



Get certified!

Your guide to the ASC-MSC

Seaweed Standard audit process

Contents



Become part of a collective effort to ensure healthy oceans and responsible seaweed production around the world

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) and Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) are international non-profit organisations established to safeguard seafood supplies for the future. They are leaders in certification and labelling programs for environmentally sustainable and responsibly produced seafood.

Both organisations work to transform the world's seafood markets. They have joined forces to create a standard that rewards sustainable and responsible seaweed production across wild-enhanced-aquaculture boundaries.

When consumers or businesses choose to buy certified sustainable seaweed, they reward farms and wild harvest operations that employ environmentally sustainable and socially responsible seaweed harvesting and farming practices.



Let's get started

This guide provides an overview of what you can expect during each stage of the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard audit process. We hope it will help to ensure that your seaweed farm or wild harvest operation audit is efficient and effective, and give you the best possible chance of a positive outcome.

If you have questions at any stage we would be happy to help. Please contact:

seaweedstandard@msc.org

www.asc-aqua.org/seaweed-standard

Together we can ensure responsible farming and healthy oceans for the future.

Benefits of certification

Achieving certification to the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard validates the efforts made by your seaweed operation to ensure long term social and environmental sustainability.

Certified seaweed producers have the opportunity to supply markets where environmental and social credibility plays an increasingly decisive role in purchasing decisions.

Potential benefits include:

- Socially responsible and environmentally sustainable seaweed production
- Reputation enhanced
- Livelihoods protected
- Access to new markets
- Existing markets secured
- Promotional opportunities

Together we can
ensure responsible
farming and healthy
oceans for the future

Who can apply?

The ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard is applicable to all seaweed operations around the world. All locations and scales of seaweed operations, including both wild harvest operations and production from at-sea or land-based aquaculture systems (farms), can apply for certification.

Eligible

All species of seaweed (algae) including:

- Both marine and freshwater algae
- Both macroalgae and microalgae
 - Macroalgae i.e. large, multicellular algae easily observed without a microscope, such as kelp
 - Microalgae i.e. microscopic algae, often unicellular
- Introduced species where the first introduction occurred more than 20 years prior to the initial audit – continuous introduction is permitted
- Introduced species cultured in on-land facilities that are completely separated from the aquatic environment
- Beach-cast seaweed

Not eligible

- Marine plants other than seaweed e.g. seagrass
- The use of mutagenic, carcinogenic or teratogenic pesticides, or any other chemicals that persist as toxins in the marine environment or on the farm, or farmed seaweeds.

Companies seeking certification must have been in operation for at least 12 months, or one harvest cycle, whichever is less, and must have available records of performance data.



1

The ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard

The ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard reflects the most up to date understanding of internationally accepted fisheries and aquaculture science and best practice management, and has been developed in consultation with academics, scientists, industry experts and conservation groups.

It is the first international seaweed standard, incorporates United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UN FAO) guidelines and meets the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance (ISEAL) code of good social and environmental practice.



Certified seaweed operations must be well-managed, environmentally sustainable and socially responsible.

If you decide to begin the audit process, an accredited third party conformity assessment body (CAB) will provide an assessment team to independently score your farm or wild harvest operation to some or all of the 31 performance

indicators (PIs) that make up the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard.

The number of PIs scored depends on the type of seaweed production system that you use. Your CAB will explain exactly which of the PIs will be scored for your operation.






