

APPENDIX 1

Guidelines for the ecolabelling of fish and fishery products from marine capture fisheries, revision 1, 2009

SCOPE

1. These guidelines are applicable to ecolabelling schemes that are designed to certify and promote labels for products from well-managed marine capture fisheries and focus on issues related to the sustainable use of fisheries resources.

PRINCIPLES

2. The following principles should apply to ecolabelling schemes for marine capture fisheries:
 - 2.1 Be consistent with the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the World Trade Organization (WTO) rules and other relevant international instruments.
 - 2.2 Recognize the sovereign rights of States and comply with all relevant laws and regulations.
 - 2.3 Be of a voluntary nature and market-driven.
 - 2.4 Be transparent, including balanced and fair participation by all interested parties.
 - 2.5 Be non-discriminatory, do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade¹ and allow for fair trade and competition.²
 - 2.6 Provide the opportunity to enter international markets.³
 - 2.7 Establish clear accountability for the owners of schemes and the certification bodies in conformity with international standards.
 - 2.8 Incorporate reliable, independent auditing and verification procedures.
 - 2.9 Be considered equivalent if consistent with these guidelines.
 - 2.10 Be based on the best scientific evidence available, also taking into account traditional knowledge of the resources provided that its validity can be objectively verified.
 - 2.11 Be practical, viable and verifiable.
 - 2.12 Ensure that labels communicate truthful information.
 - 2.13 Provide for clarity.

¹ Consistent with the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade.

² See Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries Article 11.2.

³ See Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries Article 11.2.

- 2.14 Be based, at a minimum, on the minimum substantive requirements, criteria and procedures outlined in these guidelines.
3. The principle of transparency should apply to all aspects of an ecolabelling scheme including its organizational structure and financial arrangements.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

4. Ecolabelling schemes should take into account that principles, minimum substantive requirements, criteria and procedures set out in this document will apply equally for developed, transition and developing countries.
5. Bearing in mind that ecolabelling schemes relate to fisheries management, and rights and duties of States⁴, it is recognized that the involvement of States in ecolabelling schemes is desirable and should be encouraged. It is also recognized that States and, as appropriate, regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) may develop ecolabelling schemes in a manner consistent with these guidelines. Ecolabelling schemes should give full consideration to the recommendations and advice by States, and, as appropriate, RFMOs.
6. In accordance with Article 5 of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and recognizing that all countries should have the same opportunities, and in view of the special conditions applying to developing countries and countries in transition and their important contribution to international fish trade, it is acknowledged that in order to benefit from applying ecolabelling schemes, States, relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and financial institutions should provide developing countries and countries in transition with financial and technical assistance to develop and maintain appropriate management arrangements that will allow them to participate in such schemes. Such assistance should also consider direct support towards the often high costs of accreditation and certification. Development agencies and donor institutions are encouraged to support FAO in facilitating financial and technical assistance to developing countries and countries in transition.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

7. For the purpose of these International Guidelines, the following terms and definitions apply.

Accreditation

8. Procedure by which a competent authority gives formal recognition that a qualified body or person is competent to carry out specific tasks. (Based on ISO/IEC Guide 2:1996, 12.11)

Accreditation body

9. Body that conducts and administers an accreditation system and grants accreditation. (Based on ISO Guide 2, 17.2)

Accreditation system

10. System that has its own rules of procedure and management for carrying out accreditation.
11. Note: accreditation of certification bodies is normally awarded following successful assessment and is followed by appropriate surveillance. (Based on ISO Guide 2, paragraph 17.1)

⁴ In these Guidelines, the reference to States includes the European Community in matters within its competence.

Arrangement

12. A cooperative mechanism established by two or more parties be they governmental, private or non-governmental entities.

Audit

13. A systematic and functionally independent examination to determine whether activities and related results comply with planned objectives. (Based on Codex Alimentarius, Principles for Food Import and Export Certification and Inspection, CAC/GL 20)

Certification

14. 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. (Based on ISO Guide 2, 15.1.2 and Principles for Food Import and Export Certification and Inspection, CAC/GL 20)

Certification body

15. Competent and recognized body that conducts certification. A certification body may oversee certification activities carried out on its behalf by other bodies. (Based on ISO Guide 2, 15.2)

Chain of custody

16. The set of measures which is designed to guarantee that the product put on the market and bearing the ecolabel logo is really a product coming from the certified fishery concerned. These measures should thus cover both the tracking/traceability of the product all along the processing, distribution and marketing chain, as well as the proper tracking of the documentation (and control of the quantity concerned).

Complaint

17. An objection by a person or body to a decision regarding accreditation, de-accreditation, certification or de-certification.

Conformity assessment

18. Any activity concerned with determining directly or indirectly that relevant requirements are fulfilled.
19. Note: typical examples of conformity assessment activities are sampling, testing and inspection; evaluation, verification and assurance of conformity (supplier's declaration, certification); registration, accreditation and approval as well as their combinations. (ISO Guide 2, 12.2)

Decision

20. Any resolution by an accreditation or certifying body or arrangement concerning the rights and obligations of a person or body.

Ecolabelling scheme

21. Ecolabelling schemes entitle a fishery product to bear 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.

Standard for certification

22. Document approved by a recognized organization or arrangement, that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for products or related processes and production methods, with which compliance is not mandatory under international trade rules. It may also include or deal exclusively with terminology, symbols, packaging, marking or labelling requirements as they apply to a product, process or production method. (Based on TBT Agreement, Annex 1, paragraph 2) In these guidelines, unless otherwise qualified, the word standard refers to a standard for certification. The standard for certification will include requirements, criteria and performance elements in a hierarchical arrangement. For each requirement, one or more substantive criteria should be defined. For each criterion, one or more performance elements should be provided for use in assessment.

Standard-setting organization or arrangement

23. Organization or arrangement that has recognized activities in standard setting. (Based on ISO Guide 2, paragraph 4.3)

Third party

24. Person or body that is recognized as being independent of the parties involved, as concerns the issue in question. (ISO/IEC Guide 2:1996)

Unit of certification

25. The “unit of certification” is the fishery for which ecolabelling certification is sought, as specified by the stakeholders who are seeking certification. The certification could encompass: the whole fishery, where a fishery refers to the activity of one particular gear-type or method leading to the harvest of one or more species; a sub-component of a fishery, for example a national fleet fishing a shared stock; or several fisheries operating on the same resources. The “stock under consideration” exploited by this fishery (unit of certification) may be one or more biological stocks as specified by the stakeholders for certification. The certification applies only to products derived from the “stock under consideration” (see paragraph 30). In assessing compliance with certification standards, the impacts on the “stock under consideration” of all the fisheries utilizing that “stock under consideration” over its entire area of distribution are to be considered.

MINIMUM SUBSTANTIVE REQUIREMENTS AND CRITERIA FOR ECOLABELS

Introduction

26. The following sets forth the minimum substantive requirements and criteria for assessing whether a fishery can be certified and an ecolabel awarded to a fishery. Ecolabelling schemes may apply additional or more stringent requirements and criteria related to sustainable use of the resources. The requirements and criteria presented below are to be based on and interpreted in accordance with the current suite of agreed international instruments addressing fisheries, in particular the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement and the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, as well as related documentation including the 2001 Reykjavik Declaration on Responsible Fisheries in the Marine Ecosystem.

27. Requirements are specified for each of three areas: the management systems, the fishery and associated “stock under consideration” for which certification is being sought, and consideration of serious impacts of the fishery on the ecosystem. Criteria and related measurable performance indicators and a corresponding monitoring system should be established in order to assess the conformity of the fishery concerned with the requirements and the criteria of the ecolabelling scheme. In developing and applying the criteria and assessing the conformity of the fishery with the standard of certification, the views and opinions of States, RFMOs and FAO should be fully considered.

Management systems

28. Requirement: The fishery is conducted under a management system which is based upon good practice and that ensures the satisfaction of the requirements and criteria described in Paragraph 29. The management system and the fishery operate in compliance with the requirements of local, national and international law and regulations, including the requirements of any regional fisheries management organization that manages the fisheries on the “stock under consideration”.
- 28.1 For the “stock under consideration” there are documented management approaches with a well based expectation that management will be successful taking into account uncertainty and imprecision.
- 28.2 There are objectives, and as necessary, management measures to address pertinent aspects of the ecosystem effects of fishing as per paragraph 31.
29. The following criteria will apply to management systems for any fisheries, but it must be recognized that special consideration needs to be given to small-scale fisheries with respect to the availability of data and with respect to the fact that management systems can differ substantially for different types and scales of fisheries (e.g. small scale through to large scale commercial fisheries).
- 29.1 Adequate data and/or information are collected, maintained and assessed in accordance with applicable international standards and practices for evaluation of the current state and trends of the stocks⁵ (see below: Methodological aspects). This can include relevant traditional, fisher or community knowledge, provided its validity can be objectively verified.
- 29.2 In determining suitable conservation and management measures, the best scientific evidence available is taken into account by the designated authority, as well as consideration of relevant traditional fisher or community knowledge, provided its validity can be objectively verified, in order to evaluate the current state of the “stock under consideration”⁶ in relation to, where appropriate, stock specific target and limit reference points.⁷
- 29.2bis: Taking due account of paragraph 32, for the “stock under consideration” the determination of suitable conservation and management measures should include or take account of:
- Total fishing mortality from all sources is considered in assessing the state of the “stock under consideration”, including discards, unobserved mortality, incidental mortality, unreported catches and catches in other fisheries.

⁵ After Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, Article 7.4.4.

⁶ Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, Articles 6.4 and 7.4.1.

⁷ Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, Article 7.5.3.

- Management targets are consistent with achieving maximum sustainable yield (MSY) (or a suitable proxy) on average, or a lesser fishing mortality if that is optimal in the circumstances of the fishery (e.g. multispecies fisheries) or to avoid severe adverse impacts on dependent predators.
 - The management system should specify limits or directions in key performance indicators (see 30.2), consistent with avoiding recruitment overfishing or other impacts that are likely to be irreversible or very slowly reversible, and specify the actions to be taken if the limits are approached or the desired directions are not achieved.
- 29.3 Similarly, data and information, including relevant traditional, fisher or community knowledge, provided its validity can be objectively verified, are used to identify adverse impacts of the fishery on the ecosystem, and timely scientific advice is provided on the likelihood and magnitude of identified impacts (see paragraph 31).
- 29.4 The designated authorities adopt and effectively implement appropriate measures for the conservation and sustainable use of the “stock under consideration” based on the data, information and scientific advice referred to in the preceding bullets⁸. Short-term considerations should not compromise the long-term conservation and sustainable use of fisheries resources.
- 29.5 An effective legal and administrative framework at the local, national or regional level, as appropriate, is established for the fishery⁹ and compliance is ensured through effective mechanisms for monitoring, surveillance, control and enforcement (see paragraph 6).¹⁰
- 29.6 In accordance with the Code of Conduct Article 7.5, the precautionary approach is being implemented to protect the “stock under consideration” and to preserve the aquatic environment. Inter alia this will require that the absence of adequate scientific information should not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation and management measures.¹¹ Further, relevant uncertainties are being taken into account through a suitable method of risk assessment. Appropriate reference points are determined and remedial actions to be taken if reference points are approached or exceeded are specified.¹²

“Stocks under consideration”

30. Requirement: The “stock under consideration” is not overfished, and is maintained at a level which promotes the objective of optimal utilization and maintains its availability for present and future generations¹³, taking into account that longer term changes in productivity can occur due to natural variability and/or impacts other than fishing. In the event that biomass drops well below such target levels, management measures (Code of Conduct Article 7.6) should allow for restoration within reasonable time frames of the stocks to such levels (see also paragraph 29.2.bis). The following criteria are applicable:

- 30.1 The “stock under consideration” is not overfished if it is above the associated limit reference point (or its proxy).

⁸ Based on Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, Article 7.1.1.

⁹ Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, Article 7.1.1.

¹⁰ Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, Article 7.1.7.

¹¹ Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, Article 7.5.1.

¹² Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, Article 7.5.2.

¹³ Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, Article 7.1.1.

- 30.2 If fishing mortality (or its proxy) is above the associated limit reference point, actions should be taken to decrease the fishing mortality (or its proxy) below that limit reference point.
- 30.3 The structure and composition of the “stock under consideration” which contribute to its resilience are taken into account.
- 30.4 In the absence of specific information on the “stock under consideration”, generic evidence based on similar stocks can be used for fisheries with low risk to that “stock under consideration”. However, the greater the risk the more specific evidence is necessary to ascertain the sustainability of intensive fisheries.

Ecosystem considerations

31. Requirement: Adverse impacts of the fishery on the ecosystem should be appropriately assessed and effectively addressed.¹⁴ Much greater scientific uncertainty is to be expected in assessing possible adverse ecosystem impacts of fisheries than in assessing the state of target stocks. This issue can be addressed by taking a “risk assessment/risk management approach”. For the purpose of development of ecolabelling schemes, the most probable adverse impacts should be considered, taking into account available scientific information, and traditional, fisher or community knowledge provided that its validity can be objectively verified. Those impacts that are likely to have serious consequences should be addressed. This may take the form of an immediate management response or further analysis of the identified risk. In this context, full recognition should be given to the special circumstances and requirements in developing countries and countries in transition, including financial and technical assistance, technology transfer, and training and scientific cooperation. The following criteria are to be interpreted in the context of avoiding high risk of severe adverse impacts:
 - 31.1 Non target catches, including discards, of stocks other than the “stock under consideration” are monitored and should not threaten these non-target stocks with serious risk of extinction; if serious risks of extinction arise, effective remedial action should be taken.
 - 31.2 The role of the “stock under consideration” in the food-web is considered, and if it is a key prey species in the ecosystem, management measures are in place to avoid severe adverse impacts on dependent predators.
 - 31.3 There is knowledge of the essential habitats for the “stock under consideration” and potential fishery impacts on them. Impacts on essential habitats and on habitats that are highly vulnerable to damage by the fishing gear involved are avoided, minimized or mitigated (Code of Conduct 7.2.2). In assessing fishery impacts, the full spatial range of the relevant habitat should be considered, not just that part of the spatial range that is potentially affected by fishing.
 - 31.4 In the absence of specific information on the ecosystem impacts of fishing for the unit of certification, generic evidence based on similar fishery situations can be used for fisheries with low risk of severe adverse impact. However, the greater the risk the more specific evidence is necessary to ascertain the adequacy of mitigation measures.

