CERTIFICATION AND RATINGS
COLLABORATION

Seafood Certification & Ratings Collaboration
Complementary Roles Brief | January 2018

Ratified by Aquaculture Stewardship Council, Fair Trade USA, Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch, Sustainable Fisheries Partnership, and Marine Stewardship Council.
The statements in this document about certification and ratings programs apply only to the programs who have ratified the document.

Language note: Our certification and ratings programs have different claims. The term sustainable/responsible is used in this document to refer collectively to seafood that is environmentally and/or socially sustainable and/or responsible.

Certification and Ratings – A Common Goal

Certification and ratings are tools that measure fishery and aquaculture performance. They aim to help businesses and consumers select sustainable/responsible seafood and help businesses, producers, governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders identify and make improvements. They are committed to incentivizing fisheries and aquaculture to undertake continuous improvement toward environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and economic viability.

Our theory of change is that business demand for sustainable/responsible seafood, coupled with engagement from the supply chain, is an important motivation for producers to improve their practices, often through fishery or aquaculture improvement projects. Businesses care about seafood sustainability/responsibility because they want to assure a long-term supply of seafood and reduce risk to their brands, and because an increasing number of customers ask for sustainable/responsible products.

The producers demonstrate that they have improved toward sustainability/responsibility by becoming certified or through an increase in their ratings from red through green. For producers, the driver for change may be a demand from a retailer for specific performance improvement; a desire to access a market which has a commitment to source only sustainable/responsible product or is willing to pay a market premium; a desire to improve their performance for the local environmental, social, and economic benefits that attend sustainable/responsible practices; or a requirement from a certification or rating system that change is necessary to maintain certification or rating status.

The Seafood Certification & Ratings Collaboration unites five global seafood certification and ratings programs working together to coordinate our tools and increase our impact so that more seafood producers move along a clear path toward environmental sustainability and social responsibility. Learn more at www.certificationandratings.org.

How Certifications and Ratings Complement Each Other

Certification and ratings programs play complementary roles to drive improvement and meet a range of market needs for stakeholders including producers, businesses, governments, and NGOs.

Ratings focus on assessing as many seafood sources as possible in key markets to provide information on the full spectrum of low-to-high performance for fisheries and aquaculture. This information can be used to identify opportunities for producers to pursue improvement projects and certifications, as well as help businesses evaluate sourcing options.

Certifications directly engage with fisheries or farms and require them to address social and environmental challenges to improve and meet the certification standard. Certifications also engage with the supply chain to verify the sustainability/responsibility and origin of certified products.

For details on the similarities and differences among Seafood Certification & Ratings Collaboration members, please see Appendix A.

What the Collaboration Recommends for Major Buyers

The Seafood Certification & Ratings Collaboration recommends that companies strive to sell only seafood from assured sustainable/responsible sources. Companies can accomplish this objective by changing and improving their sources.

Our certification and ratings programs offer a range of tools to assess the level of performance and support different responsible sourcing strategies and claims:

- Certification provides the highest level of assurance that the product is verified to be sustainable/responsible, is harvested legally, and is traceable back to its source.

- A green rating indicates that the source has a high level of environmental sustainability/responsibility, but the responsibility for verifying the claim and ensuring traceability lies with the business purchasing from the source. A yellow rating indicates that the source is a good alternative with some environmental concerns.

- An effective fishery or aquaculture improvement project helps fisheries or farms that are not currently sustainable/responsible to improve toward sustainability/responsibility.

To meet this objective, companies may take different approaches to responsible sourcing depending on their brand, market needs, and market influence including: sourcing only sustainable/responsible products today; transitioning their seafood range to only sustainable/responsible products over time; and/or focusing their efforts on improving lower-performing seafood sources.