 Principle 1 Sustainable wild populations	 Principle 2 Environmental impacts	 Principle 3 Effective management	 Principle 4 Social responsibility	 Principle 5 Community relations and interaction
PI 1.1 Stock status	PI 2.1 Habitat	PI 3.1 Legal and/or customary framework	PI 4.1 Child labour	PI 5.1 Community impacts
PI 1.2 Harvest strategy	PI 2.2 Ecosystem structure and function	PI 3.2 Decision-making processes	PI 4.2 Forced, bonded or compulsory labour	PI 5.2 Conflict resolution
PI 1.3 Genetic impact on wild stock	PI 2.3 ETP species	PI 3.3 Compliance and enforcement	PI 4.3 Discrimination	PI 5.3 Rights of indigenous groups
	PI 2.4 Other species		PI 4.4 Health, safety and insurance	PI 5.4 Visibility, positioning and orientation of farms or water-based structures
	PI 2.5 Waste management and pollution control		PI 4.5 Fair and decent wages	PI 5.5 Identification and recovery of substantial gear
	PI 2.6 Pest(s) and disease(s) and management		PI 4.6 Freedom of association and collective bargaining	PI 5.6 Noise, light and odour
	PI 2.7 Energy efficiency		PI 4.7 Disciplinary practices	PI 5.7 Decommissioning of abandoned production units
	PI 2.8 Translocations		PI 4.8 Working hours	
	PI 2.9 Introduction of alien species		PI 4.9 Environmental and social training	

Table 1: List of performance indicators

How does the scoring process work?

Your farm or wild harvest operation will be assessed for all applicable performance indicators (PIs).

For each PI, there are three possible outcomes:

- ✓ Your operation meets global best practice
- ✓ Your operation meets the acceptable level of practice but requires improvements to reach global best practice
- ✗ The acceptable level of practice is not met

Once each PI has been scored, the combined outcomes for all PIs will determine if certification is awarded.

- ✓ If your operation meets global best practice for all applicable PIs, certification will be awarded
- ✓ If your operation meets global best practice for most applicable PIs and some improvements are required, certification will be awarded
- ✗ If too many PIs require improvements, certification will not be awarded
- ✗ If any PI does not meet the acceptable level of practice, certification will not be awarded

During the audit process you will have the opportunity to make changes and improve your operations in order to meet acceptable levels of practice.

Good to know

For each of the five core principles of the Seaweed Standard only one or two PIs can require improvements. Depending on the type of production system used by your seaweed operation, the overall number of PIs that can require improvements will vary (to a maximum of 8).

Improvements

If your farm or wild harvest operation requires improve-

ments for any PI, you will receive one or more ‘conditions’ related to that PI.

You will be required to take appropriate action to improve performance and achieve global best practice within a predetermined timeframe (typically one year).

Action plans for improvement

If improvements are identified, you will need to develop an action plan outlining:

- The conditions that have been set for your farm or wild harvest operation
- How they will be addressed
- Who will address them
- When they will be addressed
- How the action is expected to improve performance
- How the assessment team will consider whether the improvements are on track and whether they’ve been completed

Critical conditions and further opportunities for improvement

If, during the assessment process, the acceptable level of practice is not met for any PI, a ‘critical condition’ will be raised. Following the initial assessment of all PIs, the audit process will be put on hold to provide an opportunity for you to address the issues raised.

You will then have 3 months to improve your operations to ensure all PIs meet the Seaweed Standard requirements. In some circumstances, the time allowed for you to make improvements may be extended to 6 months. Once all issues have been addressed, the audit process will continue.

Category	Production location and type	Linkages to wild stocks
A	Harvest of natural populations	Wild stocks harvested
Bi	Cultivation at sea (including production systems which require some stages cultivated in land-based hatcheries followed by grow-out at sea)	Seed supplied from wild stocks
Bii		Supply of seed from wild stocks NOT required or negligible
Ci	Cultivation entirely in land-based systems	Seed supplied from wild stocks
Cii		Supply of seed from wild stocks NOT required or negligible

Table 2: Seaweed production categories

Seaweed production categories

Depending on the location and type of seaweed production (i.e. harvest of natural population, cultivation at sea, cultivation entirely in land-based systems) your operations may not need to be scored against certain PIs.

For example, a land-based aquaculture system that does not depend on wild stocks or seeds (category Cii) would not be assessed against the PIs related to stock status (1.1) and their management (1.2).

