving feed conversion rates for the industry. The area covered by regional programmes can be defined by different boundaries, such as a common water input or discharge source, or a geographic feature, such as an island or coastal area. Alternatively, it may have defined zonal boundaries such as a government-designated administrative division like a development plan area or areas defined by integrated coastal zone management plans.

If the feed contains wild capture fish, or the farm is stocked partly from wild seedlings, the sources of supply should be assessed using the wild capture risk assessment process. This may result in an AIP to change the source of feed materials for the industry in general, and/or reduce the proportion of wild capture fish in the feed, and/or address the fishery impacts in a FIP.

4.3 Advocacy initiatives

'Advocacy' is used here to describe the public or private exercising of influence by SSC members in order to affect changes in political decision-making.

In some scenarios, SSC members may initiate advocacy strategies in order to drive improvements for the fishery or farm system in question. This is generally where the sustainability of a source is hindered by the political decision-making of governmental management authorities, rather than by the behaviour of the fishing fleet or producers themselves.

As an example, members might encounter a scenario in which multiple coastal states are exploiting the same fishery but are failing to bilaterally agree TACs and quota allocations in line with the scientific advice. These conditions may lead to overfishing which traditional improvement efforts by supply chain actors are unable to influence directly, prompting an advocacy response.

Advocacy strategies should have a defined goal, workplan and timescale in order to demonstrate alignment with the SSC Codes.

> **Best practice advice:**
>
> Advocacy efforts may be more effective when supported by multiple stakeholders. Consider using the SSC network to identify and engage like-minded members that would be able to collaborate on the improvement of this fishery or farm system.

Goal: Each advocacy effort should work towards a clearly stated goal. When setting goals, members should:

- Identify the optimal outcome(s) which the activity aims to achieve;
- Identify the decision makers who can influence the outcome(s);
- Examine which other organisations can help influence the outcome(s);
- Investigate the barriers to progress so far. Consider the following questions: Why are the necessary decisions not being made?; What efforts have attempted and failed to influence the relevant specific process(es) in the past?; What needs to change to prompt the required improvement(s)?

Workplan: A workplan gives structure, direction and focus to advocacy efforts. The plan should indicate:

- Preliminary research on the topic's background and the landscape of stakeholders within which the advocacy will take place. Identify the varying stakeholder positions: are they supportive of the advocacy direction? Members can identify opportunities to collaborate and amplify the effect of advocacy, increasing likelihood of success. Other stakeholders may be obstructive of the goals, and proactive attempts should be made to convert or, if unsuccessful, mitigate against their potential counter-efforts. Consensus building is considered best practice to influence change.
- What form(s) the advocacy will take. Consider the following options: private or public letters; joint public statements; statements of support to another organisation or campaign; press releases; collection and provision of evidence; meetings with or presentations to relevant decision-makers.
- How often and when the member will engage in correspondence with the decision-maker whom the advocacy aims to influence.
- Milestones which should be met to demonstrate progress and provide opportunity to evaluate advocacy efforts throughout the designated period for engagement.
- Roles and responsibilities, where advocacy is a collective effort. All participants should proactively engage in the advocacy to an extent relative to their influence and resources. Relevant individual inputs might include: supporting a secretariat role for an advocacy project, financially or in-kind; drafting and editing individual or collective statements; identifying and contacting key decision-makers; providing brand logos to demonstrate support for advocacy positions; raising the profile of the initiative through press releases or communication to supply chain contacts[1].

Timescales: It is important to define timescales at the outset of any improvement effort. Individual members should pre-identify a date by which their goal(s) will be achieved.

- If the advocacy achieves its goal within this timescale, identify the main reasons for success and use as a learning exercise. Consider sharing these insights with other members.

1. Refer to page 5 of the SSC Terms of Reference for policies on how the SSC logo can also be used in collective advocacy initiatives.

- If the advocacy does not achieve its goal within this timescale but a critical evaluation of the workplan has identified new opportunities for influence, the member may choose to develop a new engagement plan. This plan should include significant differentiating features from previous efforts which demonstrate a reasonable likelihood of success.

