

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) has launched its 2017 policy development round, opening up six areas of its program to consultation from stakeholders

The areas in this development round cover: establishing a new standard to manage the mixing of MSC certified and non-certified fish feed ingredients; the development of a new standard for seaweed; a new program to recognise fisheries that are “In transition to MSC”; and an update on how to confirm the absence of forced labour in fisheries and supply chain organisations; harmonising fisheries assessment outcomes; and ensuring traceability of certified product within fisheries.

Dan Hoggarth, MSC’s Head of Standards Governance, said: “The MSC is committed to continually evolving and updating our program so that we reference the best available scientific research, remain relevant to a global market and incorporate the most effective management practices adopted in the industry. To ensure that all the changes we make to our program are effective and proportionate, we strongly encourage both current and prospective stakeholders to participate in this round of consultations. Their experience and expertise is invaluable to our considerations on all these important topics.”

The consultations are open until 30 April, with the exception of the consultation on labour practices, which closes on 14 May. A summary of each consultation topic is available below.

Labour practices

The MSC is extending the requirements for labour practices across its program. The proposal is for a self-declaration by certificate holders and those in assessment confirming the absence of forced and child labour in their operations.

In transition to MSC program

This provides both a pathway and recognition for fisheries making progress towards achieving MSC certification. This is the first consultation for this new program. The MSC are collecting opinions about the entry requirements for the program, the time frame that fisheries will be

able to stay in the program and a credible verification system that confirms if fisheries are making progress.

Fishery assessment harmonisation

Fisheries from the same region, with the same target species should achieve the same scores and be required to make the same improvements when assessed against the MSC Standard – even when they are assessed by different people. Called harmonisation, this outcome is being developed as part of the MSC Simplification project. In this consultation period, the MSC is collecting opinions on the best way to achieve harmonisation.

Mass balance chain of custody

This standard defines how MSC certified marine ingredients are mixed with non-certified but approved marine ingredients in ASC compliant fish feed. This standard is initially only for use by fish feed mills seeking certification against the new ASC Feed Standard. It is for business-to-business use only.

The MSC want to know if this is an effective and auditable standard. They are also collecting opinions on how the ASC Feed Standard and MSC Mass Balance Standard can work together. The new standard will hopefully be released in early 2018.

Fisheries traceability

As part of a greater review of its Chain of Custody Standard, the MSC are collecting ideas on how traceability can be improved at the start of the certified supply chain. Proposals include improved application of Chain of Custody to at-sea activities, earlier consideration of traceability in the fishery assessment process, and more support for assessment bodies in deciding the level of risk for traceability and deciding where Chain of Custody should begin.

Seaweed standard

There are two separate consultations on the ASC–MSC Seaweed Program in this development round. These will be the final two before the new Seaweed Standard is released into a pilot phase later this year. Firstly, the MSC are seeking feedback on the most recent draft of the standard and secondly, they are consulting on the certification and accreditation requirements that will be used by certifiers when making assessments against this standard.

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