The independent third party conformity assessment body (CAB) will determine the category of your seaweed operation using [redacted] and explain which PIs will need to be scored.

Good to know

- Social requirements (covered in principles 4 and 5) will always be audited for both farms and wild harvest operations. This part of the audit will be carried out by a qualified social assessor. Interviews with farm workers and others are a key part of the social audit in addition to team observations and documentary evidence.
- The method by which some social requirements are scored is modified for small family businesses.
- The cumulative impact of other ASC-MSC certified seaweed farms or wild harvest operations will need to be considered (where these exist).



2

Preparing for the audit process

Preparation and good project management are key to ensuring a smooth, timely and cost-effective assessment. Many farms and wild harvest operations have found it useful to designate a member of staff or hire a project manager to monitor the audit process and act as a point of contact to the assessment team.



ASC and MSC developed the Seaweed Standard to which farms and wild harvest operations are assessed. To maintain the highest level of impartiality and minimise conflict of interest, audits are carried out by a third party auditor: an accredited third party conformity assessment body (CAB) which employs a team of experts (the assessment team) to independently score the seaweed farm or wild harvest operation.

Choosing a conformity assessment body (CAB)

The role of the conformity assessment body (CAB) is to provide an independent, third party audit of your farm or wild harvest operation against the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard.

The CAB has a responsibility to consult with you and other stakeholders in an impartial way in order to determine if you meet the Standard. They are not obliged to conduct new research, but use the existing evidence to reach a judgment.

A lack of data or documentation will result in higher uncertainty about the performance of a farm or wild harvest operation. This may result in lower scores and can increase the cost of audits.

To get the most out of the audit process, we recommend that you take the time to look into different CABs and choose the one that offers you the best service.

CABs must be accredited by Accreditation Services International (ASI) to conduct assessments to the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard. ASI monitors CABs to

ensure that they are complying with ASC and MSC requirements. A list of accredited CABs can be found on the **ASI website**.

We recommend that you:

- Get quotes from two or more CABs
- Ensure they have a good knowledge and understanding of your farm or wild harvest operation or of other similar operations
- Check that they can perform both environmental and social audits
- Interview them
- Check their availability suits your timescales and that the timings they have suggested seem feasible given the complexity of your operation, the timing of any seasonal part of the operation that they may wish to observe, and the stakeholders involved
- Commission a pre-audit
- Ask them to provide testimonials from recent clients

Defining the contract

Once you have chosen a CAB, you will need to sign a contract with them for the duration of the audit process.

Find out more:

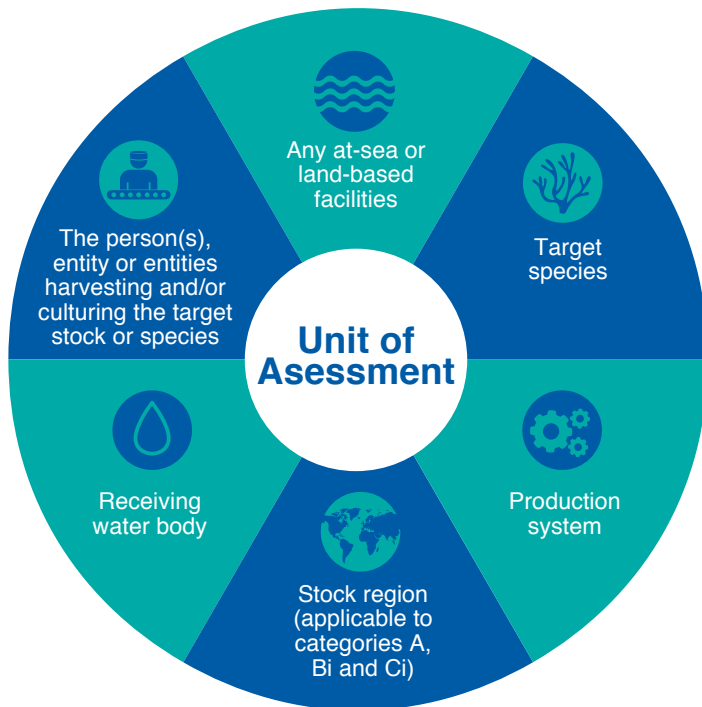
A full list of accredited conformity assessment bodies is available at: www.accreditation-services.com/archives/certification_bodies