- If the advocacy does not achieve its goal within this timescale and engagement at the required level is not practical or is not proving to be effective, members should no longer source from the fishery or farm system in question.

- In all cases, outcomes should be recorded in order to inform the scoping of future advocacy initiatives.

Using formal FIP/AIP frameworks can be helpful to structure and monitor the progress of advocacy initiatives, but this approach is not a requirement for meeting the SSC Codes.

For transparency, advocacy initiatives should consider public communication of their aims, workplans, milestones and progress achieved to date. Members may choose to keep sensitive elements of advocacy planning documents (e.g. specific stakeholder mapping) confidential.

Members should continue to engage in direct traditional improvements to the farm or fishery where possible.

Part 2
The Voluntary Code of Conduct on Environmental Claims

5 Introduction

The Voluntary Code on Environmental Claims ('the Labelling Code') commits SSC members, where they choose to make a self-declared environmental claim, to only do so in accordance with the minimum criteria set out in the Labelling Code.

The Labelling Code aims to harmonise labelling of own-brand seafood among SSC members. This means that there will be more clarity for consumers and other businesses when buying fish. Communication about fish needs to be clear, consistent and meaningful.

Environmental claims can be communicated through product labels, websites, point of sale materials (posters, billboards, leaflets, menus), and other promotional materials or images, as well as other forms of public facing or business to business communication.

> **Best practice advice:**
>
> Encourage consumers to learn more about the SSC and any environmental claims being made by directing them to the SSC website www.sustainableseafoodcoalition.org.

6 Environmental claims

To comply with the Labelling Code, members can only use two categories of environmental claims on own-brand products. These are claims regarding sustainability and responsibility. Both sustainability and responsibility claims can only be made for fish derived from fisheries or farms that meet the relevant minimum criteria, as set out in the Labelling Code, and where sufficient documentation is available to support this claim. Where these minimum criteria cannot be met, however, no such claims can be made.

The Labelling Code is without prejudice to the requirements set by any ecolabel or third party certification standard owner used by the member. This includes the use of any associated trademarks, claims and logos.

6.1 Sustainability

Sustainability relates to the current environmental and management status of the fish. This means that the fishery has a limited impact on the ecosystem. Examples of key international standards and codes of conduct are detailed in Section 7.1.

At present, sustainability claims cannot be made for aquaculture as the SSC is not aware of any existing certification standards that make claims of sustainability. Those standards currently in place are certifying products with claims of responsibility. If and when the situation changes and farms are able to meet criteria and thus claim sustainability, this guidance will be revised accordingly. Any fish that meets the criteria for sustainability in the Labelling Code can alternatively carry claims regarding responsibility.

6.2 Responsibility

Responsibility relates to the behaviour of the business. Once all criteria for the Sourcing Code are met, members may make responsibility claims on any own-brand fish. Claims are optional; there is no requirement to make any such claim.

6.3 Additional claims

It is very easy to mislead a consumer by using terms that are difficult to provide evidence for. The SSC believes some terms lack meaning, including 'environmentally friendly', 'better for the environment', 'eco' and 'green', as set out in Defra's 'Environmental claims and labels: guidance for businesses' [↗]. These terms must not be used. Terms with an agreed definition such as 'well-managed', as used in the FAO's 'Product Certification and Ecolabelling for Fisheries Sustainability' [↗], may be used as long as it is included alongside the relevant sustainability or responsibility claim.

In conjunction with the relevant sustainability or responsibility claim, members may wish to include additional terms related to the environmental practices of the fishery or farm. These terms must be clear, consistent and meaningful descriptors of practices, and follow the general principles of the Labelling Code.

6.4 Images: claims by association

Images used in relation to a fish or fishery product must not mislead the consumer in any way. Images should show a clear and accurate reflection of the fishing or farming method, the area it was sourced from, and/or any other defining characteristics. This applies to all images used, whether on-pack, online, in advertisements or in any other communication. It would not be appropriate, for example, to use a picture of an artisanal fisherman if the fish was caught as part of a long-line fishery.