¹⁴ Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, Article 7.2.

Methodological aspects

Assessing current state and trends in target stocks

32. There are many ways in which state and trends in stocks may be evaluated, that fall short of the highly quantitative and data-demanding approaches to stock assessment that are often used for large scale fisheries in developed countries. Use of less elaborate methods for stock assessment should not preclude fisheries from possible certification for ecolabelling. However it should be noted that, to the extent that the application of such methods results in greater uncertainty about the state of the “stock under consideration”, more precautionary approaches to managing fisheries on such resources will be required which may necessitate lower levels of utilization of the resource. There is a variety of management measures commonly used in small scale or low value fisheries that nonetheless can achieve quite adequate levels of protection for stocks in the face of uncertainty about the state of the resource. A past record of good management performance could be considered as supporting evidence of the adequacy of the management measures and the management system.

PROCEDURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS

Introduction

33. Drawing heavily on available guides, especially those produced by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), this chapter of the guidelines addresses the three principal procedural and institutional matters that any ecolabelling scheme should encompass: (1) the setting of certification standards, (2) the accreditation of independent certifying bodies, and (3) the certification that a fishery and the product chain of custody are in conformity with the required standard and procedures. The certification standard encapsulates the objectives that are pursued by a scheme. It is usually expressed in specific criteria that a product and/or the production process and methods would have to meet to get certified.
34. Accreditation of a certification body seeks to verify that the body is appropriate and capable for the certifying tasks. It would have to ascertain that the certification body is neutral and independent and has the technical and financial capacity to perform a certification of the conformity of a fishery with the established standard. Similar requirements apply to the accreditation body itself. The accreditation body needs to have the technical and financial capacity to undertake accreditation tasks, and perform these tasks in a neutral, non-discriminatory and independent manner.
35. The above three steps in the setting up of an ecolabelling scheme would normally have to occur sequentially in the same order whereby (2) accreditation and (3) certification would remain regular activities of the scheme once established. The scheme may also, at a regular but longer time interval, review and revise the certification standard in view of new knowledge and experiences.

Structure

36. The procedural guidelines are presented in three parts as follows:
- **Guidelines for the Setting of Standards of Sustainable Fisheries;**
 - **Guidelines for Accreditation;** and
 - **Guidelines for Certification.** Each of these three parts is further subdivided into four sections: i) **Purpose**, ii) **Normative references**, iii) **Functions and structure**; and iv) **Requirements**. The Requirements are the minimum requirements that a body, person or arrangement should meet to be recognized as competent and reliable in its domain. The **Principles** listed earlier in these

guidelines apply equally to procedural and institutional aspects of marine fisheries ecolabelling schemes.

Options for governance structures

37. There are various options for the governance of an ecolabelling scheme. The initiative for a scheme could be taken by a government, an intergovernmental organization, a non-governmental organization, or a private industry association. There are also various options for the geographical range of a scheme. It could be national, regional or international in scope.
38. The owner of a scheme may not necessarily be directly engaged in its operational affairs. These may be handled by an organization or arrangement which has been specifically set up for this purpose. It could be public, non-governmental or private. The owner of the scheme may lay down rules and regulations under which the ecolabelling arrangement or body is required to operate. The body may implement one ecolabelling scheme for one specific sector (e.g. fisheries) or may have responsibilities for various sectors (textiles; paper; etc.)
39. The owner of an ecolabelling scheme should engage a separate independent specialist accreditation body to take on the task of accreditation of certification bodies on its behalf. The accreditation body could be private, public or an autonomous body governed by public service rules.

Guidelines for the Setting of Standards of Sustainable Fisheries

Purpose

40. The setting of standards is among the most critical tasks of any ecolabelling scheme of products from sustainable marine capture fisheries. The standards reflect the objectives for sustainable fisheries that are being pursued through the scheme. Standards comprise quantitative and qualitative indicators of the governance system or management regime of a fishery as well as of its outcome in terms of sustainable fisheries and conservation of marine fishery resources and related ecosystems.
41. Standards should not distort global markets and should not create unnecessary obstacles to international trade.

Normative basis

42. The normative basis of standards of sustainable fisheries is given by international fisheries instruments and applicable national legislation. Relevant international fisheries instruments include, inter alia, the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement and the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.
43. In procedural terms, the normative basis for standard development includes the following:
 - ISO/IEC Guide 59 Code of good practice for standardization. 1994.
 - WTO TBT, ANNEX 3 Code of Good Practice for the Preparation, Adoption and Application of Standards.
 - FAO. 1998. Report of the Technical Consultation on the Feasibility of Developing Non-Discriminatory Technical Guidelines for Eco-Labeling of Products from Marine Capture Fisheries, Rome, Italy, 21-23 October 1998. FAO Fisheries Report No. 594.
 - ISEAL. P020 Guidance on ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards. Public Draft. July 2003.
 - ISEAL. Code of Good Practice for Voluntary Process and Production Method Standard-setting Procedures. Public Draft. 1 March 2003.

Functions and organizational structure

44. A standard setting organization or arrangement is assigned with the tasks of setting, reviewing, revising, assessing, verifying and approving standards. These tasks can be fulfilled through a specialized standard-setting body or through another suitable arrangement.
45. Where there is no standard-setting body, the organizational structure of a standard-setting arrangement should include, inter alia, a technical committee of independent experts and a consultation forum whose mandates are established.

Requirements

Transparency

46. Transparency in the development of standards is necessary to guarantee and to ensure consistency with relevant international standards and to facilitate access, and participation of all interested parties, especially those of developing countries and countries in transition.
47. Standard-setting organizations or arrangements should carry out their activities in a transparent fashion and following written rules of procedure. Procedural rules should contain a mechanism for the impartial resolution of any substantive or procedural disputes about the handling of standard-setting matters.
48. A standard is under preparation (under review or under revision) from the moment a decision has been taken to develop, review or revise a standard until that standard has been adopted.
49. Once a standard has been adopted, it should be promptly published and should be accessible on the Internet.
50. At least once every six months, the standard-setting organization or arrangement should publish a work programme containing:
 - its name;
 - its address;
 - the list of standards currently under preparation;
 - the list of standards currently under reviewing or revision;
 - the list of standards which were adopted in the preceding period.
51. A notice of existence of the work programme should be published in a national or, as may be, regional or international publication of standardization activities and/or should be accessible on the Internet whenever possible.
52. On the request of any interested party, the standardizing organization or arrangement should promptly provide, or arrange to provide a copy of its standard setting procedures, most recent work programme, draft standard or final standard.
53. Translations into English, French or Spanish of standard setting procedures, most recent work programme, draft standards or final standards should be provided upon request, within the means of the standard-setting body or arrangement.

Participation by interested parties

54. Standard-setting arrangements or organizations should ensure balanced participation by independent technical experts and by representatives of interested parties in the standard development, revision and approval process. Development of standards of sustainable fisheries should, wherever possible, include representatives of fisheries management authorities, the fishing industry, fishworkers organizations, the scientific community, environmental interest groups, fish processors, traders and retailers as well as consumer associations.

55. Interested parties should be associated in the standard-setting tasks through an appropriate consultation forum or be made aware of an appropriate alternative mechanisms by which they can participate. Where more than one forum is designated, coordination requirements applicable to them should be determined.
56. Standardizing arrangements or organizations should have written procedures to guide decision-making.

Notification provisions

57. Before adopting a standard, the standardizing organization or arrangement should allow a period of at least 60 days for the submission of comments on the draft standard by interested parties. No later than the start of the comment period, the standardizing organization or arrangement should publish a notice announcing the period for commenting in a national or, as may be, regional or international publication of standardization activities and/or on the Internet.
58. The standardizing organization or arrangement should take into account, in further processing of the standard, the comments received during the period for commenting. The reply should include an explanation why a deviation from relevant national or international standards is necessary.

Keeping of records

59. Proper records of standards and development activity should be prepared and maintained. The standard setting organization or arrangement should identify a central focal point for standards-related enquiries and for submission of comments. Contact information for this focal point should be made easily available including on the Internet.

Review and revision of standards and of standard setting procedures

60. Standards should be reviewed at regular published intervals and, if appropriate, revised following such reviews. Certified fisheries should be given a period of at least three years to come into compliance with the revised standards.
61. Proposals for revisions can be submitted by any interested party and should be considered by the standard-setting organization or arrangement through a consistent and transparent process.
62. The procedural and methodological approach for setting standards should also be updated in the light of scientific and technical progress and of the experience gained in standard setting of sustainable fisheries.

Validation of standards

63. In developing and revising standards, an appropriate procedure should be put in place to validate the standard vis-à-vis the minimum requirements for sustainable marine fisheries as laid out in these guidelines. Validation is also required to ensure that standards do not encompass criteria or requirements that are of no relevance for sustainable fisheries and could cause unnecessary barriers of trade or mislead the consumer.

Guidelines for Accreditation

Purpose

64. Accreditation provides assurance that certification bodies responsible for conducting conformity assessments with sustainability standards and chain of custody requirements in fisheries are competent to carry out such tasks. By awarding accreditation to a certification body, accreditation bodies provide

assurance that the latter is able to assess and certify that a certain fish or fishery product comes from a fishery that conforms with the established standard of sustainability.

Normative reference

65. ISO Guide 61. General Requirements for assessment and accreditation of certification/registration bodies. 1996.

Functions and structure

66. Accreditation is carried out on the basis of a system that has its own rules and management, **i.e. an accreditation** system. The tasks of granting accreditation following successful assessment should be undertaken by competent accreditation bodies. In order to be recognized as competent and reliable in undertaking the assessment in a nondiscriminatory, impartial and accurate manner, an accreditation body should fulfill, inter alia, the following requirements.

Requirements

Non-discrimination

67. Access to the services of the accreditation body should be open to all certification entities irrespective of their country of residence. Access should not be conditional upon the size of the applicant body or membership in any association or group, nor should accreditation be conditional upon the number of certification bodies already accredited.
68. Full recognition should be given to the special circumstances and requirements of certification bodies in developing countries and countries in transition including financial and technical assistance, technology transfer, and training and scientific cooperation.

Independence, impartiality and transparency

69. The accreditation body should be independent and impartial. In order to be impartial and independent, the accreditation body should:
 - be transparent about its organizational structure and the financial and other kinds of support it receives from public or private entities;
 - be independent from vested interests, together with its senior executive and staff;
 - be free from any commercial, financial and other pressures which might influence the results of the accreditation process;
 - ensure that decision on accreditation is taken by a person(s) who has (ve) not participated in the assessment;
 - not delegate authority for granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending or withdrawing accreditation to an outside person or body.

Human and financial resources

70. The accreditation body should have adequate financial resources and stability for the operation of an accreditation system and should maintain appropriate arrangements to cover liabilities arising from its operations and/or activities.
71. The accreditation body should employ a sufficient number of personnel having the necessary education, training, technical knowledge and experience for performing accreditation functions in fisheries.

72. Information on the relevant qualifications, training and experience of each member of the personnel involved in the accreditation process should be maintained by the accreditation body. Record of training and experience should be kept up to date.
73. When an accreditation body decides to subcontract work related to accreditation to an external body or person, the requirements for such an external body should be no less than for the accreditation body itself. A properly documented contractual or equivalent agreement covering the arrangements including confidentiality and conflict of interests, should be drawn up.

Accountability and reporting

74. The accreditation body should be a legal entity and should have clear and effective procedures for handling applications for accreditation procedures. In particular, the accreditation body should maintain and provide to the applicants and accredited entities:
 - a detailed description of the assessment and accreditation procedure;
 - the documents containing the requirements for accreditation;
 - the documents describing the rights and duties of accredited bodies.
75. A properly documented contractual or equivalent agreement describing the responsibilities of each party should be drafted.
76. The accreditation body should have:
 - defined objectives and commitment to quality;
 - procedures and instructions for quality documented in a quality manual;
 - an established effective and appropriate system for quality.
77. The accreditation body should conduct periodic internal audits covering all procedures in a planned and systematic manner to verify that the accreditation system is implemented and effective.
78. The accreditation body may receive external audits on relevant aspects. The results of the audit should be accessible by the public.
79. Qualified personnel, attached to the accreditation body's team, should be nominated by the accreditation body to conduct the assessment against all applicable accreditation requirements.
80. Personnel nominated for the assessments should provide the accreditation body with a report of its findings as to the conformity of the body assessed to all of the accreditation requirements. The report should provide sufficiently comprehensive information such as:
 - the qualification, experience and authority of the staff encountered;
 - the adequacy of the internal organization and procedures adopted by the certification body to give confidence in its services;
 - the actions taken to correct identified nonconformities including, where applicable, those identified at previous assessments.
81. The accreditation body should have policy and procedures for retaining records of what happened during the assessment visit for a period consistent with its contractual, legal or other obligations. The records should demonstrate that the accreditation procedures have been effectively fulfilled, particularly with respect to application forms, assessment reports and other documents relating to granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending or withdrawing accreditation. The records should be identified, managed and disposed of in such a way as to ensure the integrity of the process and confidentiality of the information.

