Seafood Certifications

Seafood Certifications with Social Elements and Certification Initiatives

This document provides a list of certification programs with social components; the list is not exhaustive and does not include all seafood certifications. The information provided was submitted by the certification programs. This document is intended for informational purposes only and should not be construed as legal advice nor as providing recommendations or endorsements of any kind. Readers should always refer to the original reference source for complete information and important contextual background such as the scope and objectives of the specific resource.

To learn specific social responsibility information collected by these certifications, please reference Social Responsibility Information for Seafood Supply Chains: A Compilation of Resources

Aquaculture Stewardship Council

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) is a global organization working with aquaculture producers, seafood processors, retail and foodservice companies, scientists, conservation groups and the public to promote environmental and social certification and labelling program for responsibly farmed seafood. The ASC operates with Chain of Custody (CoC) certification to ensure traceability, which includes certifying environmental, social and economic aspects of the supply chain. Social and economic issues considered during the audit process include: labor rights and conditions, gender rights, cultural rights, social services, income, and value chain fairness. Launched in January 2012, the ASC set up the CoC requirements and procedures with the Marine Stewardship Council (see more details under the MSC section of this report) and uses standards developed according to ISEAL guidelines.

Founded in 2010 by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Dutch Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH), the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) is an independent not for profit organization with global influence. ASC aims to be the world’s leading certification and labelling program for responsibly farmed seafood. The ASC’s primary role is to manage the global standards for responsible aquaculture, which were developed by the WWF Aquaculture Dialogues. For ASC, CoC is certified through application of the MSC CoC, to which ASC CoC requirements have been added as a scope, to ASC certified aquaculture products. Only products that originate in ASC certified farms and are sold through an MSC certified CoC (with ASC CoC scope) are eligible to carry the ASC ecolabel. ASC standards include social criteria which state that aquaculture should be undertaken in a socially responsible manner that ensures that the operations do not negatively impact farm workers and local communities. This includes criteria regarding the labor rights of individuals, and labor requirements in ASC standards are based on the core principles of the International Labor Organization (ILO).
**Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP)**

Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) is an aquaculture certification program developed by the Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA), an international, non-profit trade association which seeks to promote responsible aquaculture practice through education, advocacy, and by providing businesses and others with resources to support sustainable aquaculture. BAP certification standards exist for the entire aquaculture supply chain, including seafood processing plants, farms, hatcheries, and feed mills. BAP certification is based on independent audits that evaluate compliance with the BAP standards and address key topics such as food safety, quality, traceability, the environment, animal welfare, and social responsibility. BAP facilities must submit to an annual audit in order to maintain certification. Audits are conducted by independent (ISO 17065) Certification Bodies and facilities that meet the standard.

**Fair Trade Certified Seafood**

In 2014, Fair Trade USA launched its Seafood program in an effort to bring the benefits of Fair Trade to fishermen, fish farmers, and seafood processing workers. Through Fair Trade certification and improved market access, the Seafood program aims to build strong communities by ensuring financially stable families, safe working conditions, access to services through community development premium investments, and biologically healthy ecosystems. Fair Trade's standards use a step-wise approach that requires improvement of social, economic, and environmental conditions over time, benefiting both communities and the natural ecosystems upon which they depend.

Fair Trade USA, a non-profit organization, is a leading third-party certifier of Fair Trade products in the United States. Fair Trade uses a market-based approach to ensure safe working conditions, and helps producers compete equitably in international markets. Fair Trade USA launched its Capture Fisheries Program in 2014, in an effort to bring small-scale fishermen and their communities the benefits of Fair Trade. The Capture Fisheries Program uses a step-wise approach that requires fishers to address and improve social, economic, and environmental conditions over time. To ensure that Fair Trade seafood can be identified and traced along the supply chain, all traders must adhere to Fair Trade traceability guidelines as well as provide and retain Chain of Custody (CoC) records with Fair Trade-required product information. Fair Trade USA standards contain a variety of social responsibility criteria and evaluate for progress on a variety of social dimensions.