6.5 Factual information

Other factual information that is not legally required can also be provided as long as it is consistent with the Labelling Code. This includes information such as date of catch or production techniques and practices. As with environmental claims, a clear, consistent and meaningful approach should be taken. See Appendix 3 for details of legal requirements for mandatory and voluntary labelling.

6.6 The 95% commitment

This commitment addresses all claims in relation to a product or dish containing fish, such as a fish pie or crab sticks. It does not relate to other ingredients, such as breadcrumbs in a fish cake, but does include the fish based ingredients, such as stock. It applies to a product or dish that contains:

- Fish from more than one fishery or aquaculture source;
- Fish from more than one country; or
- Several species of fish.

At least 95% (by weight) of the component fish in the product or dish must satisfy the criteria for any claims and, ideally, this should be 100%. This only relates to sustainability or responsibility claims and not to providing further information or for the use of images, which should both relate to 100% of the fish.

Examples of the 95% commitment

- A fish pie in which 95% of all the fish meet the criteria for claims of sustainability could be labelled 'made with sustainably sourced fish'.

- In a fish stick, if 90% of the fish used is pollock, which meets the Labelling Code criteria for sustainability, but the other 10% of fish ingredients do not, members cannot make a sustainability claim on the whole stick (e.g. 'sustainably sourced fish stick') but can on the pollock element of it (e.g. fish stick with sustainably sourced pollock).

- In a dish where all of the fish is the same species from the same area (e.g. cod from the North Sea), if 80% is sourced from vessels belonging to a country which has third party sustainability certification (e.g. UK), and the rest comes from vessels flagged to a different country that does not have certification (e.g. Norway), members cannot make a claim on the product.

- A seafood paella in which only the haddock and the mussels meet the criteria for sustainability and the prawns in it do not, could be labelled 'seafood paella with sustainably sourced haddock and mussels'.

7 Labelling for claims regarding sustainability

Members can only make a sustainability claim if they can demonstrate that the minimum criteria in the Labelling Code have been met. This can be through:

- An independent certification to a credible third party standard; or

- An equivalent level of stewardship and assurance of provenance (i.e. an independent audit that meets the criteria in Section 7.1).

7.1 Minimum criteria

For all sustainability claims, the following minimum criteria should be met:

- An independently audited chain of custody is in place to trace the fish from point of sale to its source fishery;

- The source fishery is monitored at least every two years through a surveillance audit and fully reassessed every five years by the independent auditors;

- The source fishery is consistent with the principles of relevant key international standards and codes of conduct and is operated in a manner consistent with the principles of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries [↗];

- Where relevant, the use of labels is consistent with the relevant[2] ISO standard guidelines on product labelling;

- Without prejudice to requirements for bodies operating product certification systems (e.g. ISO 17065 [↗]) the standard and audit are transparent and participatory, open to formal input and review, and provides opportunity for stakeholder comment and objection;

- Audits are performed by independent auditors that are accredited to a standard recognised by international accreditation meeting, at a minimum, ISO 17065 [↗]; and

- Any certification is consistent with the FAO guidelines for the ecolabelling of fish and fishery products from marine capture fisheries [↗].

7.2 Additional points

If independent certification for the source fishery is suspended and/or the fishery no longer meets the minimum criteria in the Labelling Code, claims of sustainability will no longer be made. Claims may still be made on stock bought when the fishery did meet the commitments, but no claims may be made on new stock sourced and labelled after the source fishery was suspended or stopped meeting the criteria.

2. ISO 14020, 14021, 14022,14023, 14024, 14025.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Summary of Key Principles in FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries [↗]

The key principles in this document apply at a member state level, not an individual business level, but are aimed at any organisation involved in the conservation or management of fishery resources. For further detail readers must refer to the full, original document. The key principles are:

- Taking into account the biological characteristics of the resources and their environment; assigning priority to undertake research and data collection; encouraging bilateral and multilateral cooperation in research as appropriate; and recognising the trans-boundary nature of aquatic ecosystems;

- Adopting management measures that ensure the conservation of both the target and any associated or dependent species. Where both selective and environmentally safe fishing gear and practices occur, these should be recognised and prioritised in establishing fishery conservation management;

- Minimising waste, catch of non-target species, and impacts on associated or dependent species;

- Protecting and rehabilitating critical fisheries habitats in aquatic ecosystems including mangroves, lagoons and reefs. Habitat protection efforts should focus on limiting destruction, degradation, pollution and other significant impacts resulting from human activities that threaten the viability of fishery resources;

- Considering social impacts alongside economic ones; and

- Promoting research into the environmental and social impacts of fishing gear and the impact of such gear on biodiversity and coastal fishing communities.