Resolution of complaints concerning accreditation of certifying bodies¹⁵

82. The accreditation body should have a written policy and procedures for dealing with any complaints in relation to any aspect of the accreditation or de-accreditation of certifying bodies.
83. These procedures should include establishment, on an ad hoc basis as appropriate, of an independent and impartial committee to respond to a complaint. If possible, the committee should attempt to resolve any complaints through discussion or conciliation. If this is not possible, the committee should provide a written ruling to the accreditation body, which should transmit it to the other party or parties involved.
84. The accreditation body should:
 - a. keep a record of all complaints, and remedial actions relative to accreditation;
 - b. take appropriate corrective and preventive action;
 - c. assess the effectiveness of remedial actions;
 - d. safeguard confidentiality of information obtained during the investigation and resolution of complaints.
85. Information on procedures for handling complaints concerning accreditation should be made publicly available.
86. The above does not exclude recourse to other forms of legal and administrative processes as provided for in national legislation or international law.

Confidentiality

87. The accreditation body should have adequate arrangements, consistent with applicable laws, to safeguard confidentiality of the information obtained in the course of its accreditation activities at all levels of its organization, including committees and external bodies acting on its behalf.
88. Where the law requires information to be disclosed to a third party, the body should be informed of the information provided, as permitted by the law. Otherwise information about an applicant certification body should not be disclosed to a third party without a written consent of the body.

Maintenance and extension of accreditation

89. The accreditation body should have arrangements to ensure that an accredited certification body informs it without delay of changes in any aspects of its status or operation.
90. The accreditation body should have procedures to conduct reassessments in the event of changes significantly affecting the capabilities, or scope of accredited activities of the accredited body or the conformance with any other relevant criteria of competence specified by the accreditation body.
91. Accreditation should be re-assessed at sufficiently close intervals to verify that the accredited certification body continues to comply with the accreditation requirements. The periodicity for carrying out reassessments should not exceed five years.

Suspension and withdrawal of accreditation

92. The accreditation body should specify the conditions under which accreditation may be suspended or withdrawn, partially or in total, for all or part of the scope of accreditation.

¹⁵ Procedures by the accreditation body on the resolution of complaints and appeals concerning certification are provided in the following chapter on Guidelines for Certification.

Change in the accreditation requirements

93. The accreditation body should give due notice of any changes it intends to make in its requirements for accreditation.
94. It should take account of views expressed by interested parties before deciding on the precise form and effective date of the changes.
95. Following a decision on, and publication of, the changed requirements, it should verify that each accredited body carries out any necessary adjustments to its procedures within such time as, in the opinion of the accreditation body, is reasonable.
96. Special considerations should be given to accredited bodies in developing countries and countries in transition.

Proprietor or licensee of an accreditation symbol or a logo¹⁶

97. The accreditation body which is proprietor or licensee of a symbol or logo, intended for use under its accreditation programme, should have documented procedures describing its use.
98. The accreditation body should not allow use of its accreditation mark or logo in any way which implies that the accreditation body itself approved a product, service or system certified by a certification body.
99. The accreditation body should take suitable action to deal with incorrect references to the accreditation system or misleading use of accreditation logos found in advertisements, catalogues, etc.

Guidelines for Certification

Purpose

100. Certification is the procedure by which a third party gives written or equivalent assurance that a fishery conforms with the relevant standard and that a proper chain of custody is in place. Certification is an integral and indispensable part of any ecolabelling scheme of products from sustainable marine fisheries. It provides assurance to buyers and consumers that a certain fish or fishery product comes from a fishery that conforms with the established standard for a sustainable fishery. Impartial certification based on an objective assessment of all relevant factors ensures that ecolabels convey truthful information. This is a necessary condition for the ecolabelling scheme to attain its objectives.

Scope

101. There are two types of certification, certification of the fishery itself and certification of the chain of custody between the time the fish is harvested and the time the fish or fishery product is sold to the final consumer. Separate certificates may be issued for the fishery and for the chain of custody.
102. Two types of assessments are required for certification:
 - a. conformity assessment of whether a fishery conforms with the standard and related certification criteria;
 - b. chain of custody assessment of whether adequate measures are in place to identify fish from a certified fishery at subsequent stages of fish processing, distribution and marketing.
103. Fish and fishery products that are labelled to indicate to the consumer their origin from a sustainable fishery require both types of assessments and certificates.

¹⁶ The provisions on the use and control of a certification claim, symbol or logo is addressed in the Guidelines for Certification.

Normative references

104. ISO Guide 62, General Requirements for bodies operating assessment and certification/registration of quality systems. 1996.
105. ISO/IEC Guide 65, General requirements for bodies operating product certification systems. 1996.
106. WTO. Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade, Article 5.

Functions and structure

107. The tasks of carrying out conformity and chain of custody assessments should be undertaken by recognized and accredited certification bodies. In order to be recognized as competent and reliable in undertaking the assessments in a non-discriminatory, impartial and accurate manner, a certification body has to fulfill, inter alia, the following requirements.

Requirements

Independence and impartiality

108. The certification body should be legally and financially independent from the owner of the ecolabelling scheme.
109. The certification body and its assessment and certifying staff, whether directly employed by the certification body or sub-contracted by it, should have no commercial, financial or any other interest in the fishery or chain of custody to be assessed other than for its certification services.
110. The certification body should ensure that different personnel conduct the certification decision and the certification assessments.
111. The certifying body should not delegate authority for granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending or withdrawing certification to an outside person or body.

Non-discrimination

112. Access to the services of the certification body should be open to all types of fisheries whether managed by a regional, governmental, parastatal or non-governmental fisheries management organizations or arrangement. Access to certification should not be conditional upon the size or scale of the fishery nor should certification be conditional upon the number of fisheries already certified.

Human and financial resources

113. The certification body should have adequate financial resources and stability for the operation of a certification system and should maintain appropriate arrangements to cover liabilities arising from its operations and/or activities.
114. The certification body should employ a sufficient number of personnel having the necessary education, training, technical knowledge and experience for performing conformity and/or chain of custody assessments in fisheries.
115. Information on the relevant qualifications, training and experience of each member of the personnel involved in the certification process should be maintained by the certification body. Record of training and experience should be kept to date.
116. When a certification body decides to sub-contract work related to certification to an external body or person, the requirements for such an external body should be no less than for the certification body itself. A properly documented contractual or equivalent agreement covering the arrangements including confidentiality and conflict of interests, should be drawn up.

Accountability and reporting

117. The certification body should be a legal entity and have clear and effective procedures for handling applications for certification of the fishery and/or the chain of custody. In particular, the certification body should maintain and provide to the applicants and certified entities:
 - a detailed description of the assessment and certification procedure;
 - the documents containing the requirements for certification;
 - the documents describing the rights and duties of certified entities.
118. A properly documented contractual or equivalent agreement describing the rights and duties of each party should be drafted between the certification body and its clients.
119. The certification body should have:
 - defined objectives and commitment to quality;
 - policies and procedures for quality documented in a quality manual;
 - an established effective, appropriate system for quality.
120. The certification body should conduct periodic internal audits covering all procedures in a planned and systematic manner to verify that the certification system is implemented and effective.
121. The certification body may receive external audits on relevant aspects. The results of the audits should be accessible by the public.
122. The certification body should have a policy and procedures for retaining records for a period consistent with its contractual, legal or other obligations. The records should demonstrate that the certification procedures have been effectively fulfilled, particularly with respect to application forms, assessment reports and other documents relating to granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending or withdrawing certification. The records should be identified, managed and disposed of in such a way as to ensure the integrity of the process and confidentiality of the information.
123. The certification body should ensure that, in the event of changes, all affected parties are notified.
124. The certification body should make appropriate documents available on request.

Certification fees

125. The certification body should maintain a written fee structure for applicants and certified fisheries which should be available on request. In establishing the fee structure and in determining the specific fee of a certification assessment, the certification body should take into account, inter alia, the requirements for accurate and truthful assessments, the scale, size and complexity of the fishery or chain of custody, the requirement of non-discrimination of any client, and the special circumstances and requirements of developing countries and countries in transition.

Confidentiality

126. The certification body should have adequate arrangements, consistent with applicable laws, to safeguard confidentiality of the information obtained in the course of its certification at all levels of its organization.
127. Where the law requires information to be disclosed to a third party, the client should be informed of the information provided, as permitted by the law. Otherwise information about a particular product or fishery should not be disclosed to a third party without a written consent of the client.

Maintenance of certification

128. The certification body should carry out periodic surveillance and monitoring at sufficiently close intervals to verify that certified fisheries and/or certified chains of custody continue to comply with the certification requirements.
129. The certification body should require the client to notify it promptly of any intended changes to the management of the fishery, or the chain of custody, or other changes which may affect conformity.
130. The certificate body should have procedures to conduct reassessments in the event of changes significantly affecting the status and management of the certified fishery, or the chain of custody, or if analysis of a complaint or any other information indicates that the certified fishery and/or the chain of custody no longer comply with the required standard and/or related requirements of the certification body.
131. The period of validity of a certificate should not exceed five years in the case of a fishery and three years in the case of the chain of custody. The assessment required for re-certification should give particular attention to changes that have been made in the conduct of the fishery or in the management practices, and on any new conditions that changes in standards might require.

Renewal of certification

132. On the basis of prior regular monitoring and auditing exercises and a full reassessment, the validity of certification can be renewed up to the time limits of five years in the case of a fishery and three years in the case of the chain of custody.

Suspension and withdrawal of certification

133. The certification body should specify the conditions under which certification may be suspended or withdrawn, partially or in total, for all or part of the scope of certification.
134. The certification body should require that a certified fishery and/or chain of custody upon suspension or withdrawal of its certification (however determined), discontinues use of all advertising matter that contains any reference thereto and returns any certification documents as required by the certification body. The certification body should also be responsible for informing the public about the withdrawal or suspension after the appeals process is exhausted.

Maintaining the chain of custody

135. Chain of custody procedures are implemented at the key points of transfer. At each point of transfer, which may vary according to the type of fish or fishery product traded, all certified fish or fishery products must be identified and/or segregated from non-certified fish or fishery products.
136. The certification body should ensure that a recipient of certified fish or fishery products should maintain pertinent chain of custody records, including all records relating to shipment, receipt and invoicing.
137. The certification body should have documented procedures defining auditing methods and periodicity of audits. The periodicity of audits should depend on:
 - the technical processes undertaken at the point of transfer;
 - such risk factors as the value and volume of the certified output.

138. Any breach or apparent breach of the chain of custody identified during an inspection/audit should be explicitly recorded in the inspection/audit report together with:
 - an explanation of the factors that allowed the breach to occur;
 - an explanation of the corrective actions taken or required to ensure that a similar breach does not re-occur.
139. All inspection/audit records should be incorporated into a written inspection/audit report that is available to pertinent parties and filed at the certification body office.
140. The inspection/audit report should contain, as a minimum:
 - the date of the inspection/audit;
 - the name(s) of the person(s) responsible for the report;
 - the names and addresses of the sites inspected/audited;
 - the scope of the inspection/audit;
 - comments on the conformity of the client with the chain of custody requirements.

Use and control of a certification claim, symbol or a logo

141. The certification body, accreditation body or owner of the ecolabelling scheme should have documented procedures describing the requirements, restrictions or limitations on the use of symbols or logos indicating that a fish or fishery product comes from a sustainable fishery. In particular, the ecolabelling scheme is required to ensure that symbols or logos should not relate to claims that are of no relevance for sustainable fisheries and could cause barriers of trade or mislead the consumer.
142. The certification body, accreditation body or owner of the ecolabelling scheme should not issue any license to affix its mark/claim/logo or issue any certificate for any fishery or fishery product unless it is assured that the product bearing it is in fact produced from certified sources.
143. The certification body, accreditation body or owner of the ecolabelling scheme is responsible that no fraudulent or misleading use is made with the use and display of its certification mark and logos.
144. If the certification body, accreditation body or owner of the ecolabelling scheme confers the right to use a symbol or logo to indicate certification, the fishery and any fish or fishery product from such fishery may use the specified symbol or logo only as authorized in writing by it.
145. The certification body, accreditation body or owner of the ecolabelling scheme should take suitable action to deal with incorrect references to the certification system or misleading use of symbols and logos found in advertisements, catalogues, etc.
146. All certificates issued should include:
 - the name and address of the accreditation body or owner of the ecolabelling scheme;
 - the name and address of the certification body;
 - the name and address of the certification holder;
 - the effective date of issue of the certificate;
 - the substance of the certificate;
 - the term for which the certification is valid;
 - signature of the issuing officer.

Resolution of complaints and appeals

147. The accreditation body or owner of the ecolabelling scheme should have a written policy and procedures, applicable to accredited certification bodies, for dealing with any complaints and appeals from involved parties in relation to any aspect of certification or de-certification. Such procedures should be timely, clearly define the scope and nature of appeals that will be considered and should be open only to parties involved in, or consulted, during the assessment. Costs of appeals should be borne by the appellant.
148. These procedures should include an independent and impartial committee to respond to any complaint. If possible, the committee should attempt to resolve any complaint through discussion or conciliation. If this is not possible, the committee should provide a written finding to the certification body, accreditation body or owner of the ecolabelling scheme as appropriate, which should transmit the finding to the party or parties involved.
149. The above does not exclude recourse to other forms of legal and administrative processes as provided for in national legislation or international law.