Appendix A: Similarities and Differences Among Collaboration Members

Aquaculture Stewardship Council

Scope	- Aquaculture certification - Certifies individual farms or groups of farms - Includes environmental, social, and economic issues
Purpose	- Help farms demonstrate that they achieve and maintain a high level of environmental and social performance. - Motivate farms to improve their performance, become certified, and maintain that performance into the future.
Participation	Farms seek certification voluntarily and pay for it through a third-party process.
Assessment Process & Assurance	- A third-party audit company, accredited by Accreditation Services International, conducts an in-person audit to determine if the farm meets the certification standard. Multiple certification bodies may apply for accreditation, in accordance with ISO 17065/17011 requirements. - Systems and processes are subject to scrutiny by ASC governance bodies (Stakeholder Advisory Group, Technical Advisory Group and Supervisory Board). - Certification involves stakeholder engagement throughout the process, is fully public and transparent and includes external quality assurance. ASC has a public appeals process consistent with FAO ecolabeling guidelines. - The certification process follows prescribed requirements that are public and developed, like the standards themselves, through extensive public consultation. - ASC standards, certification requirements and processes are consistent with the requirements of FAO and ISEAL's standard setting and assurance codes.
Traceability & Labeling	- ASC products must be traceable to the unit of certification, and the entire supply chain must be certified to the MSC Chain of Custody standard (COC). - Assurance of traceability and product integrity is provided by third-part auditors working for third-party accredited certification companies. - The ASC ensures regular product checks, trace-backs and special investigations. - Annual audits follow defined procedures for checking that the five core principles of the COC are adhered to, and include in-factory checks on product processing, segregation, record keeping and mass balance. - Control of logo use follows ISEAL Guidance on claims and labelling. - ASC invests significantly in policing the use of claims and authorizing the use of the ASC logo on products. - The generation of licence revenue from the use of the ASC logo is managed by a separate entity, ASC International; which distances ASC logo activity from its core certification activity.
Role in Improvement	- Certification requires farms to directly improve their performance, reducing their impacts, to meet the standard and achieve certification. - Improvement efforts typically occur prior to seeking certification, as part of the certification process and when changes are made to the standard, that the client must meet to maintain certification. - ASC is consistent with ISEAL's Impacts Code and must demonstrate this annually.

Fair Trade USA

Scope	- Wild capture certification - Certifies groups of small- to medium-scale fishermen and processing facilities prior to export - Includes environmental, social, and economic issues
Purpose	- Help fisheries demonstrate that they achieve a high level of social performance and are continually improving their level of environmental performance. - Motivate fisheries to become certified, continue to improve their performance over time, and maintain that performance into the future. - Empower fishers and workers with the Fair Trade premium and improved trade relationships. - Offer consumers an opportunity to connect with impact on the water through their purchases.
Participation	Fisheries seek certification voluntarily and pay for it through a third-party process.
Assessment Process & Assurance	- An accredited third party conducts an in-person audit of a group of fishermen, landing sites, and processing facility(ies) where applicable, to determine if they meet the certification standard. - The certification process is public and transparent, and includes stakeholder engagement, peer review, and a public appeals process. - Certification standards and processes are overseen by governance bodies and are consistent with the relevant requirements of the FAO and ISEAL standard setting and assurance codes.
Traceability & Labeling	- Products can display the certification label by paying a service fee and securing chain of custody certification to ensure products are traceable to the source. - Assurance of traceability and product integrity is provided by audits. - Annual audits follow defined procedures for checking that the core principles of the Trade Standard are adhered to, and include in-factory checks on product processing, segregation, record keeping and mass balance where applicable. - Control of label use follows ISEAL Guidance on claims and labelling. - FTUSA polices the use of claims and authorization of the use of the FTUSA seal on products.
Role in Improvement	- Desire to become certified and Fair Trade price premium create motivation for fisheries to improve their performance. - If the audit identifies conditions, the client commits to address these to achieve and/or maintain certification. - When changes are made to the standard, the client must continue to meet the standard to maintain certification.