Appendix 2: Summary of Key Principles in FAO Technical Guidelines for Aquaculture Certification [↗]

Minimum substantive criteria for developing aquaculture certification standards are described by the FAO and provided for a) animal health and welfare; b) food safety; c) environmental integrity; and d) socio-economic aspects. The extent to which a certification standard seeks to address the issues should be explicitly stated by the standard. For further detail readers must refer to the full, original document.

Aquaculture activities are conducted in a manner that:

- Assures the health and welfare of farmed aquatic animals, by optimizing health through minimizing stress, reducing aquatic animal disease risks and maintaining a healthy culture environment at all phases of the production cycle (animal health and welfare);

- Ensures food safety by implementing appropriate national or international standards and regulations including those defined by FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius (food safety);

- Is in accordance with local, national and international laws and regulations; encourages restoration of habitats and sites damaged by previous uses in aquaculture; ensures impacts are identified and adverse impacts are managed or mitigated to an acceptable level; uses native species for culture and measures to minimize unintentional release or escape of cultured species into natural environments (environmental integrity);

- Sets measurable benchmarks that encourage improvement and innovation in environmental performance of aquaculture. Certification standards may consider application of the "precautionary approach" in accordance with the relevant provisions of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries [Web↗];

- Approaches risk through a suitable scientific method of assessing the likelihood of events and the magnitude of impacts, and take into account relevant uncertainties. Appropriate reference points should be determined and remedial actions taken if reference points are approached or exceeded. Certification standards should endeavour to promote the internalization of environmental costs (risk analysis); and

- Is socially responsible and within national rules and regulations, with regard to the ILO Convention on labour rights, not jeopardizing the livelihood of aquaculture workers and local communities (socio-economic aspects).

Appendix 3: Legal requirements

The Sourcing and Labelling Codes are voluntary and do not replace any existing or future legal requirements. Businesses must refer to the original legislation for full requirements. It is the responsibility of the member to ensure their labelling meets such mandatory requirements including, but not limited to the following legislation and amendments thereto:

- Fish Labelling Regulations 2013 [↗];

- Fisheries Control Regulation [↗]; and

- The Common Organisation of the Markets [↗](CMO)

The Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 requires all information to consumers to be fair and honest. The Advertising Standards Authority is responsible for complaints about all advertisements and promotions.

For more information on the CMO regulation and other relevant labelling legislation, see www.seafish.org/industry-support/legislation [↗].

Appendix 4: Glossary

AIP
See Aquaculture Improvement Project, see section 4.

AIPCE-CEP
AIPCE is the European Fish Processors Association; CEP is the European Federation of National Organisations of Importers and Exporters of Fish www.aipce-cep.org [↗]

Appropriate actions
Actions to be taken by the member in response to the risk assessment outcome.

Aquaculture
The farming of any aquatic organisms including, but not limited to fish, molluscs, crustaceans, aquatic plants, reptiles and amphibians.

Aquaculture Improvement Programme (AIP)
An alliance of stakeholders working together to address sustainability issues in a fish-farming process or region. AIPs work to reduce environmental impacts of aquaculture particularly on a regional level. See Section 4 for further information.

Aquaculture source
Each of the processes in the production chain of fish produced by aquaculture, including sea ranching. This may include the hatchery or source fishery, the farm site, the fish feed, the place of processing and the feed mill.

Audit
A planned and documented activity performed by qualified personnel to determine by evaluation of objective evidence the adequacy and compliance with established procedures, and the effectiveness of implementation.