Keeping of records on complaints and appeals concerning certification

150. The certification body, accreditation body or promoter/owner of the ecolabelling scheme should:
 - keep a record of all complaints and appeals, and remedial actions related to certification;
 - take appropriate corrective and preventive action;
 - assess the effectiveness of remedial actions;
 - safeguard confidentiality of information obtained during the investigation and resolution of complaints and appeals concerning certification.
151. Information on procedures for handling of complaints and appeals concerning certification should be made publicly available.

APPENDIX 2

Draft guidelines for certification in aquaculture

INTRODUCTION

These draft guidelines on aquaculture certification are the result of 6 expert workshops and/or consultative fora organized by FAO in collaboration with the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia (NACA) and various host countries, during 2007–2008, respectively in Bangkok (Thailand, 27–30 March 2007), Fortaleza (Brazil, 31 July – 3 August, 2007), Cochin (India, 23 November 2007), London (U.K, 28–29 February 2007), Beijing (China, 6–8 May 2008) and Silver Spring (Washington D.C., USA, 29–30 May 2008). The workshops held in Bangkok, Fortaleza, Cochin and Beijing focused on Asia and Latin America as major aquaculture producing regions of the world; whereas the two workshops held respectively in London and in Silver Spring focused on Europe and North America as major global seafood markets and included many diverse stakeholders from the aquaculture supply chain, in particular representatives of importers, retailers and processors who showed a keen interest in the development of guidelines for aquaculture certification.

At the conclusion of each workshop, the draft guidelines were revised by the FAO Secretariat taking into consideration the relevant views and concerns of the participants, as well as comments received from the public. All draft versions of the guidelines were circulated to over 300 individuals worldwide for comments and suggestions.

Three additional FAO consultative processes at the Government levels were undertaken to finalize these guidelines. They took place during the fourth session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries: Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (COFI:AQ) in Puerto Varas, Chile (6–10 October 2008), the FAO technical consultation (Rome, 15–19 February 2010) and the 5th session of the COFI:AQ (Phuket, Thailand, 27 September – 1 October 2010). The latter session of COFI:AQ adopted the below guidelines on aquaculture certification and requested the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) to adopt them at its 29th session to be held in Rome, Italy, during the period 31 January – 4 February 2011.

In addition to the text of the draft guidelines on aquaculture certification reported below, readers are advised to consult the reports of the above mentioned workshops and consultative fora on the dedicated website (<http://www.fao.org/fishery/about/cofi/aquaculture/en>) to take advantage of the discussions that took place and the background presentations and information that were made available.

BACKGROUND

1. Global production from aquaculture is growing substantially and provides increasingly significant volumes of fish and other aquatic food for human consumption, a trend that is projected to continue. Although aquaculture growth has potential to meet the growing need for aquatic foods and to contribute to food security, poverty reduction and, more broadly, to achieving sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals, it is increasingly recognised that improved management of the sector is necessary to achieve this potential.

2. Aquaculture is a highly diverse production sector comprising many different systems, sites, facilities, practices, processes and products, conducted under a wide range of political, social, economic and environmental conditions.
3. Efforts to promote aquaculture development should recognize the special concerns and interests of resource-poor small-scale aquaculture farmers, and encourage corporate social responsibility in engaging small-scale farmers and other small-scale stakeholder in market chains. Certification schemes should not create obstacles to trade or exclude small-scale farmer aquaculture products from market chains.
4. Aquaculture production and trade have increased, but concerns have emerged regarding possible negative impacts on the environment, communities and consumers. Solutions to many of these issues have been identified and addressed. The application of certification in aquaculture is now viewed as a potential market-based tool for minimising potential negative impacts and increasing societal and consumer benefits and confidence in the process of aquaculture production and marketing.
5. Although aquatic animal health and food safety issues of aquaculture have been subjected to certification and international compliance for many years, aspects of animal welfare, environmental issues and socio-economic aspects have not been subjected to compliance or certification.

SCOPE

6. These guidelines provide guidance for the development, organization and implementation of credible aquaculture certification schemes.
7. The guidelines consider a range of issues which should be considered relevant for the certification in aquaculture, including: a) animal health and welfare, b) food safety, c) environmental integrity and d) socio-economic aspects associated with aquaculture.
8. Sustainable development of aquaculture depends on three factors, social, economic and environmental sustainability, all of which have to be addressed proportionally.
9. There is an extensive national and international legal framework in place for various aspects of aquaculture and its value chain, covering such issues as aquatic animal disease control, food safety and conservation of biodiversity. Legislation is particularly strong for processing, export and import of aquatic products. Recognized competent authorities are normally empowered to verify compliance with mandatory national and international legislation. Other issues such as environmental sustainability and socio-economic aspects may not be covered in such a binding manner and open the opportunity for voluntary certification as a means to demonstrate that a particular aquaculture system is managed responsibly.
10. Credible aquaculture certification schemes consist of three main components: (i) standards; (ii), accreditation, and (iii) certification. The guidelines therefore cover:
 - standard setting processes required to develop and review certification standards;
 - accreditation systems needed to provide formal recognition to a qualified body to carry out certification;
 - certification bodies required to verify compliance with certification standards.
11. Developing and implementing a certification scheme may be undertaken by any entity qualified to do so in accordance with the requirements of these guidelines. Such an entity can include, *inter alia*, a government, an intergovernmental organization, a non-governmental organization, private sector group (e.g. a

producer or trade association), a civil society arrangements, or consortium comprising some or all of these different stakeholder groups, as direct users of the guidelines. The guidelines provide information on the institutional and organizational arrangements for aquaculture certification, including governance requirements, particularly to ensure that conflicts of interest are avoided.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

12. For the purpose of these international guidelines on aquaculture certification, the following terms and definitions apply. These terms and definitions come from or were derived from existing recognized material (e.g. FAO¹, ISO², Codex Alimentarius³, OIE⁴, FAO Ecolabelling Guidelines, FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (the Code) and many others), and stakeholder inputs received during the process of developing the guidelines.

Accreditation

13. Procedure by which a competent authority consistent with applicable law gives formal recognition that a qualified body or person is competent to carry out specific tasks. (Modified from ISO/IEC Guide 2:1996, 12.11)

Accreditation body

14. Body that conducts and administers an accreditation system and grants accreditation. (ISO Guide 2, 17.2)

Accreditation system

15. System that has its own rules of procedure and management for carrying out accreditation. Accreditation of certification bodies is normally awarded following successful assessment and is followed by appropriate surveillance. (ISO Guide 2, para. 17.1)

Aquaculture

16. The farming of aquatic organisms involving intervention in the rearing process to enhance production and the individual or corporate ownership of the stock being cultivated. (Modified from the FAO Glossary of Aquaculture – <http://www.fao.org/fi/glossary/aquaculture/>)

Audit

17. A systematic and functionally independent examination to determine whether activities and related results comply with planned objectives. (Codex Alimentarius, Principles for Food Import and Export Certification and Inspection, CAC/GL 20)

Certification

18. Procedure by which certification body or entity 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 audit activities that may include continuous audit in the production chain. (Modified from ISO Guide 2, 15.1.2; Principles for Food Import and Export Certification and Inspection, CAC/GL 20; Ecolabelling Guidelines)

¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

² International Standards Organization.

³ Codex Alimentarius Commission.

⁴ World Organisation for Animal Health.

Certification body or entity

19. Competent and recognized body, governmental or non-governmental, that conducts certification and audit activities. A certification body may oversee certification activities carried out on its behalf by other bodies. (Based on ISO Guide 2, 15.2)

Certification scheme

20. The processes, systems, procedures and activities related to standard setting, accreditation and implementation of certification. (Adapted from the Report of the First Expert Workshop on Aquaculture Certification held in Bangkok, Thailand. March 2007)

Chain of custody

21. The set of measures that verify that a certified product originates from a certified aquaculture production chain, and is not mixed with non-certified products. Chain of custody verification measures should cover the tracking/traceability of the product all along the production, processing, distribution and marketing chain, the tracking of documentation, and the quantity concerned. (Form FAO Fisheries Ecolabelling Guidelines)

Conformity assessment

22. Any activity concerned with determining directly or indirectly that relevant requirements are fulfilled. (Modified from ISO Guide 2, 12.2)

Group certification

23. Certification for a group of small-scale aquaculture farmers or aquaculture farmer cooperative who has key characteristics in common in term of nature of production, proximity of farm location, common marketing as a group. The group has an Internal Control System to ensure compliance with the standards by all members of the group.

Small-scale aquaculture

24. Aquaculture farms with small production volume, and/or relatively small surface area, mainly without permanent labour, and typically lacking technical and financial capacity to support individual certification. (Adapted from the Report of the First Expert Workshop on Aquaculture Certification held in Bangkok, Thailand. March 2007)

Standard

25. An approved document that provides for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for products or related processes and production methods, with which compliance is not mandatory under international trade rules. It may also include or deal exclusively with terminology, symbols, packaging, marking or labelling requirements as they apply to a product, process or production method. A public sector standard is prepared by the international standardization community, and is always approved by an officially recognised body. A private sector standard is prepared by a private body and is not in all cases approved by an officially recognised body. (Based on TBT Agreement, Annex 1, para. 2)

Standard setting body, organization or entity

26. Organization or entity that has recognized activities in standard setting. (Based on ISO Guide 2, para. 4.3)

Third party

27. Person or body that is recognized as being independent of the parties involved, as concerns the issue in question, and involves no conflict of interest. (ISO/IEC Guide 2:1996; Ecolabelling Guidelines)

Traceability

28. The ability to follow the movement of a product of aquaculture or inputs such as feed and seed, through specified stage(s) of production, processing and distribution. (Adapted from Codex)

Unit of certification

29. The scale or extent of the aquaculture operation(s) assessed and monitored for compliance. The unit of certification could consist of a single farm, production unit or other aquaculture facility. The certification unit could also consist of a group or cluster of farms that should be assessed and monitored collectively.

Veterinary Medicinal Products

30. Any substance or combination of substances presented for treating or preventing disease in animals or which may be administered to animals with a view to making a medical diagnosis or to restoring, correcting or modifying physiological functions in animals. (EU Directive 2001/82/EC)

APPLICATION

31. These guidelines for voluntary certification schemes are to be interpreted and applied in their entirety in a manner consistent with national laws and regulations and, where they exist, international agreements.
32. Entities responsible for new and existing aquaculture certification schemes should undertake to assess, verify and document that these certification schemes have been developed and are being implemented in accordance with the guidelines. If there are deficiencies in the way an existing scheme was developed and/or in how it is being implemented, the entities responsible for the functions (i.e. standard setting, accreditation, or certification) should act accordingly to define and implement a corrective action plan. When this is completed, the entities should verify and document that the scheme is in accordance with the guidelines. There should not be any conflict of interest among the entities involved.
33. If the entities responsible for a private aquaculture certification scheme do not provide credible assurance that the scheme has been developed and is being implemented in accordance with the guidelines, stakeholder groups (especially those being certified under the scheme) may use these guidelines to have the scheme evaluated by a body with appropriate expertise or undertake such evaluation themselves. See chapter on Institutional and Procedural Requirements for details.
34. The evaluation would use these guidelines to assess whether a certification scheme is developed and implemented in accordance with the guidelines regarding, *inter alia*:
 - whether the principles have been adhered to;
 - whether the special considerations have been addressed;
 - whether the objectives of the scheme and issue areas have been addressed in accordance with the appropriate minimum substantive requirements; and
 - whether the standard setting, accreditation and/or certification have been developed and implemented in accordance with the institutional and procedural requirements.

PRINCIPLES

35. Aquaculture certification schemes:
 - a. should be based on international standards or guidelines, where applicable, and must recognise the sovereign rights of States and comply with relevant local, national and international laws and regulations. They must be consistent with relevant international agreements, conventions, standards, codes of practice and guidelines.
 - b. should recognise that any person or entity undertaking aquaculture activities is obliged to comply with all national laws and regulations.
 - c. should be developed based on the best scientific evidence available, also taking into account traditional knowledge, provided that its validity can be objectively verified.
 - d. should be developed and implemented in a transparent manner and should ensure that there is no conflict of interest among the entities that are responsible for standard setting, accreditation, and certification. These entities should facilitate mutual recognition, strive to achieve harmonization and recognise equivalence, based on the requirements and criteria outlined in these guidelines.
 - e. should be open to scrutiny by consumers, civil society, and their respective organisations and other interested parties, while respecting legitimate concerns to preserve confidentiality.
 - f. should be credible and robust, be fully effective in achieving their designated objectives.
 - g. should promote responsible aquaculture during production as outlined in the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, in particular the Article 9, Aquaculture Development.
 - h. should include adequate procedures for maintaining chain of custody and traceability of certified aquaculture products and processes.
 - i. should establish clear accountability for all involved parties, including the owners of certification schemes, accreditation bodies and the certification bodies, in conformity with international requirements, as necessary.
 - j. should not discriminate against any group of farmers practising responsible aquaculture based on scale, intensity of production, or technology; promote cooperation among certification bodies, farmers and traders; incorporate reliable, independent auditing and verification procedures; and should be cost-effective to ensure inclusive participation of responsible farmers.
 - k. should strive to encourage responsible trade, consistent with the FAO Technical Guidelines on Responsible Fish Trade, and should provide the opportunity for aquaculture products to enter international markets without obstacles to trade.
 - l. should ensure special considerations are provided to address the interests of resource-poor small-scale farmers, especially the financial costs and benefits of participation, without compromising food safety.
36. These aquaculture certification guidelines should recognize the special needs of farmers and governments in developing countries. These guidelines should also recognize the special role of FAO in assisting developing countries in devising an implementation framework which is both attainable and measurable. Similarly, FAO should facilitate the assessment of the capacity of farmers and governments to meet the proposed requirements of aquaculture certification schemes, and to develop realistic expectations with regard to the farmers and governments meeting these requirements.