We recommend that you take the time to look into different CABs and choose the one that offers you the best service

Notes

Deciding on the Unit of Assessment

At the very beginning of the audit process, you should provide your CAB with the information necessary to determine the Unit of Assessment (UoA). The UoA defines what is being audited during the certification process and includes:



Good to know

The Unit of Certification (UoC) is the unit entitled to receive an ASC or MSC certificate if the audit is successful. The UoC includes the UoA plus other client group members, such as NGOs or seaweed processors, who are contributing to the cost of the assessment but are not part of the management of the actual farm or wild harvest operation.

MSC Chain of Custody certification and seaweed traceability

The MSC Chain of Custody Standard gives assurance that seaweed products bearing the ASC and/or MSC ecolabel come from a sustainable and socially responsible source which is certified to the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard.

Certification of the entire supply chain is necessary for seaweed from your farm or wild harvest operation to be sold as “ASC and/or MSC certified” and for the MSC and/or ASC ecolabel to be used on packs or menus.

Which label?

Products from different seaweed production categories will carry different labels.



Wild harvest (Category A) – MSC ecolabel



Farmed (Categories Bii and Cii) – ASC label



Enhanced (Categories Bi & Ci) or Mixed source – MSC ecolabel and ASC logo (must be used together)



Good to know

Certified sustainable seaweed may also be used for beauty products or other commodities that do not carry an ecolabel.

Do you need a Chain of Custody certificate?

To meet the traceability requirement of the MSC Chain of Custody Standard, your farm or wild harvest operation will need to have systems in place to show that certified seaweed and seaweed products are segregated from any non-certified products. Certified seaweed must be correctly identified and traceable back to your farm or wild harvest operation.

In some cases, the assessment team may determine that your farm or wild harvest operation and/or other client group members (e.g. the processor) need to have their own Chain of Custody certification. For example, when certified and non-certified seaweed is cultured in the same farm and there is therefore a risk of possible mixing or substitution. A separate Chain of Custody certification may be recommended to ensure independent evaluation of the entire traceability system from the very beginning of the chain.

It's worth thinking about the identification, segregation and traceability systems and subcontractors your seaweed farm or wild harvest operation has in place early on in the audit process so you can make adjustments as necessary.





Preparing the information

An audit of a farm or wild harvest operation is based on expert analysis of information. This information can take many forms, including:

- Data on seaweed stocks
- Information on social regulations e.g. health and safety
- Internal records and procedures
- Interviews with stakeholders
- Scientific papers and reports
- The Client Audit Checklist

Without this information, the assessment team will not be able to audit your farm or wild harvest operation.

What about seaweed producers with limited data?

Your farm or wild harvest operation may not have access to the detailed scientific data that is needed for an audit. This is particularly true for small scale and developing world producers.

If data are limited, the assessment team can use the MSC's Risk-Based Framework or request the use of an alternative risk-based method via an official variation request to ASC-MSC.

The risk-based approach employs a more precautionary approach to assessing the sustainability of the stock.

For small family businesses, the method by which some social requirements are scored is also modified. For example, using conversations with the family instead of written records.

We recommend that you engage with relevant stakeholders at the start of the process to build trust and understanding, and help your audit go smoothly

Engaging with your stakeholders

The ASC and MSC welcome the input and involvement of stakeholders throughout the audit process to ensure that assessments are fair, credible and robust.

We recommend that you contact relevant stakeholders at the very beginning of the audit process to build trust and understanding and help your audit go smoothly.