First, second and third party audits
First party audits are produced and conducted internally by the company. Second party audits are conducted by an independent body. Third party audits are external and performed by organisations that are independent of both the business and the standard, or the issue referred to.

Biological reference point
A scientific reference to help fisheries managers know when a stock and fishing activity is at minimum, safe and target levels. It is determined based on scientific stock assessment data, and usually managers use three types of biological reference point:

- The total amount of biomass (or size) in a stock;

- The biomass of mature fish (which are able to reproduce) in a stock; and

- The fishing mortality (death of fish caused only by fishing) on that stock.

Biosecurity

The procedures or measures designed to protect the population and environment against harmful biological or biochemical substances.

Broodstock

Broodstock, or broodfish, are a group of mature individuals used in aquaculture for breeding purposes. Broodstock can be a population maintained in captivity as a source of replacement for, or enhancement of, seed and fry numbers.

Catch limit

A quantitative limit on all fish caught over a given period.

Certification

Procedure by which a third party gives written or equivalent assurance that a product, process or service conforms to specified requirements. Certification may be, as appropriate, based on a range of inspection activities which may include continuous inspection in the production chain.

Certification body

The party that conducts audits and issues certificates against a given standard, thereby declaring conformity to that standard. The certification body is a third party, not the standard owner, and is responsible for ensuring the standard is adopted and applied consistently.

Claim(s)

See Environmental claim.

Common name

Commercial names as provided in the Fish Labelling Regulations 2010 or amendments thereafter. Where fish have multiple common names, the SSC recommends using the name that is most commonly found in the UK and/or amongst other SSC members.

Communication

Any communication by the member regarding their labelling, presentation or advertising of fish to consumers or other businesses. This may include product labels, in-store signs, internet descriptions, magazines, advertisements, images or logos that portray the product origin/claim/information, social media, and direct consumer communications.

Conservation red list

A list of threatened and vulnerable species complied by an organisation (e.g. IUCN; RSPB).

Conservation reference point

Values of fish stock population parameters (such as biomass or fishing mortality rate) used in fisheries management.

Discards

The portion of fish or other animals in the catch, which are thrown away, or dumped at sea, either dead or alive, for any reason. It does not include plant materials and post harvest waste such as offal.

Ecolabel

A distinctive logo or statement which certifies that the fish has been harvested in compliance with conservation and sustainability standards. The logo or statement is intended to make provision for informed decisions of purchasers whose choice can be relied upon to promote and stimulate the sustainable use of fishery resources.

Environmental claim

Claims made by a member with regard to the environmental impacts of a fishery or fish farm on the relevant stock or fish and/or on the wider ecosystem. It includes any ISO type II term, label, image, logo or other commercial communication in relation to all fish products offered for sale, and any commercial communication made in the context of fish, both consumer facing and business to business.

Environmental Impact Assessment

A sequential set of activities designed to identify and predict the impacts of a proposed action on the bio-geophysical environment and human health and well being, and to interpret and communicate information about the impacts, including mitigation measures that are likely to eliminate the risks.

FAO

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations www.fao.org/home/en/ [↗]

Farm site

The physical location in which the fish is produced.

Farming

A form of intervention in the rearing process to enhance production, such as regular stocking, feeding, and protection from predators. Farming also implies individual or corporate ownership of the stock being cultivated. For statistical purposes, aquatic organisms which are harvested by an individual or corporate body which has owned them throughout their rearing period contribute to aquaculture, while aquatic organisms, which are exploitable by the public as a common property resource with or without appropriate licenses, are the harvest of wild capture fisheries.

Farming operation (farm)

See Aquaculture source.

FIP

See Fishery Improvement Project.

Fish

Any wild captured or farmed marine, freshwater, anadromous or catadromous fish, crustacean, mollusc or other aquatic invertebrate used for any purpose (including but not limited to seafood, fishmeal, and fish oil).

Fish stocks

Populations of single species, or occasionally species groups, which are caught in a particular geographic region.

Fishery

The activity of one particular fishing gear-type or method leading to the harvest of one or more wild species.