MINIMUM SUBSTANTIVE CRITERIA

37. Minimum substantive criteria for developing aquaculture certification standards are provided in this section for a) animal health and welfare, b) food safety, c) environmental integrity and d) socio-economic aspects. The extent to which a certification scheme seeks to address the issues depends on the objectives of the scheme, which should be explicitly and transparently stated by the scheme. Development of certification schemes should consider the importance of being able to measure performance of aquaculture systems and practices, and the ability to assess conformity with certification standards.

ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE⁵

38. Aquaculture activities should be 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. Guidelines and standards set by the OIE should be the specific normative basis.

Minimum substantive criteria for addressing aquatic animal health and welfare in aquaculture certification schemes

39. Aquaculture operations should implement aquatic animal health management programmes set up in compliance with relevant national legislation and regulations, taking into account the FAO Technical Guidelines on Health Management for Responsible Movement of Live Aquatic Animals and relevant OIE Standards.
40. Movement of aquatic animals, animal genetic material and animal products should take place in accordance with the relevant provisions in the OIE Aquatic Animal Health Code to prevent introduction or transfer of diseases and infectious agents pathogenic to aquatic animals while avoiding unwarranted sanitary measures.
41. A culture environment should be maintained at all phases of the production cycle adapted to the species raised, to benefit aquatic animal health and welfare, and reduce the risks of introduction and spread of aquatic animal diseases. In particular by
- Allowing for quarantining of stock where appropriate;
 - Routine monitoring of stock and environmental conditions for early detection of aquatic animal health problems; and
 - Implementation of management practices that reduce the likelihood of disease transmission within and between aquaculture facilities and natural aquatic fauna, and reduce stress on animals for the purpose of optimizing health.
42. Veterinary medicines should be used in responsible manner and in accordance with applicable national legislation or relevant international agreements that ensure effectiveness, safety of public and animal health and protection of the environment.
43. Use of species in polyculture or integrated multitrophic aquaculture should be carefully considered in order to reduce potential disease transmission between cultured species.
44. Aquaculture animals should be kept under farming conditions suitable for the species concerned, in particular taking into account water temperature and quality.

⁵ For the purpose of these guidelines, reference to animal welfare applies only insofar as it affects animal health consistent with current and future OIE.

45. Workers should be trained on good aquatic animal health and welfare management practices to ensure they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in maintaining aquatic animal health and welfare in aquaculture.

FOOD SAFETY

46. Aquaculture activities should be conducted in a manner that ensures food safety by implementing appropriate national or international standards and regulations including those defined by FAO/WHO *Codex Alimentarius*. Although *Codex Alimentarius* covers both safety and quality issues concerning aquatic products, for the purpose of these guidelines, quality aspects are not currently addressed in detail.

Minimum substantive criteria for addressing food safety in aquaculture certification schemes

47. Aquaculture facilities should be located in areas where the risk of contamination is minimized and where sources of pollution can be controlled or mitigated.
48. Where feed is used, aquaculture operations should include procedures for avoiding feed contamination in compliance with national regulations or as determined by internationally agreed standards. Aquaculture operations should use feeds and feed ingredients which do not contain unsafe levels of pesticides, biological, chemical and physical contaminants and or other adulterated substances. Feed which is manufactured or prepared on the farm should contain only substances permitted by the national competent authorities.
49. All veterinary drugs and chemicals for use in aquaculture shall comply with national regulations, as well as international guidelines. Wherever applicable, veterinary drugs and chemicals should be registered with the competent national authority. Veterinary drugs should be scheduled (classified). Control of diseases with veterinary drugs and antimicrobials should be carried out only on the basis of an accurate diagnosis and knowledge that the drug is effective for control or treatment of a specific disease. In some classifications, veterinary drugs may only be prescribed and distributed by personnel authorized under national regulations. All veterinary drugs and chemicals or medicated feeds should be used according to the instructions of the manufacturer or other competent authority, with particular attention to withdrawal periods. Banned non-registered and/or non permitted antimicrobial agents, veterinary drugs and/or chemicals must not be used in aquaculture production, transportation or product processing. Prophylactic use of veterinary medicinal products, particularly antimicrobial agents⁶, should not take place.
50. Water used for aquaculture should be of a quality suitable for the production of food which is safe for human consumption. Waste water should not be used in aquaculture. If wastewater is used, the WHO guidelines for the safe use of wastewater and excreta in aquaculture should be followed.
51. The source of broodstock and seed for culture (larvae, post larvae, fry and fingerling, etc.) should be such to reduce the risk of carryover of potential human health hazards (e.g. antibiotics, parasites, etc.) into the growing stocks.
52. Traceability and record-keeping of farming activities and inputs which impact food safety should be ensured by documenting, *inter alia*:
- the source of inputs such as feed, seed, veterinary drugs and antibacterials, additives, chemicals; and
 - type, concentration, dosage, method of administration and withdrawal times of chemicals, veterinary drugs and antibacterials and the rationale for their use.

⁶ Antimicrobial agents do not include vaccines.

53. Aquaculture facilities and operations should maintain good culture and hygienic conditions, including:
 - Good hygiene practices in the farm surroundings should be applied aiming at minimizing contamination of growing water, particularly from waste materials or faecal matter from animals or humans;
 - Good Aquaculture Practices should be applied during culture to ensure good hygienic culture conditions and safety and quality of aquaculture produce;
 - Farms should institute a pest control programme, so that rodents, birds and other wild and domesticated animals are controlled, especially around feed storage areas;
 - Farm grounds should be well maintained to reduce or eliminate food and feed safety hazards; and
 - Appropriate techniques for harvesting, storing and transportation of aquaculture products should be applied to minimize contamination and physical damage.
54. Identification, classification, integrated management and monitoring programmes should be implemented in bivalve molluscs growing areas to prevent microbiological, chemical and reduce biotoxin contamination. Relaying and depuration of bivalve molluscs to remove microbial contamination should be carried in accordance with the requirements of Codex.
55. Workers should be trained in good hygienic practices to ensure they are aware of their roles and responsibilities for protecting aquaculture products from contamination and deterioration.

ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY

56. Aquaculture should be planned and practiced in an environmentally responsible manner, in accordance with appropriate local, national and international laws and regulations.
57. Aquaculture certification schemes should encourage restoration of habitats and sites damaged by previous uses in aquaculture.
58. Aquaculture can impact on the environment and aquaculture certification schemes should ensure these impacts are identified and adverse impacts are managed or mitigated to an acceptable level in accordance with local and national laws. Whenever possible, native species should be used for culture and measures should be taken to minimise unintentional release or escape of cultured species into natural environments.
59. Management practices that address environmental impacts of aquaculture differ substantially for different types of scale of aquaculture and for different aquaculture farming systems. Certification schemes should not be overly prescriptive, but set measurable benchmarks that encourage improvement and innovation in environmental performance of aquaculture.
60. Certification schemes may consider application of the “precautionary approach” in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.
61. In undertaking risk analysis, risks should be addressed 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.
62. Certification schemes should endeavour to promote the internalization of environmental costs and the use of economic instruments, taking into account the approach that the polluter should, in principle, bear the cost of pollution,

with due regard to the public interest and without distorting international trade and investment⁷.

Minimum substantive criteria for addressing environmental integrity in aquaculture certification schemes

63. Environmental impact assessments should be conducted, according to national legislation, prior to approval of establishment of aquaculture operations.
64. Regular monitoring of on-farm and off-farm environmental quality should be carried out, combined with good record keeping and use of appropriate methodologies.
65. Evaluation and mitigation of the adverse impacts on surrounding natural ecosystems, including fauna, flora and habitats should be carried out.
66. Measures should be adopted to promote efficient water management and use as well as proper management of effluents to reduce impacts on surrounding land and water resources should be adopted.
67. Where possible, hatchery produced seed should be used for culture. When wild seeds are used, they should be collected using responsible practices.
68. Exotic species are to be used only when they pose an acceptable level of risk to the natural environment, biodiversity and ecosystem health.
69. With reference to paragraph 9.3.1 of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, where genetic material of an aquatic organism has been altered in a way that does not occur naturally, science-based risk assessment should be used to address possible risks on a case-by-case basis. Induction of polyploidy is not included.
70. Infrastructure construction and waste disposal should be conducted responsibly.
71. Feeds, feed additives, chemicals, veterinary drugs including antimicrobials, manure and fertilizer should be used responsibly to minimize their adverse impacts on the environment and to promote economic viability.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS

72. Aquaculture should be conducted in a socially responsible manner, within national rules and regulations, having regard to the ILO-convention on labour rights, not jeopardizing the livelihood of aquaculture workers, and local communities. Aquaculture contributes to rural development, enhances benefits and equity in local communities, alleviates poverty and promotes food security. As a result, socio-economic issues should be considered at all stages of aquaculture planning, development and operation.
73. The importance of corporate social responsibility from aquaculture to local communities should be recognized.

Minimum substantive criteria for addressing socio-economic aspects in aquaculture certification schemes

74. Workers should be treated responsibly and in accordance with national labour rules and regulations and, where appropriate, relevant ILO conventions.
75. Workers should be paid wages and provided benefits and working conditions according to national laws and regulations.
76. Child labour should not be used in a manner inconsistent with ILO conventions and international standards.

⁷ Based on the principle 16 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, June 1992.

INSTITUTIONAL AND PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

77. The institutional and procedural requirements for establishing and implementing credible aquaculture certification schemes are presented here in four parts: 1) Governance, 2) Standard setting, 3) Accreditation and 4) Certification.
78. The sections on Standards setting, Accreditation, and Certification are each subdivided into four sections: i) Purpose, ii) Normative references, iii) Functions and structure and iv) Requirements. The requirements are considered the minimum requirements that a body or entity should meet to be recognized as credible and reliable in executing its duties and responsibilities. The principles provided in this document apply equally to procedural and institutional aspects of certification schemes for aquaculture.
79. The guidance presented here draws on other internationally accepted guidance, especially those produced by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) , and the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC). Any certification scheme implemented pursuant to these guidelines must conform with a country's WTO commitments, particularly those under the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade and the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary Measures.

GOVERNANCE

80. The procedures used and institutions involved in establishing and implementing a certification scheme should be transparent, credible and robust with good governance.
81. There are various options for the geographical range of a scheme. It could be national, regional or international in scope.
82. It is essential that the owner of a private or non-governmental certification scheme is not directly engaged in its operational affairs, i.e. undertaking accreditation or certification, to avoid conflicts of interest. The owner or developer of a private or non-governmental certification scheme must have a formal arrangement with a separate independent specialized accreditation body or entity to take on the task of accreditation of certification bodies on its behalf. The accreditation body or entity could be private, public or an autonomous body governed by national rules and regulations.
83. The owner or developer of a certification scheme should have clear written procedures to guide the decision-making process.
84. Certification must be handled by an organization (certification body or entity) that has been specifically set up for this purpose. It could be government, public, non-governmental or private. The certification scheme should lay down rules and regulations under which the certification body or entity is required to operate. The certification body or entity may be involved in certification for one certification scheme for one specific sector (e.g. aquaculture) or may be involved with a number of sectors or schemes.

STANDARD SETTING

Purpose

85. Standards provide the necessary requirements, the quantitative and qualitative criteria and the indicators for certification of aquaculture. Standards should reflect the objectives, results and outcomes that are being pursued through the certification scheme to address animal health and welfare, food safety, environmental integrity and/or socio-economic aspects in aquaculture.

Normative basis

86. The normative basis for development of standards includes the following existing documented procedures:
- *WTO Agreement on technical barriers to trade*
 - *WTO Agreement on the application of sanitary and phytosanitary measures*
 - *Codex guidelines on food import and export inspection and certification systems*
 - *ISO/IEC Guide 59. Code of good practice for standardization. 1994*
 - *ISO/IEC 22003:2007 Food safety management systems: Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of food safety management systems*
 - *ISEAL. ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards. 2006*
 - *OIE Aquatic Animal Health Code*
 - *International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) Code of Practice on the Introductions and Transfers of Marine Organisms*
 - *Code of Practice on the Introductions and Transfers of Marine Organisms*
 - *ISO/IEC 22000:2005 Food safety management systems- Requirements for any organization in the food chain*
 - *ISO/TS 2004:2005 Food safety management systems – Guidance on the application of ISO 22000:2005*
 - *ISO 22005:2007 Traceability in the feed and food chain – General principles and basic requirements for system design and implementation*
 - *ISO/IEC 16665 Water quality – Guidelines for quantitative sampling and sample processing of marine soft-bottom macrofauna*
 - *ISO 23893-1:2007 Water quality – Biochemical and physiological measurements on fish – Part 1: Sampling of fish, handling and preservation of samples*
 - *ISO/IEC 17021:2006 Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems*
 - *ISO/IEC 17065*
 - *ISO/IEC 22003:2007 Food safety management systems: Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of food safety management systems*
 - *ISO/IEC 17021. Management Systems certification*
 - *ISO/IEC 22003. Food safety management systems*
 - *ISO/IEC 17025. Laboratory testing*
 - *ISO/IEC 22005. Chain of Custody*

Functions and organizational structure

87. Standard setting encompasses the tasks of developing, monitoring, assessing, reviewing, and revising standards. These tasks can be fulfilled through a specialized standard setting body or entity, or through another suitable entity and be either a government or non government entity. The standard setting body or entity is also responsible for ensuring appropriate communications and outreach regarding the standard and the standard setting process, and ensuring that the standard and associated documents are available.
88. The organizational structure of a standard setting body or entity should include, *inter alia*, a technical committee of independent experts and a consultation forum with relevant stakeholder representatives whose mandates are clearly established.
89. A standard setting body or entity must be a legal entity, with sufficient resources to support its standard setting function. The process should include adequate stakeholder representation. Governance, administration and other support staff should be free of conflicts of interest.