Costs and sources of funding

Certification is paid for by the farm or wild harvest operation. The ASC and MSC do not receive payment, only the conformity assessment body (CAB) you have chosen to carry out audits.

The cost of assessment against the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard will depend on:

- The complexity of your farm or wild harvest operation
- Production location or type
- The availability of information
- The level of stakeholder involvement

There are a range of funding sources and opportunities to assist certification. Your regional ASC or MSC office will be able to provide you with up to date advice on relevant funding options in your region.

Find out more:

Contact: seaweedstandard@msc.org

- For more about the Risk-Based Framework see www.msc.org/about-us/standards/fisheries-standard/msc-risk-based-framework
- For more information about the Seaweed Standard and assessment process see www.asc-aqua.org/seaweed-standard
- For more information on how stakeholders can get involved in the assessment process see www.msc.org/track-a-fishery/have-your-say
- For more on the Chain of Custody Standard see www.msc.org/get-certified/supply-chain

3

The optional pre-audit

A pre-audit is an optional preliminary review to inform whether your farm or wild harvest operation is ready to enter the full audit process.



Pre-audits are much quicker and cheaper than the full initial audit process. However, they do not have the rigour and robustness of the full audit.

Seaweed producers may undertake pre-audits themselves, or use CABs, independent consultants or other qualified auditors or organisations.

During a pre-audit, the CAB will advise on which PIs apply to your operation and if there are PIs for which the cumulative impact of other ASC-MSC certified seaweed farms or wild harvest operations will be considered.

The CAB will identify the strengths and weaknesses of your farm or wild harvest operation in relation to some or all of the 31 PIs and allocate an approximate score for each applicable PI.

These results will be used to determine the likelihood of your farm or wild harvest operation meeting the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard.

At the end of the pre-audit, the CAB will present you with a pre-audit report which identifies any obstacles that need to be addressed before your wild harvest operation undergoes the full audit process.

The pre-audit report is confidential between you and the CAB, however if you proceed to initial audit the CAB is required to give ASC and MSC a copy of any pre-audit report(s). It is your own decision whether to proceed to the full audit.

The pre-audit will consist of:

- A meeting between you and the CAB
- A site visit (this is optional)
- A review of available data
- Identification of any stakeholder issues or interests
- A pre-audit report outlining the extent to which your farm or wild harvest operation meets the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard
- A description of potential obstacles that will need to be addressed before your farm or wild harvest operation meets the requirements of the Standard

The CAB will identify strengths and weaknesses in relation to the 31 PIs and allocate approximate scores

Good to know

You are under no obligation to use the same CAB for pre-audit, initial audit and/or post certification surveillance and auditing. However, there may be time and cost savings associated with doing so.



4

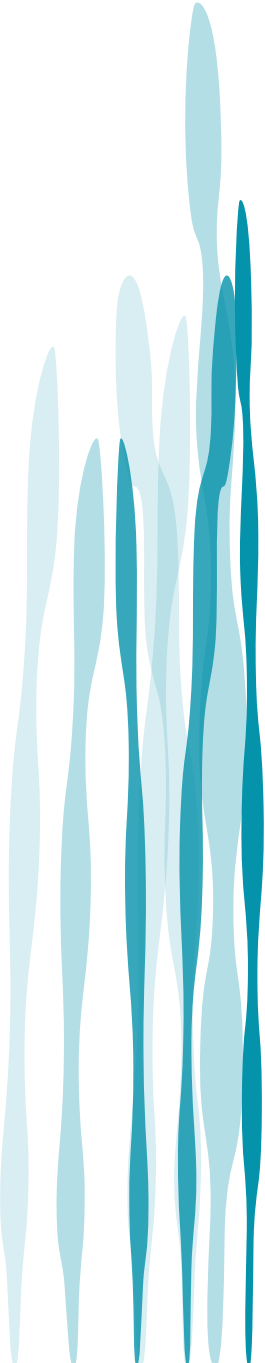
The initial audit

The initial audit is the detailed, public, rigorous process that your conformity assessment body (CAB) will follow to determine if your farm or wild harvest operation meets the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard.