**Friend of the Sea**

Friend of the Sea (FOS) — a Nonprofit organization — is committed to improving the global sustainability of seafood by developing international certification programs for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. FOS criteria follow the FAO Guidelines for eco-labeling and include a social component to the audit. Audit checklists are available to download from the FOS website. All the checklists include a social accountability section that has four requirements: compliance with international and ILO directives regarding child labor, remunerating workers with salaries conforming at least to the legal minimum, assuring workers’ access to medical care, and applying safety measures
in accordance with legal requirements. FOS also recommends that organizations should be SA8000 certified (see SA8000 — Social Accountability in this section for more information), which is a standard based off of ILO, UN and national laws that covers child labor, forced labor, health and safety issues, working hours, and disciplinary practices, in additions to other relevant standards. These audits are conducted by independent Certification Bodies.

**Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA) Best Aquaculture Practices**
The Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA) is an international, nonprofit trade association with robust membership and educational programming for individuals and businesses alike. GAA’s vision is to see a world that embraces and enables the role of responsibly farmed seafood in meeting global nutrition needs. This is executed through their work in advancing a safe, quality seafood supply through environmentally and socially responsible aquaculture. The development of its Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) standards allows for the full production chain to be addressed (seafood processing plants, farms, hatcheries, and feed mills). The BAP standards address key topics such as food safety, quality, traceability, the environment, animal welfare, and social responsibility. Regarding social responsibility, all of the BAP standards cover a wide range of subjects including, but not limited to, child labor, young workers, and the treatment, rights, benefits, and safety of the workers. Other social responsibility provisions include discussion of proper medical care, staff facilities, protective clothing, training, benefits, worker rights, minimum wage, and the abolition of forced labor and human trafficking. Membership available at: www.aquaculturealliance.org

**GLOBAL G.A.P.**
The GLOBAL G.A.P. Aquaculture Standard operates under a third party accredited certification system. To claim certified status at point of sale, all stages of production must be certified: feed, seedlings, farming, and post-harvest activities. Certification is linked to the scientific name of the product. GLOBAL G.A.P. is recognized by the GFSI. GLOBAL G.A.P. Aquaculture Certification requires the Integrated Farm Assurance All Farm and Aquaculture Modules, the Chain of Custody Standard, and the Compound Feed Manufacturing Standard. The new voluntary Responsible Operations Standard add-on for feed mills supplying to GLOBAL G.A.P. certified farms adds social, environmental, and marine sourcing sustainable criteria to the compulsory food safety requirements and good manufacturing practices. There are currently 30 species certified under this system in 35 countries worldwide. Recall/withdrawal mock tests are mandatory and must be performed annually.

Global G.A.P. (Good Agriculture Practice) is a global organization that sets voluntary standards for the certification of agricultural products around the world. The Global G.A.P. aquaculture standard includes criteria for environmental and ecological care, legal compliance, food safety, workers’ occupational health, and safety and welfare. The standard covers the entire product chain from feed to hatcheries and farms and chain of custody. In addition, Global G.A.P. offers GRASP, which stands
for GlobalG.A.P. risk assessment on social practice. GRASP is an add-on, voluntary module for the assessment of workers’ health, safety and welfare.

**International Transport Workers’ Federation Blue Certificate**

The International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF), together with ILO social partners, has come up with a set of policies to establish minimum standards for workers in the fishing industry, ILO Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (ILO C188), which is yet to be ratified by sufficient countries to see it come into force. ITF has a set of policies applicable to seafarers (specifically, the shipping industry) that could also be applied to fishing vessels, including those flying the flag of a country that ITF has identified as a flag of convenience (FOC; see ‘Challenges’). According to the ITF’s website, 'all FOC vessels covered by an ITF- acceptable agreement are issued an ITF Blue Certificate by the ITF Secretariat, which signifies the ITF's acceptance of the wages and working conditions on board.' Certification compliance is monitored by a network of over 130 ITF inspectors in ports throughout the globe.

**Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)**

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is a global nonprofit organization working with partners around the world to keep oceans healthy and full of life through sustainable fishing. The program, which is voluntary, encourages responsible fishing management and sustainable fishing practices to protect the future of fishing communities, preserve ocean ecosystems, and ensure seafood is available to everyone, always.

Developed in coordination with scientists, conservation groups, industry, and stakeholders, the MSC Standard is the global gold standard for wild caught sustainable seafood. To become certified, fisheries enter a rigorous, impartial, transparent, and traceable process. Only seafood from fisheries that meet the MSC’s strict standard for sustainability can be sold with the MSC blue fish label.

The Marine Stewardship Council condemns the use of forced or child labor and recognizes the importance of social issues when considering sustainability. All fisheries in the MSC program must complete and submit a Certificate Holder Forced and Child Labor Policies, Practices and Measures template, detailing the measures they have in place to mitigate the presence of forced or child labor. If a fishery does not submit the appropriate template, the fishery will not be eligible for certification and existing certificates will be suspended. This is the first stage of a phased approach where the MSC will introduce auditing and requirements, on a risk basis, for the exclusion of forced labor in MSC certified fisheries and supply chains.

**Naturland Organic Aquaculture and Sustainable Capture Fishery**

Naturland is one of the major international associations for organic agriculture and promotes organic farming worldwide. Currently over 65,000 farmers, bee-keepers, fish farmers and fishers in 58 countries are working according to the Naturland standards. At Naturland, organic applies to what
lives in water, too. With its standards on Organic Aquaculture, Naturland transferred the organic and social principles to the production of fish and seafood and with its standards on Sustainable Capture Fishery created a framework for sustainable fishery of wildfish.

The Naturland understanding of sustainability also includes the social aspect and thus the situation of the people in their working and living environments. That is why the social conditions found both on board ship and on fish farms, certified to the Naturland standards, come under scrutiny during the inspection procedure. Wherever they are in the world, conformity is required with the Naturland Social Responsibility standards. With reference to such UN conventions as those on human and children’s rights, and the core labour standards of the International Labour Organization, they govern working conditions and protect the employees. The standards include the prohibition of exploitative child labour and any form of forced labour, as well as a guarantee of freedom of assembly and access to trade unions. Other key aspects are the adoption of measures on health and safety at the workplace, and opportunities for further training.

With its supplementary certification Naturland Fair, Naturland combines organic and fair trade under one logo which is applied to products from both the north and the south. Because aquaculture farmers, fishermen and workers must get a fair deal for their hard work. With the Naturland Fair standards Naturland has established a set of stringent and obligatory standards. Naturland Fair partners pay fair prices to the producers, cultivate long-term, co-operative trading relationships and acknowledge their social responsibility. Procuring raw materials from local sources and commitment to communal projects contribute to the common good.

**Responsible Fishing Scheme**

The Seafish Responsible Fishing Scheme (RFS) is a voluntary vessel based program certifying high standards of crew welfare and responsible catch practices on fishing vessels. The RFS is a ‘business-to-business’ tool to help fishermen showcase best practice through independent, third-party auditing. The program includes standards for crew safety, health, and welfare as well as responsible catching practices on vessels. After undergoing a comprehensive review process, the RFS was re-launched in 2016. Vessels and their skipper are now audited against the RFS standard by the scheme’s independent certification body Acoura. Seafish is also developing a mechanism for a Vessel Improvement Project (VIP). The VIP will benchmark the skippers and vessels in the program against the RFS standard and develop milestones based on the results –creating a roadmap to full RFS compliance.

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The current Standard owner, Seafish, the public body that supports the £10bn UK seafood industry, and Global Seafood Assurances (GSA), a new not-for-profit organisation seeking to offer full supply chain assurance for wild and farmed seafood, are currently working in partnership to develop Version 2 of the RFS. The updated version will streamline the structure and strengthen the focus on decent working conditions and operational best practice from the catch to the quay. These proposed revisions can be found in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for RFS Version 2. The new version will be available from May 2020.