Requirements

Transparency

90. Transparency in the setting of standards is essential. Transparency helps facilitate consistency with relevant national and international standards and facilitates access to information and records pertaining to certification and participation of all interested parties, including those of developing countries and countries in transition, particularly small-scale stakeholders.
91. The standard setting body or entity should carry out activities in a transparent fashion, following written rules of procedure. Procedural rules should contain a mechanism for the impartial resolution of any substantive or procedural disputes about the handling of standard setting matters.
92. On a regular basis as appropriate, the standard setting body or entity should publicize its work programme as widely as possible.
93. On the request of any interested party, the standards setting body or entity should provide, or arrange to provide, within reasonable time, a copy of its standard setting procedures, most recent work programme, draft standards or final standards.
94. Based on the needs of users, a standards setting body or entity should translate the standard setting procedures, most recent work programme, draft standards or final standards into appropriate languages.

Participation by interested parties

95. The standards setting body or entity should strive to achieve balanced participation by independent technical experts and by representatives of interested parties in the standards development, revision and approval process. Interested parties can include, *inter alia*, governments, non-governmental organizations, private sector groups, civil society arrangements, representatives of the aquaculture industry (input suppliers, producers, processors, traders and retailers), the scientific community, community groups and various consortia, as indirect users of the guidelines.
96. Interested parties should be associated in the standard setting process through an appropriate consultation forum or be made aware of appropriate alternative mechanisms by which they can participate. Where more than one forum is designated, appropriate coordination and communication requirements should be determined and provided.

Content and comparable systems

97. The standards setting process should seek to:
 - include international reference standards in animal health and welfare, food safety, environmental integrity and socio-economic aspects;
 - identify and review comparable systems;
 - identify research needs and knowledge gaps;
 - include requirements of relevant international agreements; and
 - encourage mutual recognition among certification schemes.

Notification provisions

98. Before adopting a standard(s), the standards setting body or entity should allow a period of an appropriate duration for the submission of comments on the draft standards by interested parties. No later than the start of the comment period, the standard setting body or entity should publish a notice announcing the period for commenting in a national or, as appropriate, regional or international publication of standardization activities and/or on the Internet.

99. In further processing of the standards, the standards setting body or entity should take into account the comments received during the period for commenting.

Keeping of records

100. Proper records of standards and development activity should be prepared and maintained. The standards setting organization or entity should identify a central focal point for standards-related enquiries and for submission of comments. Contact information for this focal point should be made easily available including on the Internet.

Review and revision of standards and of standards setting procedures

101. Standards should be reviewed at regular published intervals in consultation with appropriate stakeholders and, if appropriate, revised following such reviews. Certified aquaculture operations should be given an appropriate period to come into compliance with the revised standards.
102. Proposals for revisions can be submitted by any interested party and should be considered by the standard setting body or entity through a consistent and transparent process.
103. The procedural and methodological approach for setting standards should also be updated in the light of scientific and technical progress and of the experience gained in the application of the standard in aquaculture.

Validation of standards

104. In developing and revising standards, an appropriate procedure should be put in place to corroborate the standard vis-à-vis the minimum requirements for aquaculture as laid out in these guidelines. Validation is also required to ensure that standards:
- are effective in meeting the certification goals, meaningful, objective and auditable;
 - do not contain criteria or requirements that could cause unnecessary barriers to trade or mislead the aquaculture community; and
 - take into consideration practicality and cost of standards development and maintenance.

ACCREDITATION

Purpose

105. Accreditation provides assurance that certification bodies responsible for conducting conformity assessments according to standards for aquaculture in relation to animal health and welfare, food safety, environmental integrity and socio-economic aspects are competent to carry out such tasks. Accreditation provides assurance that the certification body or entity is able to assess and certify that a specific aquaculture product, method or process comes from a certified aquaculture operation and conforms to the standards.

Normative reference

- ISO/IEC 17011. *Conformity assessment – General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies.*

Functions and structure

106. Accreditation is an independent assessment of the competence of the certification body or entity. The task of granting accreditation following successful assessment should be undertaken by competent accreditation bodies. Accreditation is

carried out on the basis of a system that has its own rules and management, i.e. an accreditation system.

107. An accreditation body or entity must be a legal entity, with sufficient resources to support its functions in undertaking accreditation. The governance structure should include appropriate stakeholder representation. Governance, administration and other support staff should be free of conflicts of interest. In order to be recognized as competent and reliable in undertaking the assessment of certification bodies or entities in a non-discriminatory, impartial and accurate manner, an accreditation body or entity should fulfill, *inter alia*, the following requirements.

Requirements

Non-discrimination

108. Access to the services of the accreditation body or entity should be open to all certification entities irrespective of their location. Access should not be conditional upon the size of the applicant body or membership in any association or group, nor should accreditation be conditional upon the number of certification bodies already accredited.
109. Full recognition should be given to the special circumstances and requirements of certification bodies in developing countries and countries in transition including financial and technical assistance, technology transfer, and training and scientific cooperation, without compromising the integrity of the accreditation and certification process.

Independence, impartiality and transparency

110. The accreditation body or entity should be independent and impartial. In order to be impartial and independent, the accreditation body should:
- be transparent about its organizational structure and the financial and other kinds of support it receives from public or private entities;
 - be independent from vested interests, together with its senior executive and staff;
 - be free from any commercial, financial and other pressures that might influence the results of the accreditation process;
 - ensure that decision on accreditation is taken by a person(s) who has(ve) not participated in certification (conformity assessment); and
 - not delegate authority for granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending or withdrawing accreditation to an outside person or body.

Human and financial resources

111. The accreditation body or entity should have adequate financial resources and stability for the operation of an accreditation system and should maintain appropriate arrangements to cover liabilities arising from its operations and/or activities.
112. The accreditation body or entity should employ a sufficient number of personnel having the necessary training, technical knowledge and experience for performing accreditation functions in aquaculture.
113. Information on the relevant qualifications, training and experience of each member of the personnel involved in the accreditation process should be maintained by the accreditation body or entity. Record of training and experience should be kept up to date.
114. When an accreditation body or entity decides to subcontract work related to accreditation other than work exempted in paragraph 91 to an external body or

person, the requirements for such an external body should be no less than for the accreditation body or entity itself. A properly documented contractual or equivalent agreement covering the arrangements including confidentiality and conflict of interests, should be drawn up.

Accountability and reporting

115. The accreditation body or entity should be a legal entity and should have clear and effective procedures for handling applications for accreditation procedures. In particular, the accreditation body or entity should maintain and provide to the applicants and accredited entities:
 - a detailed description of the assessment and accreditation procedure;
 - the documents containing the requirements for accreditation; and
 - the documents describing the rights and duties of accredited bodies.
116. A properly documented contractual or equivalent agreement describing the responsibilities of each party should be drafted.
117. The accreditation body or entity should have:
 - defined objectives and commitment to quality;
 - procedures and instructions for quality documented in a quality manual; and
 - an established effective and appropriate system for quality.
118. The accreditation body or entity should conduct periodic internal audits covering all procedures in a planned and systematic manner to verify that the accreditation system is implemented and effective.
119. The accreditation body or entity may receive external audits on relevant aspects. The results of the audit should be accessible by the public.
120. Qualified personnel, attached to the accreditation body or entity, should be nominated by the accreditation body or entity to conduct the assessment against all applicable accreditation requirements.
121. Personnel nominated for the assessments should provide the accreditation body or entity with a report of its findings as to the conformity of the body assessed to all of the accreditation requirements. The report should provide sufficiently comprehensive information such as:
 - the qualification, experience and authority of the staff encountered;
 - the adequacy of the internal organization and procedures adopted by the certification body or entity to give confidence in its services; and
 - the actions taken to correct identified nonconformities including, where applicable, those identified at previous assessments.
122. The accreditation body or entity should have policy and procedures for retaining records of what happened during the assessment visit for a period consistent with its contractual, legal or other obligations. The records should demonstrate that the accreditation procedures have been effectively fulfilled. The records should be identified, managed and disposed of in such a way as to ensure the integrity of the process and confidentiality of the information.

Resolution of complaints concerning accreditation of certifying bodies

123. The accreditation body or entity should have a written policy and procedures for dealing with any complaints in relation to any aspect of the accreditation or de-accreditation of certifying bodies.
124. These procedures should include establishment, on an *ad hoc* basis as appropriate, of an independent and impartial committee to respond to a complaint. The committee should seek to resolve any complaints through discussion or conciliation. If this is not possible, the committee should provide a written ruling to the accreditation body or entity, which should transmit it to the other party or parties involved.

125. The accreditation body or entity should:
 - keep a record of all complaints, and remedial actions relative to accreditation;
 - take appropriate corrective and preventive actions;
 - assess the effectiveness of remedial actions; and
 - safeguard confidentiality of information obtained during the investigation and resolution of complaints.
126. Information on procedures for handling complaints concerning accreditation should be made publicly available.
127. The above does not exclude recourse to other forms of legal and administrative processes as provided for in national legislation or international law.

Confidentiality

128. The accreditation body or entity should have adequate arrangements, consistent with applicable laws, to safeguard confidentiality of the information obtained in the course of its accreditation activities at all levels of its organization, including committees and external bodies acting on its behalf.
129. Where the law requires information to be disclosed to a third party, the body should be informed of the information provided, as permitted by the law. Otherwise information about an applicant certification body or entity should not be disclosed to a third party without a written consent of the body.

Maintenance and extension of accreditation

130. The accreditation body or entity should have arrangements to define the period of accreditation of a certifying body or entity, with clear monitoring procedures.
131. The accreditation body or entity should have arrangements to ensure that an accredited certification body or entity informs it without delay of changes in any aspects of its status or operation.
132. The accreditation body or entity should have procedures to conduct reassessments in the event of changes significantly affecting the capabilities or scope of activities of the accredited body or entity or the conformance with any other relevant criteria of competence specified by the accreditation body or entity.
133. Accreditation should be re-assessed at sufficiently close intervals or as necessary to verify that the accredited certification body or entity continues to comply with the accreditation requirements. The period for carrying out reassessments should not exceed five years.

Suspension and withdrawal of accreditation

134. The accreditation body or entity should specify the conditions under which accreditation may be suspended or withdrawn, partially or in total, for all or part of the scope of accreditation.

Change in the accreditation requirements

135. The accreditation body or entity should give due notice of any changes it intends to make in its requirements for accreditation to all stakeholders involved.
136. It should take account of views expressed by interested parties before deciding on the precise form and effective date of the changes.
137. Following a decision on and publication of the changes, it should verify that each accredited body or entity carries out any necessary adjustments to its procedures within such time as, in the opinion of the accreditation body or entity, is reasonable.
138. Special considerations should be given to accredited bodies in developing countries and countries in transition, without compromising the integrity of the certification process.

Proprietor or licensee of an accreditation symbol, label or a logo

139. The provisions on the use and control of a certification claim, symbol, label or logo are addressed in the following section on certification.
140. The accreditation body or entity that is proprietor or licensee of a symbol or logo, intended for use under its accreditation programme, should have documented procedures describing its use.
141. The accreditation body or entity should not allow use of its accreditation mark or logo in any way that implies that the accreditation body or entity itself approved a product, service or system certified by a certification body or entity.
142. The accreditation body or entity should take suitable action to deal with incorrect references to the accreditation system or misleading use of accreditation logos found in advertisements, catalogues, etc.

CERTIFICATION

Purpose

143. Certification is the procedure by which a body or entity gives written or equivalent assurance that the aquaculture operation or activity under consideration conforms to the relevant aquaculture certification standards. Impartial certification based on an objective assessment of relevant factors provides assurance to buyers and consumers that a certified aquaculture product comes from an aquaculture operation that conforms to the certification standards.

Scope

144. Certification could include an aquaculture activity e.g. an aquaculture operation of the chain of custody of a product. Separate certificates may be issued for the aquaculture activity and the chain of custody of a product.
145. Two types of assessments are required for certification:
 - Conformity assessment: Whether an aquaculture activity conforms to the standards and related certification criteria.
 - Chain of custody assessment: Whether adequate measures are in place to identify and differentiate products from a certified aquaculture operation including production and subsequent stages of processing, distribution and marketing (traceability).
146. Aquaculture products that are labelled to indicate to the buyer and consumer of their origin from a certified aquaculture operation and chain of custody require both types of assessments and certificates.