Fishery Improvement Project (FIP)

An alliance of stakeholders working together to resolve sustainability issues within a specific fishery or to improve a specific aspect of the fishery. A FIP works through key organisations and individuals talking through the management of the fishery and the challenges that it may face, identifying data that needs to be collected, agreeing on a set of priority actions that should be undertaken to improve the fishery, and then overseeing an action plan. See Section 4 for further information.

Fishing gear

Tools with which fish and seafood are captured, such as nets, lines, traps and pots.

Fishing selectivity

Ability to target and capture fish by size and species during harvesting operations, allowing juvenile fish and non-target species to escape unharmed.

GSSI

Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative www.ourgssi.org [↗]

ICES

International Council for the Exploration of the Seas www.ices.dk/Pages/default.aspx [↗]

Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing

A fishing activity that occurs either as an expressly illegal activity or, at a minimum, an activity undertaken with little regard for applicable regulations. IUU fishing has detrimental economic, social, environmental and safety consequences by undermining management practices and posing a threat to effective conservation and management.

Image

Any photograph, drawing, logo or other graphical depiction.

Independently audited chain of custody

Independent certifiers carry out assessments of fisheries and businesses against a certification body's standards (e.g. for sustainable fishing and seafood traceability). This ensures the process is robust, credible and meets best practice guidelines for standard-setting organisations as set out by ISEAL and the FAO.

Independent certification to a third party standard

An independent assessment to show that specified requirements pertaining to a product, person, process or management system have been met.

Independent competent endorsement

An external body that has a demonstrated knowledge and understanding of EU, UK and relevant international fisheries and aquaculture management, practice, regulation and environmental standards and certification standards.

International Standardisation Organisation (ISO)

ISO is a network of national standards bodies and the largest developer of voluntary international standards www.iso.org/iso/home.htm

ISEAL

ISEAL Alliance is a non-governmental organisation whose mission is to strengthen sustainability standards systems for the benefit of people and the environment www.isealalliance.org

ISO 17065

ISO 17065 (or EN45011 in its European version) specifies general requirements for third parties operating a product certification system. The accreditation must be performed against a standard and demonstrates competence to certain regulatory authorities.

ISO type I claim

Voluntary, multiple-criteria based third party programme that awards a licence which authorises the use of environmental labels on products.

ISO type II claim

A single-attribute label developed by the producer for own-branded products.

IUCN Red List

An inventory of the global conservation status of biological species, compiled by the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) http://www.iucnredlist.org

Marine Protected Area

Any area of intertidal or sub-tidal terrain, together with its overlaying waters, and associated flora, fauna, historical and cultural features, which has been reserved by law or other effective means to protect part or all of the enclosed environment.

Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)

A biological reference point, which is determined based on scientific stock assessment data. Fish stocks at MSY levels are considered healthy. Fish stocks grow in the same way as most other groups of animals; the more mature fish within them that are reproducing, the faster the stock grows. This growth rate increases until competition for resources, such as food, causes it to decrease. It is this peak, where the growth rate is at its highest, that is known as MSY.

Member

Member of the Sustainable Seafood Coalition (SSC). An up-to-date list can be found on the website at www.sustainableseafoodcoalition.org/ssc/members

Non-conformance

Failure to act in accordance with a standard.

Non-compliance

Failure, or refusal, to comply (e.g. with a law, regulation, or term of contract).

Own-brand

Own-brand refers to any fish or seafood product that carries the SSC members' name at the point of sale to the final consumer.

Precautionary principle

When an activity causes a threat or harm to the environment, general precautionary measures should be taken. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.

Products

Any goods or service.

Publicly available

Obtainable by any person, without unreasonable barriers of access. In the Labelling Code, this may refer to information in-store, online, by request, or by any other commercial communication.

Re-circulated closed system

Refers to an aquaculture system that is independent from the immediate environment. The re-circulatory nature of the system often refers to water use, where water is treated and recycled each time it passes through the aquaculture system.

Reference points

A basis or standard for evaluation, assessment or comparison. For example MSY is a biological reference point, estimated by scientific stock assessments, and used in fishery management to determine the maximum amount of fish that can be sustainably harvested.

Risk assessment

An estimate of adverse effects that may result from exposure to certain hazards.