The process starts when you sign a contract with your CAB and they notify the ASC and MSC that your farm or wild harvest operation is beginning the initial audit process.

Overview of the full assessment process

- 
- Step 1** Preparation for initial audit
 - Step 2** Announcement of initial audit
 - Step 3** Information gathering, site visit and scoring
 - Step 4** Opportunity for improvements
 - Step 5** Client Draft Report
 - Step 6** Public Comment Draft Report
 - Step 7** Final Report and determination
 - Step 8** Public Certification Report. If all requirements are met, certification is granted!

Good to know

The period from the announcement of the initial audit to the receipt of the Final Report should be no more than 12 months. The length of the assessment depends to some extent on your preparation as well as the nature and complexity of your farm or wild harvest operation.

1

Preparation for initial audit

Before the audit is announced, you will receive the following information, in writing, from your conformity assessment body:

- Expected scope of audit
- Any Chain of Custody certification requirements
- Draft work schedule and proposed team members
- An explanation of the audit process and the process of stakeholder consultation
- A **Client Application Checklist**, including a list of all performance data that will be required by the CAB prior to the audit.

This checklist will help ensure that all relevant information is ready and that your wild harvest operation or farm is fully prepared to proceed with the audit. You must fill out the Client Application Checklist and submit it to your assessment team in advance of the initial audit.

2

Announcement of initial audit

- The CAB announces that the farm or wild harvest operation is undergoing an initial audit using the Audit Announcement Template.
- The announcement is made 30 days prior to the site visit, and the CAB must notify potential stakeholders and invite their participation.
- The ASC and MSC are alerted, and the announcement is posted on the **ASC-MS website** and circulated to stakeholders.
- You may wish to identify key spokespeople and some high-resolution photographs of the farm or wild harvest operation in preparation for media interest.

Good to know

Contact the MSC or ASC to discuss how you communicate your decision to enter assessment in addition to the formal announcement.

3

Information gathering, site visit and scoring

- The assessment team will analyse all relevant information including technical papers, reports and data about your farm or wild harvest operation, as well as the information you submitted in the Client Application Checklist.
- They will then arrange a site visit to interview you, the farm or wild harvest operation managers, employees and any participating stakeholders to ensure they are aware of all potential information and issues – this could include both production sites and management locations.
- The social auditor will interview 15% of the employees (up to 40 people) to evaluate principles 4 and 5.
- The assessment team use this evidence to score the farm or wild harvest operation's performance against some or all of the 31 principal indicators of the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard.

Good to know

You can help the assessment team by organising information in accordance with the structure of the performance indicators

4

Opportunity for improvements

If your farm or wild harvest operation fails to meet the acceptable level of practice for any of the applicable performance indicators (PIs), a critical condition will be raised.

If this happens, you will not automatically fail the entire audit process. Instead, you will be given an opportunity to improve your practices.

Any critical conditions will be communicated to you by your conformity assessment body and you will have 3 months to improve so that all operations reach an acceptable level of practice. In some circumstances, where meeting a condition is outside the client's control, this can be extended to 6 months.

The audit process will continue once operations are improved and the critical conditions are closed. If operations are not improved, certification will not be granted.

5

Client Draft Report

The CAB compiles a draft report summarising:

- Your farm or wild harvest operation's performance against the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard
- The proposed certification outcome
- Details of any conditions aimed at improving your farm or wild harvest operation's performance

You will have the opportunity to comment on the Client Draft Report and to create client action plans showing how you will address any conditions

This stage is a crucial opportunity to address any issues that would prevent the certification of your seaweed production operation.