Normative references

- ISO Guide 62, *General Requirements for bodies operating assessment and certification/registration of quality systems*. 1996
- ISO/IEC Guide 65, *General requirements for bodies operating product certification systems*. 1996
- WTO. *Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade*
- ISO/IEC 17021. *Management Systems certification*
- ISO/IEC 22003. *Food safety management systems*
- ISO/IEC 17025. *Laboratory testing*
- ISO/IEC 22005. *Chain of Custody*
- OIE Aquatic Animal Health Code/Guidelines
- TBT Articles 5–6. *Conformity Assessment*

Functions and structure

147. The tasks of carrying out conformity and chain of custody assessments should be undertaken by accredited certification bodies. In order to be recognized as competent and reliable in undertaking the assessments in a non-discriminatory, impartial and accurate manner, a certification body or entity should fulfill the following requirements.

Requirements

Independence and impartiality

148. The certification body or entity should be legally and financially independent from the owner of the certification scheme and should not have any conflict of interest.
149. The certification body or entity and its assessment and certifying staff, whether directly employed by the certification body or entity or sub-contracted by it, should have no commercial, financial or any other interest in the aquaculture operation or chain of custody to be assessed other than for its certification services.
150. The certification body or entity should ensure that the personnel who conduct assessment in view of certification are different from the personnel which grant the certificate.
151. The certifying body or entity should not delegate authority for granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending or withdrawing certification to an outside person or body.

Non-discrimination

152. Access to the services of the certification body or entity should be open to all types of aquaculture operations.
153. Access to the certification body or entity should not be conditional upon the size or scale of the aquaculture operations nor should certification be conditional upon the number of aquaculture operations already certified.

Human and financial resources

154. The certification body or entity should have adequate financial resources and stability for its conduct and should maintain appropriate arrangements to cover liabilities arising from its operations and/or activities.
155. The certification body or entity should employ a sufficient number of personnel having the necessary qualifications, training, technical knowledge, education and experience for performing conformity and/or chain of custody assessments in aquaculture.
156. Information on the relevant qualifications, training and experience of each member of the personnel involved in the certification process should be maintained by the certification body or entity. Record of training and experience should be kept up to date.
157. When a certification body or entity decides to sub-contract work related to certification, to an outside body or person other than work exempted in paragraph 132, the requirements for such an external body should be no less than for the certification body or entity itself. A properly documented contractual or equivalent agreement, covering the arrangements including confidentiality and conflict of interests, should be drawn up. A sub-contractor should be periodically audited and evaluated.

Accountability and reporting

158. The certification body or entity should be a legal entity and have clear and effective procedures for handling applications for certification of aquaculture operations and/or chains of custody for aquaculture products. In particular, the certification body or entity should maintain and provide to the applicants and certified entities:
 - a detailed description of the assessment and certification procedure;
 - the documents containing the requirements for certification; and
 - the documents describing the rights and duties of certified entities.
159. A properly documented contractual or equivalent agreement describing the rights and duties of each party should be drafted between the certification body or entity and its clients.
160. The certification body or entity should conduct periodic internal audits covering all procedures in a planned and systematic manner to verify that the certification system is implemented and effective.
161. The certification body or entity may receive external audits on relevant aspects. The results of the audits should be accessible by the public.
162. The certification body or entity should have a policy and procedures for retaining records for a period consistent with its contractual, legal or other obligations. The records should demonstrate that the certification procedures have been effectively fulfilled, particularly with respect to application forms, assessment reports and other documents relating to granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending or withdrawing certification. The records should be identified, managed and disposed of in such a way as to ensure the integrity of the process and confidentiality of the information. The certification body or entity should ensure that any changes to the agreed procedures are notified to all affected parties.
163. The certification body or entity should make appropriate, non-confidential documents available on request.

Certification fees

164. If the certification body or entity charges fees, it should maintain a written fee structure for applicants and certified aquaculture operations that should be available on request. In establishing the fee structure and in determining the specific fee of certification, the certification body or entity should take into account, *inter alia*, the requirements for accurate and truthful assessments, the scale, size and complexity of the aquaculture operation or chain of custody, the requirement of non-discrimination of any client, and the particular circumstances and requirements of small-scale farmers, developing countries and countries in transition.

Confidentiality

165. The certification body or entity should have adequate arrangements, consistent with applicable laws, to safeguard confidentiality of the information obtained in the course of its certification at all levels of its organization.
166. Where the law requires information to be disclosed to a third party, the client should be informed of the information provided, as permitted by the law. Otherwise information about a particular product or aquaculture operation should not be disclosed to a third party without a written consent of the client.

Maintenance of certification

167. The certification body or entity should carry out periodic surveillance and monitoring at appropriate intervals to verify that certified aquaculture operations and/or certified chains of custody continue to comply with the certification requirements.
168. The certification body or entity should require the client to notify it promptly of any intended changes to the management of the aquaculture, or the chain of custody, or other changes that may affect conformity to certification standards.
169. The certification body or entity should have procedures to conduct reassessments in the event of changes significantly affecting the status and management of the certified aquaculture operation, or the chain of custody, or if analysis of a complaint or any other information indicates that the certified aquaculture operation and/or the chain of custody no longer comply with the required standard and/or related requirements of the certification body or entity.
170. The period of validity of a certificate should not exceed five years. The assessment required for re-certification should give particular attention to changes made in the conduct of the aquaculture operation or in the management practices.

Renewal of certification

171. On the basis of proper monitoring and auditing, the validity of certification should be renewed for an agreed period, not to exceed five years, or more frequently if warranted by changes in the operation under certification.

Suspension and withdrawal of certification

172. The certification body or entity should specify the conditions under which certification may be suspended or withdrawn, partially or in total, for all or part of the scope of certification.
173. The certification body or entity should require that a certified aquaculture operation and/or chain of custody upon suspension or withdrawal of its certification (however determined), discontinues use of all advertising matter that contains any reference thereto and returns any certification documents as required by the certification body or entity. The certification body or entity should also be responsible for informing the public about the withdrawal or suspension after the appeals process is exhausted.

Maintaining the chain of custody

174. Chain of custody procedures are implemented at the key points of transfer. At each point of transfer, which may vary according to the type of aquaculture product traded, all certified aquaculture products must be identified and differentiated from non-certified aquaculture products.
175. The certification body or entity should ensure that a recipient of certified aquaculture products should maintain pertinent chain of custody records, including all records relating to shipment, receipt and invoicing.
176. The certification body or entity should have documented procedures defining auditing methods and periodicity of audits.
177. Any breach or apparent breach of the chain of custody identified during an inspection/audit should be explicitly recorded in the inspection/audit report together with:
 - an explanation of the factors that allowed the breach to occur; and
 - an explanation of the corrective actions taken or required to deal with the product affected by the breach and to ensure that a similar breach does not occur again.

178. All inspection/audit records should be incorporated into a written inspection/audit report that is available to pertinent parties and filed at the office of the certification body or entity.
179. The inspection/audit report should contain, as a minimum:
 - the date of the inspection/audit;
 - the name(s) of the person(s) responsible for the report;
 - the names and addresses of the sites inspected/audited;
 - the scope of the inspection/audit; and
 - comments on the conformity of the client with the chain of custody requirements.

Use and control of a certification claim, symbol, label or a logo

180. The owner of the certification scheme should have documented procedures describing the requirements, restrictions or limitations on the use of symbols, labels or logos indicating that an aquaculture product comes from a certified aquaculture operation. In particular, the certification scheme is required to ensure that symbols, labels or logos should not relate to claims that are of no relevance for certified aquaculture operations or products and could cause barriers of trade or mislead the consumer.
181. The owner of the certification scheme should not issue any license to affix its mark/claim/label/logo or issue any certificate for any aquaculture operations or products unless it is assured that the product bearing it is in fact produced from certified sources.
182. The certification body or entity, accreditation body or entity or owner of the certification scheme is responsible that no fraudulent or misleading use is made with the use and display of its certification mark, labels or logos.
183. If the certification body or entity, accreditation body or entity or owner of the certification scheme confers the right to use a symbol, label or logo to indicate certification, the aquaculture operation and any aquaculture product from it may use the specified symbol, label or logo only as authorized in writing by it.
184. The certification body or entity, accreditation body or entity or owner of the certification scheme should take suitable action to deal with incorrect references to the certification system or misleading use of symbols, labels and logos found in advertisements and catalogues.
185. All certificates issued should include:
 - the name and address of the accreditation body or entity or owner of the certification scheme;
 - the name and address of the certification body or entity;
 - the name and address of the certification holder;
 - the effective date of issue of the certificate;
 - the substance of the certificate;
 - the term for which the certification is valid; and
 - the signature and the stamp of the issuing officer.

Resolution of complaints and appeals

Policy and procedures

186. The accreditation body or entity or owner of the certification scheme should have written policy and procedures, applicable to accredited certification bodies, for dealing with any complaints and appeals from involved parties in relation to any aspect of the certification or de-certification. Such procedures should be timely, clearly define the scope and nature of appeals that will be considered and

- should be open only to parties involved in, or consulted during the assessment. Costs of appeals should be borne by the appellant.
187. These procedures should include an independent and impartial committee to respond to any complaint. If possible, the committee should attempt to resolve any complaint through discussion or conciliation. If this is not possible, the committee should provide a written finding to the certification body or entity, accreditation body or entity or owner of the certification scheme as appropriate, which should transmit the finding to the party or parties involved.
 188. The above does not exclude recourse to other forms of legal and administrative processes as provided for in national and regional legislation or international law.

Keeping of records on complaints and appeals concerning certification

189. The certification body or entity, accreditation body or entity or promoter/owner of the certification scheme should:
 - keep a record of all complaints and appeals, and remedial actions related to certification;
 - take appropriate corrective and preventive action;
 - assess the effectiveness of remedial actions; and
 - safeguard confidentiality of information obtained during the investigation and resolution of complaints and appeals concerning certification.
190. Information on procedures for handling of complaints and appeals concerning certification should be made publicly available.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

191. National and relevant international organizations, whether governmental or non-governmental, the aquaculture industry and financial institutions should recognize the special circumstances and requirements of aquaculture producers and other stakeholders in developing countries, especially those in least-developed countries and small island developing states, to support the effective and progressive implementation of these guidelines. States, relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, buyers and traders, and financial institutions should work to address these implementation needs, especially in the areas of financial and technical assistance, technology transfer, capacity building and training. Such assistance should also consider direct support towards the possible high costs of accreditation and certification.
192. Assistance is needed for building the capacity and enhancing the ability of stakeholders to participate in developing and complying with aquaculture certification schemes consistent with these guidelines. This includes ensuring that stakeholders have access to, and understanding of, these guidelines, as well as provisions of relevant international conventions and applicable standards that are essential for responsible aquaculture. Appropriate and up-to-date technologies may be required to comply with certification standards. Full benefit from such technologies would require extension, training, skill development and other local capacity building programmes for farmers and local communities and other stakeholders. Governmental and other institutions should support cooperation, especially at regional and sub-regional levels, in capacity building for developing and complying with aquaculture certification systems most suitable to their regions, and in the elaboration of mechanisms and protocols for the exchange of knowledge, experience and technical assistance in support of these objectives.
193. Different aquaculture certification schemes may be capable of meeting the same objective and to that extent may be equivalent. Memoranda of understanding, mutual recognition agreements, and unilateral recognition may be developed

for mutual recognition of aquaculture certification schemes, all of which should include appropriate controls and verification of the certification systems involved. Tools and technical assistance may be required to ensure fairness, transparency and uniformity in developing agreements and monitoring that facilitates the development and implementation of aquaculture certification schemes consistent with the certification, accreditation and standards development procedures provided in these guidelines.

194. Notwithstanding the other provisions of this chapter, third-party certification schemes implemented in application of these guidelines should not replace related certification schemes or official certificates issued by States. FAO will facilitate and monitor implementation of these guidelines on certification in aquaculture and promote exchange of knowledge and experience. Development agencies and donor institutions are encouraged to support FAO in facilitating financial and technical assistance to developing countries and countries in transition.

APPENDIX 3

Definitions relevant to private standards and certification

INTRODUCTION

Standards, and related certification, are developed by a variety of public and private organizations, target a variety of objectives and cover a variety of industrial activities. Consequently, the terminology is varied and rich and can lead to confusion.

Throughout this technical paper, many key words related to private standards and certification have been used and key definitions have been provided directly in the text. Additional definitions are provided hereafter to facilitate their understanding in the context of fisheries and aquaculture and to link to the international instruments from which they have been extracted.