Marine Stewardship Council

Scope	• Wild capture certification • Certifies a group defined by the target stock(s), fishing gear(s), and vessel(s) pursuing the stock • Includes environmental issues and forced/child labor
Purpose	• Help fisheries demonstrate that they achieve and maintain a high level of environmental performance. • Motivate fisheries to improve their performance, become certified, and maintain that performance into the future.
Participation	• Fisheries seek certification voluntarily and pay for it through a third-party process.
Assessment Process & Assurance	• A third party accredited by Accreditation Services International conducts an in-person audit of a group to determine if it meets the certification standard. Multiple certification bodies may apply for accreditation, in accordance with ISO 17065/17011 requirements. • Systems and processes are subject to scrutiny by MSC governance bodies (Stakeholder Advisory Group, Technical Advisory Board, Board of Trustees). • There is stakeholder engagement from the beginning to the end of the process, including for instance the selection of the third-party auditors, which is fully public and transparent, and follows a set of certification processes that is public, and developed, like the standard itself, through extensive public consultation. It includes external peer review and quality assurance. • MSC has a public appeals process consistent with FAO ecolabeling guidelines. • MSC certification requirements and processes are consistent with the requirements of FAO, ISEAL standard setting and assurance codes, and GSSI recognition requirements.
Traceability & Labeling	• MSC products must be traceable to the unit of certification, and the entire supply chain must be certified to the MSC Chain of Custody standard. • Assurance of traceability and product integrity is provided by third-party auditing and third-party accreditation. • The MSC conducts regular product DNA checks, tracebacks and special investigations. • Annual audits by CABs follow defined procedures for checking that the five core principles of the chain of custody standard are adhered to, and include in-factory checks on product processing, segregation, record keeping and mass balance. • Control of ecolabeling use follows ISEAL Guidance on claims and labelling. • MSC invests significantly in policing the use of claims and authorizing the use of the MSC ecolabel on products. • MSC ecolabeling use, and the generation of licence revenue from its use, is managed by a separate entity – MSC International – which has a separate Board from MSC, which distances MSC ecolabeling activity from its core certification activity.
Role in Improvement	• Desire to become certified creates motivation for fisheries to improve their performance. • If the audit identifies conditions, the client commits to address these to achieve and/or maintain certification. • When changes are made to the standard, the client must continue to meet the standard to maintain certification.

Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch Ratings

Scope	• Aquaculture and wild capture ratings • Rates: a) specific fisheries; and b) aquaculture mostly at the regional level, sometimes at the farm level • Includes environmental issues
Purpose	• Through science-based assessments, inform stakeholders including consumers, businesses, NGOs, producers, and governments, about the range of performance of fisheries and aquaculture. • Motivate fisheries and aquaculture producers to improve their performance and provide information on needed improvements.
Participation	• The majority of ratings are assessed free of charge without the prior approval of fisheries and aquaculture producers. Once assessed, producers typically participate in the process through sharing data and reviewing results. A producer may request to be rated and pay for their own assessment, but these instances make up a small proportion of overall ratings.
Assessment Process & Assurance	• A Seafood Watch staff or contracted analyst assesses publicly available data about a fishery or aquaculture unit against the standard. When data is pertinent to an assessment is available but not in the public domain, sources are encouraged to make it public. • The assessment process includes internal review, external peer-review, and stakeholder engagement before the ratings are finalized and published.
Traceability & Labeling	• Seafood Watch business partners use ratings to provide information about the environmental performance of the seafood they sell to customers (per the Common Vision). • Seafood Watch business partners may communicate about the environmental performance of their seafood offerings via a diversity of platforms including CSR reports, online claims, or indication of red-yellow-green color ratings in the fresh case if they have a traceability system in place.
Role in Improvement	• Red and yellow ratings create motivation for fisheries and aquaculture to improve their performance and provide information on needed improvements. • SFW staff connects stakeholders with existing improvement efforts and/or advises stakeholders directly.

Sustainable Fisheries Partnership FishSource

Scope	• Aquaculture and wild capture rating • Rates specific fisheries and aquaculture zones • Includes environmental issues. Social and economic issues will be added later this year
Purpose	• Inform business partners about the range of performance of their seafood sources and priorities for improvement efforts. • Engage seafood suppliers in FIPs and AIPs.
Participation	• The majority of SFP ratings are assessed free of charge without the voluntary participation of fisheries and aquaculture producers. A producer may request to be rated and pay for their own assessment, but these instances make up a small proportion of overall ratings.
Assessment Process & Assurance	• An SFP reviewer assesses public data about a fishery's or aquaculture zone's performance to generate a rating used privately by SFP's business partners. • All the material used in the rating is public on FishSource. SFP encourages producers, suppliers, and other stakeholders to provide public feedback via FishSource to highlight new data or needed corrections.
Traceability & Labeling	• SFP ratings are not used as the basis for point-of-sale labeling or claims and do not include traceability. • Engaging SFP partners' supply chains in FIPs and AIPs involves verifying the claimed source and suppliers via trace-backs and other mechanisms. This typically results in SFP partners strengthening their traceability and/or knowledge of sources.
Role in Improvement	• SFP ratings identify opportunities to engage suppliers in FIPs and AIPs. • SFP partners commit to identify all seafood sources and require all suppliers to launch FIPs and AIPs where necessary.