Good to know

It is important that you feel confident that the draft report provides a true and robust audit of your farm or wild harvest operation and that you have a good understanding of the reasons for any conditions given.

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Public Comment Draft Report

- Once you have completed a review of the draft report, the CAB will issue the 'Public Comment Draft Report' (PCDR) to the ASC and MSC to be published online.
- The CAB will notify stakeholders once the PCDR is published.
- Stakeholders and members of the public have 30 days to comment on the draft report.
- At the same time, technical experts will review the report as part of the ASC-MSC quality assurance system.
- This report includes a draft determination of whether your farm or wild harvest operation is recommended for certification.

We advise that you review the report and make sure you are comfortable with any changes that have been made since the first draft.

If you contacted stakeholders at the beginning of the process, you should have some idea of whether they are likely to object to the findings.

If you are not recommended for certification

If your farm or wild harvest operation has not been recommended for certification, the audit process should have contributed to a better understanding of your operations, and the environment in which it operates.

Once you have addressed the issues that prevented your farm or wild harvest operation from becoming certified, you can re-apply for the audit process at any time.

Find out more

The key players involved in an audit and their roles and responsibilities are outlined on



©ASC

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Final Report and determination

This report includes the certification team's determination of whether the farm or wild harvest operation should be certified. It is issued once the assessment team has considered the comments received during the public consultation period and revised the report accordingly.

The objections procedure

If a stakeholder (including the client) believes there is an error in the Final Report they can raise an objection within the 10 working day period after the report is published.

Only stakeholders that have raised an issue previously during the assessment (for example at the site visit) can initiate the objection procedure.

The CAB will first try to settle the objection in an informal manner, for example by considering additional information provided. If an agreement cannot be reached within 10 working days, the objector may re-submit the objection using the CAB's formal complaint procedure.

The CAB will update the Final Report and state the outcome of the complaint procedure in the Public Certification Report.

If an agreement cannot be reached using the complaint procedure, the objector can file a complaint against the CAB with **Accreditation Services International (ASI)**.

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Public Certification Report and getting your certificate

If no objections have been raised, your farm or wild harvest operation is certified!

Certification lasts for a maximum of three years (subject to annual surveillance audits).

Your conformity assessment body (CAB) will issue and publish a Public Certification Report, which will include any required action plans for improvement. Later, the CAB will issue a farm or wild harvest operation certificate.

If your clients become certified to the MSC Chain of Custody Standard, products from your certified farm or wild harvest operation can bear the ASC and/or MSC ecolabel on packs or menus.

**It's now time to
celebrate and promote
your certification!**

5

Maintaining ASC-MSC seaweed certification

A farm or wild harvest operation certificate lasts up to three years. During this time, your farm or wild harvest operation may need to make improvements required as conditions of certification and will receive regular surveillance audits.

After three years, your farm or wild harvest operation may choose to be re-certified. The new audit process should be completed prior to the expiry of the original certificate in order to maintain continuous certification.



Surveillance audits

Your conformity assessment body (CAB) will review your farm or wild harvest operation’s progress, and the status of any improvements being made, during annual surveillance audits.

These audits may take place at the farm, wild harvest operation, or another location where the client is based. They do not have to take place on the same date every year. They may be undertaken up to six months earlier/later than the anniversary date of your certificate each year.

Surveillance audits must include face-to-face interactions with the client, employees and relevant stakeholders, and stakeholders may be invited to provide additional information.

The assessment team is permitted to conduct an unannounced audit, or more frequent audits, if they identify a need to do so

Re-certification audit

Re-certification audits should commence before the expiry of the existing certificate. Your conformity assessment body will discuss the best timing for the re-certification audit.

Date of certification:

Surveillance audit 1:

Surveillance audit 2:

Re-assessment date:



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Who's who: Key players, roles and responsibilities

Throughout the audit process, you will become familiar with a number of key individuals and organisations. We have outlined descriptions of who they are, and their specific role(s) in the process.