Accreditation*

- Procedure by which a competent authority gives formal recognition that a qualified body or person is competent to carry out specific tasks. (ISO/IEC Guide 2, 12.11)
- Third party attestation related to a conformity assessment body conveying formal demonstration of its competence to carry out specific conformity assessment tasks. (ISO/ IEC 17000:2004)
- The procedure by which an authoritative body gives formal recognition of the competence of a certification body to provide certification services, against an international standard. (Global Food Safety Initiative Guidance Document 5th Edition September 2007. <http://www.mygfsi.com/>)
- The formal recognition that an organization is competent to perform specific processes, activities, or tasks (which are detailed in a scope of accreditation) in a reliable credible and accurate manner. It follows that:
 - Accreditation must be objective, transparent and effective.
 - An Accreditation Body (AB) must use highly professional competent assessors and technical experts in all relevant fields.
 - All AB employees (and subcontractors) must be reliable, ethical and competent in both accreditation processes and the relevant technical fields. (International Accreditation Forum IAF Guidance Document Issue 4. IAR GD 2: 2005)
- Procedure by which the evaluation, certification and inspection bodies have been assessed against internationally recognized standards to demonstrate their competence, impartiality and performance capability to carry out specific tasks. (United Kingdom Accreditation Service, UKAS. http://www.ukas.com/about/accreditation/What_is_Accreditation/What_is_Accreditation.asp)

Accreditation body*

- Body that conducts and administers an accreditation system and grants accreditation. (ISO Guide 2, 17.2)
- Authoritative body that performs accreditation. (ISO/IEC 17000:2004, 2.6)
- Agency having jurisdiction to formally recognize the competence of a certification body to provide certification services. (Global Food Safety Initiative Guidance Document 5th Edition September 2007. <http://www.mygfsi.com/>)

Accreditation system*

System that has its own rules of procedure and management for carrying out accreditation. Accreditation of certification bodies is normally awarded following successful assessment and is followed by appropriate surveillance (ISO Guide 2, 17.1)

Assessment

- Process undertaken by an accreditation body to assess the competence of conformity assessment body based on particular standard/s and/or other normative documents for a defined scope of accreditation. (ISO/IEC 17011: 2004, 3.7)
- All activities related to the certification/registration of an organization to determine whether the organization meets all the requirements of the relevant clauses of the specified standard necessary for granting certification/registration, and whether they are effectively implemented, including documentation review, audit, preparation and consideration of the audit report and other relevant activities necessary to provide sufficient information to allow a decision to be made as to whether certification/registration shall be granted. (In this Guidance the term “organization” is identical to the term “supplier” used in ISO/IEC Guide 62). (International Accreditation Forum IAF Guidance Document Issue 4. IAR GD 2: 2005)

Audit*

- Systematic, independent, documented process for obtaining records, statements of facts or other relevant information and assessing them objectively to determine the extent to which the specified requirements are fulfilled (ISO/IEC 17000: 2004, 4.4)
- A systematic and functionally independent examination to determine whether activities and related results comply with planned objectives (*Codex Alimentarius*, Principles for Food Import and Export Certification and Inspection, CAC/GL 20).
- Systematic and functionally independent examination to determine whether activities and related results comply with a conforming scheme, whereby all the elements of this scheme should be covered by reviewing the suppliers’ manual and related procedures, together with an evaluation of the production facilities. (Global Food Safety Initiative Guidance Document 5th Edition September 2007. <http://www.mygfsi.com/>)

Auditor

Person qualified to carry out audits for or on behalf of a certification body. (Global Food Safety Initiative Guidance Document 5th Edition September 2007. <http://www.mygfsi.com/>)

Benchmark

Procedure by which a food safety-related scheme is compared to a specific Guidance Document. (Global Food Safety Initiative Guidance Document 5th Edition September 2007. <http://www.mygfsi.com/>)

Central government body

Central government, its ministries and departments or any body subject to the control of the central government in respect of the activity in question. (TBT Agreement)

Certification*

- Procedure by which an official certification body or officially recognized certification body 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 audit activities that may include continuous audit in the production chain. (Modified from ISO Guide 2, 15.1.2; Principles for Food Import and Export Certification and Inspection, CAC/GL 20; Ecolabelling Guidelines)
- Competent and recognized body that conducts certification. A certification body may oversee certification activities carried out on its behalf by other bodies. (ISO Guide 2, 15.2)
- Third-party attestation (i.e., issue of a statement) that specified requirements related to products, processes, systems or persons have been fulfilled. (ISO/IEC 17000, 2005, Definitions 5.2 and 5.5)
- Procedure by which accredited certification bodies, based on an audit, provide written or equivalent assurance that food safety management systems and their implementation conform to requirements. (Global Food Safety Initiative Guidance Document 5th Edition September 2007. <http://www.mygfsi.com/>)
- It is the procedure by which official certification bodies and officially recognized bodies provide written or equivalent assurance that foods or food control systems conform to requirements. Certification of food may be, as appropriate, based on a range of inspection activities which may include continuous on-line inspection, auditing of quality assurance systems, and examination of finished products. (Codex Guidelines for the Design, Operation, Assessment and Accreditation of Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CAC/GL 26 – 1997)).

Certification body or entity*

- Competent and recognized body that conducts certification and audit activities. A certification body may oversee certification activities carried out on its behalf by other bodies. (ISO Guide 2, 15.2)
- Provider of certification services, accredited to do so by an accreditation body (Global Food Safety Initiative Guidance Document 5th Edition September 2007. <http://www.mygfsi.com/>)

Certification scheme

- Certification system related to specified products to which the same specified requirements, specific rules and procedures apply (ISO/IEC 17000).
- Scheme consisting of a certification standard and certification system as related to specified processes to which the same particular scheme applies. The certification scheme should contain at least the following items: a standard, a clearly defined scope, a certification system, including:
 - requirements for the qualifications of auditors,
 - a statement of approximate duration and frequency of visits,
 - the minimum content of the audit report. (Global Food Safety Initiative Guidance Document 5th Edition September 2007. <http://www.mygfsi.com/>)

Certification system

- A system that has its own rules of procedure and management for carrying out certification. (Global Food Safety Initiative Guidance Document 5th Edition September 2007. <http://www.mygfsi.com/>)

- Conformity assessment system that includes selection, determination, review, and finally certification as the attestation activity. (International Accreditation Forum IAF Guidance Document on General Requirements for Bodies operating Product Certification systems Issue 2. IAR GD 5: 2006)

Chain of custody*

- Documentation, and the quantity concerned (From the FAO Ecolabelling Guidelines).
- The set of measures which is designed to guarantee that the product put on the market and bearing the ecolabel logo is really a product coming from the certified fishery concerned. These measures should thus cover both the tracking/traceability of the product all along the processing, distribution and marketing chain, as well as the proper tracking of the documentation (and control of the quantity concerned) (FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/008/a0116t/a0116t01.htm#bm1.5>)

Conformity assessment*

- Any activity concerned with determining directly or indirectly that relevant requirements are fulfilled.
- *Note:* typical examples of conformity assessment activities are sampling, testing and inspection; evaluation, verification and assurance of conformity (supplier's declaration, certification); registration, accreditation and approval as well as their combinations. (ISO Guide 2, 12.2)
- Demonstration that specified requirements relating to a product, process, system, person or body are fulfilled (ISO/IEC 17000, 2004, Definition 2.1)
- Conformity assessment is an activity which involves technical procedures such as testing verification, inspection and certification which confirm that products fulfil the requirements laid down in regulations and standards (Technical Information to Technical Barriers to Trade http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_E/tbt_e/tbt_info_e.htm)

Equivalence

- Members shall accept the sanitary or phytosanitary measures of other Members as equivalent, even if these measures differ from their own or from those used by other Members trading in the same product, if the exporting Member objectively demonstrates to the importing Member that its measures achieve the importing Member's appropriate level of sanitary or phytosanitary protection. For this purpose, reasonable access shall be given, upon request, to the importing Member for inspection, testing and other relevant procedures. Members shall, upon request, enter into consultations with the aim of achieving bilateral and multilateral agreements on recognition of the equivalence of specified sanitary or phytosanitary measures. (WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures – Legal Text http://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/15sps_01_e.htm#ArticleIV)
- is the capability of different inspection and certification systems to meet the same objectives. (Codex Guidelines for the Design, Operation, Assessment and Accreditation of Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems. (CAC/GL 26 – 1997))

Local government body

Government other than a central government (e.g. states, provinces, Länder, cantons, municipalities, etc.), its ministries or departments or any body subject to the control of such a government in respect of the activity in question (TBT Agreement).

Non-conformity

- Deviation of product or process from specified requirements, or the absence of, or failure to implement and maintain, one or more required management system elements, or a situation which would, on the basis of available objective evidence, raise significant doubt as to the conformity of what the supplier is supplying. (Global Food Safety Initiative Guidance Document 5th Edition September 2007. <http://www.mygfsi.com>)
- The absence of, or the failure to implement and maintain, one or more quality management system requirements, or a situation which would, on the basis of available objective evidence, raise significant doubt as to the quality of what the organization is supplying. (International Accreditation Forum. IAF Guidance Document Issue 4. IAR GD 2: 2005)
- Deviation from specified requirements related to the product or to certification requirements defined by the certification body.

Non-governmental body

Body other than a central government body or a local government body, including a nongovernmental body which has legal power to enforce a technical regulation.

Product certification

Verification that a certain product has passed performance and/or quality assurance tests or qualification requirements stipulated in standards or regulations or that it complies with a set of criteria governing quality and/or minimum performance requirements.

Standard

- Document approved by a recognized organization or entity, that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for products or related processes and production methods, with which compliance is not mandatory under international trade rules. It may also include or deal exclusively with terminology, symbols, packaging, marking or labelling requirements as they apply to a product, process or production method. (Technical Barriers to Trade agreement, Annex 1, 2)
- A normative document, established by consensus and approved by a recognized body that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context. (Global Food Safety Initiative Guidance Document 5th Edition September 2007. <http://www.mygfsi.com/>)

Standard setting body, organization or entity

Organization or entity that has recognized activities in standard setting. (ISO Guide 2, 4.3)

Surveillance

- Systematic iteration of conformity assessment activities as a basis for maintaining the validity of the statement of conformity (ISO/IEC 17000:200, 6.1)
- Follow-up audit to verify the validity of an issued certificate. (Global Food Safety Initiative Guidance Document 5th Edition September 2007. <http://www.mygfsi.com/>)

Technical regulation

Document which lays down product characteristics or their related processes and production methods, including the applicable administrative provisions, with which compliance is mandatory. It may also include or deal exclusively with terminology,

symbols, packaging, marking or labelling requirements as they apply to a product, process or production method. (TBT Agreement)

Third party*

- Person or body that is recognized as being independent of the parties involved, as concerns the issue in question, and involves no conflict of interest. (ISO/IEC Guide 2)
- A person or body that is independent of the organization or person that provides the object of conformity assessment. (ISO/IEC 17000, 2004, Definition 2.4)

Third party certification

An assessment carried out to ensure compliance with a publicly available standards or technical specifications. The assessment is carried out by an independent, third party organization that is qualified and licensed to issue certification when the assessment is successfully completed. This means that rather than an organization or company claiming to comply with industry standards, they have taken their commitment to quality further and invited in an external third party to verify that their product or service does indeed comply with the industry standards. (BSI British Standard. <http://www.bsigroup.com/en/ProductServices/Fire/Fire-alarm-installations/About-the-scheme/Third-party-certification/>)

Traceability

- The ability to trace the history, application or location of an entity by means of recorded identifications. (ISO 8402:1994 Quality management and quality assurance – Vocabulary)
- The ability to trace the history, application or location of that which is under consideration. (ISO 9000:2000 Quality Management Systems. Fundamentals and Vocabulary).
(For both these definitions, there is an additional clause which states that when relating to products, traceability specifically entails ‘the origin of materials and parts, the processing history, and the distribution and location of the product after delivery’).
- Ability to follow the movement of feed or food through specified stage/s of production, processing and distribution. (ISO 22005 Traceability in the feed and food chain – General principles and basic requirements for system design and implementation, First edition 2007)
- Property of a measurement result whereby the result can be related to a reference through documented unbroken chain of calibrations, each contributing to the measurement uncertainty. (ISO/IEC Guide 99:2007, 2.41)
- The ability to trace and follow a food, feed, food-producing animal or substance intended to be, or expected to be incorporated into a food or feed, through all stages of production, processing and distribution. (European Community Regulation 178/2002 ‘General principles and requirements of food law’ of 28 January 2002, and in force from 1 January 2005)
- The ability to follow the movement of a food through specified stage(s) of production, processing and distribution. (Codex Procedural Manual, Eighteenth edition, 2008)

Validation

Obtaining evidence that the elements of the HACCP plan are effective. (Codex Alimentarius Commission Code of Practice for Fishery and Fishery Products, First Edition, 2009. <http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/publications.jsp?lang=en>)

Verification

The application of methods, procedures, tests and other evaluations, in addition to monitoring to determine compliance with the standards or plan. (Code of Practice for Fishery and Fishery Products, First Edition, 2009. <http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/publications.jsp?lang=en>).

Risk assessment

The evaluation of the likelihood of entry, establishment or spread of a pest or disease within the territory of an importing Member according to the sanitary or phytosanitary measures which might be applied, and of the associated potential biological and economic consequences; or the evaluation of the potential for adverse effects on human or animal health arising from the presence of additives, contaminants, toxins or disease-causing organisms in food, beverages or feedstuffs.

Appropriate level of sanitary or phytosanitary protection

The level of protection deemed appropriate by the Member establishing a sanitary or phytosanitary measure to protect human, animal or plant life or health within its territory.

* As given in the FAO Ecolabelling Guidelines – FAO. Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries. Rome, FAO. 2005. 90p.

Private standards and related certification schemes are becoming significant features of international fish trade and marketing. They have emerged in areas where there is a perception that public regulatory frameworks are not achieving the desired outcomes, such as sustainability and responsible fisheries management, or to ensure food safety, quality and environmental sustainability in the growing aquaculture industry. Unfortunately, the proliferation of private standards is causing confusion for stakeholders: fishers and fish farmers trying to decide which certification scheme will bring the most market returns, buyers trying to decide which standards have most credence in the market and will offer returns to reputation and risk management, and governments trying to decide where private standards fit into their food safety and resource management strategies. This report analyses the two main types of private standards, namely ecolabels and food safety and quality standards, their impact on fish trade and their implications for a range of stakeholders. It addresses issues that are driving the development of private standards, their policy and governance implications, the assessment of their credence, the costs implications, traceability, etc., and the challenges and opportunities for developing countries.