Risk Assessment for Seafood Sourcing (RASS) tool

An online tool currently under development by Seafish Industry Authority to provide an indication of low, medium or high risk factors (not scores) associated with sourcing from a particular fishery or aquaculture supply chain.

Scientific name

Written as '*Genus species*' and often referred to as the Latin name.

Sea pens

A fenced, netted structure, located in the open sea and used in aquaculture practices, that is fixed to the bottom substrate allowing free water exchange.

Sea ranching

The harvest of enhanced capture fisheries to raise aquatic animals under extensive production systems in open space where they grow using natural food supplies. These are generally intended for human consumption. In some cases, these species may be released by national authorities and re-captured by fishermen as wild animals.

Selectivity

See fishing selectivity.

Standard

Rules, guidelines or characteristics for products, processes and/or production methods whereby

compliance is not mandatory. The standard may also cover relevant terminology, symbols, packaging, marking or labelling requirements.

Standard setter

The organisation responsible for managing the development or revision of a standard.

Sufficient measures

Measures to ensure a full traceability system, as described in the traceability section.

Third Party Certification

A form of certification in which the producer's claim of conformity is validated, as part of a specific program, by a technically and otherwise competent body other than one controlled by the producer or buyer. The third party certifier performs an audit specific to the certification program to ensure that the producer's claims are valid.

Threatened, endangered or protected (TEP) species

Species that are protected under national or international laws, or listed as threatened or endangered on conservation lists, such as the IUCN Red List.

Traceability

Full chronological documentation of the fish from the time it is harvested from the source fishery or farm to the point when the final environmental claim is made.

Veterinary Health Plan

Veterinary health and welfare plans (VHWPs) are action plans aimed at improving the health and welfare of farm animals, which are drawn up between the farmer and his or her veterinary surgeon.

Wider environmental impacts of fishing activities

Impacts to the environment beyond the immediate targeted stock fish, such as by-catch of non-target species, damage to benthic habitats and other habitat destruction.

Wild capture

Fish harvested from a wild resource, such as the sea or a river.

Wild seed

This can refer to eggs, spawn, offspring, progeny or brood of the aquatic organism (including aquatic plants) being cultured. The seed may also be referred to as fry, larvae, postlarvae, spat, and fingerlings. They may originate from captive breeding programmes or caught from the wild.

Appendix 5: Useful references

FIPs

The FIP Directory (http://fisheryimprovementprojects.org [↗]) is a list of organisations that may be able to provide information, advice, or funding for FIPs.

Conservation Alliance for Seafood Solutions' Guidelines for supporting FIPs
http://www.solutionsforseafood.org/projects/fishery-improvement/ [↗]

Global Fishing Watch

Global Fishing Watch (http://globalfishingwatch.org/ [↗]) is the product of a technology partnership between SkyTruth, Oceana and Google that is designed to show all of the trackable fishing activity in the ocean. This interactive web tool – currently in prototype stage – is being built to enable anyone to visualise the global fishing fleet in space and time.

IUU fishing, and yellow and red cards

In an effort to combat IUU fishing, the EU implemented Regulation (EC) No 1010/2009, which came into force in January 2010. Under this regulation the EU conducts an assessment of pre-identified non-cooperating third countries (i.e. countries outside the EU). If the European Commission believes a country is failing to do enough to combat IUU fishing, it gives them a yellow card warning. The country's progress to address the issues that the Commission has highlighted is monitored regularly, and if the situation improves the country can be issued a green card. However, if the European Commission feels that not enough is being done, it can propose a red card, and if the Council of Ministers agrees, then that country can be identified as non-cooperating and blacklisted. This means trade measures are put in place banning all or certain species of fish from that country entering the EU until the country improves and is taken off the list. Many countries have successfully moved from a blacklisting (red) or yellow card to a green card.

Seafood Traceability Financial Tool (Global Food Traceability Center)

The Seafood Traceability Financial Tool (https://seafoodtraceability.org/ [↗]) aims to help organisations in the seafood industry assess the financial impact (costs and benefits) associated with implementing traceability.