The Client

an individual(s), organisation, or group of organisations that make a formal application for a farm or wild harvest operation to be assessed. For example, the client could include a seaweed production company or a seaweed processor along with other members of the Unit of Certification such as NGOs.

Clients are responsible for:

- Entering into a legal contract with an accredited conformity assessment body (CAB) – clients must therefore be a legally constituted body
- Funding the cost of the audit process
- Ensuring the CAB is aware of stakeholders that should be contacted to be involved in the audit process
- Ensuring that the assessment team has unrestricted access to data and information about the wild harvest operation
- Implementing any action plans to make improvements if/when the ASC-MSC certificate is issued

The Conformity Assessment Body (CAB)

an independent body approved by ASI to conduct audits and make a final determination of whether a farm or wild harvest operation meets the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard based on the results of these audits.

The CAB is responsible for:

- Establishing the assessment team
- Issuing the certificate
- Conducting surveillance audits and evaluations during the life of the certificate

The Assessment Team

seaweed assessment professionals, scientists, technical experts and social auditors with specialist knowledge who have been selected by the CAB to conduct the audits.

The assessment team are responsible for:

- Assessing farms and wild harvest operations against the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard and in accordance with the ASC-MSC Seaweed Certification and Accreditation Requirements on behalf of the CAB
- Using information provided by the client, management agencies and stakeholder groups to reach a judgment about the performance of a farm or wild harvest operation
- Using existing information and reports to make a precautionary decision (they are not obliged to conduct new research in order to reach a judgment)

ASC-MSC Quality Assurance System

experts selected to review the public comment draft report and provide feedback to CABs on the conclusions reached: the conditions raised; the client action plan; and each performance indicator's score and provided rationale

Stakeholders

any individuals or organisations that are interested in, or affected by, the farm or wild harvest operation.

Stakeholders are responsible for:

- Bringing any issues and concerns they have regarding the conduct or performance of the farm or wild harvest operation relevant to the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard to the attention of the assessment team
- Providing well informed and substantive arguments for their positions, including references to objective evidence that can assist the assessment team

Typical stakeholders include:

- Government agencies
- Environmental / conservation organisations
- Other fishers, seaweed farmers or wild harvesters (e.g. subsistence fishers)
- Industry groups
- Community groups
- Commercial / post-harvest sector (your customers)
- Scientists

The ASC and the MSC

mission driven non-governmental organisations and standard setters. We are not involved in the audit process and do not issue certificates. To maintain impartiality, we operate a 'third-party' certification program, where audits are carried out by independent conformity assessment bodies (CABs).

- We can support seaweed producers to understand the Seaweed Standard and the audit process and help certified producers to communicate their achievements and to explore access to markets.
- We can provide technical oversight on the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard and, if necessary, raise issues to Accreditation Services International.

7

Summary checklist

Here's a handy checklist to help you track your progress through the audit process.

Familiarise yourself with the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard

- Understand the production category of your farm or wild harvest operation
- Familiarise yourself with the principal indicators (PIs)
- Download the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard at www.asc-aqua.org/seaweed-standard

Prepare for the audit process

- Choose a conformity assessment body (CAB)
- Decide on the Unit of Assessment
- Define the contract with the CAB
- Prepare the required audit information – for full details of the information required see **Client Application Checklist**
- Get in touch with stakeholders interested in your farm or wild harvest operation
- Investigate sources of funding

- Think about Chain of Custody certification

Undertake a pre-audit

- Arrange a pre-audit to inform whether your farm or wild harvest operation is ready to undergo the initial audit or whether you must make improvements to your operations

Arrange the initial audit

- Your CAB will announce the audit
- Prepare the information required by your CAB
- Arrange a site visit with your CAB
- Review the CAB's Client Draft Report
- Create any necessary action plans for improvement

If certified

- Celebrate and promote your farm or wild harvest operation's ASC-MSC certification!

Notes



For more information

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