



World Wildlife Fund
1250 24th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20037-1193
USA
www.worldwildlife.org

Contact: Jill Schwartz
(202) 495-4458 – office
(202) 290-6526 - cell
jill.schwartz@wwfus.org

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GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS COMPLETED FOR PANGASIOUS AND BIVALVE AQUACULTURE

Three of eight sets of Aquaculture Dialogue standards now finalized

WASHINGTON, DC: Two sets of global standards – one for pangasius farming and the other for bivalve farming – were finalized today by the Aquaculture Dialogues. They were developed over the past three years by 1,000 farmers, scientists, conservationists and others with a shared vision of minimizing the negative impact pangasius or bivalve farming can have on the environment, farm workers and surrounding communities.

Most of the pangasius and bivalves consumed worldwide are produced on a farm. Industries for both species are growing rapidly. Pangasius is one of the top sellers in Europe's white fish market.

More than 600 participants make up the Pangasius Aquaculture Dialogue, responsible for developing the pangasius standards, while the standards for clams, mussels, oysters and scallops are a product of the 400-person Bivalve Aquaculture Dialogue. These comprise two of the eight aquaculture roundtables coordinated by World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The first set of Dialogue standards – for tilapia – was finalized in 2009.

“This is a huge milestone for the Aquaculture Dialogues,” said WWF-US Aquaculture Program Managing Director Jose Villalon. “The timing could not be better. With the aquaculture industry growing so quickly, there is a tremendous need for standards that are created through a credible process – one that is open, transparent and based on sound science.”

“As a major European fish brand, it is important for our business to know that there are standards that were created through a very credible process and will be independently audited,” said David Graham of Birds Eye Iglo Group, who is a member of the pangasius Dialogue's Process Facilitation Group. “That's what we need in order to help enhance consumer confidence in what is still a relatively unfamiliar fish species.”

The final standards, which will help address such issues as improper use of chemicals, water pollution and poor working conditions, are focused solely on the key impacts of aquaculture. This approach results in a manageable list of standards, instead of an exhaustive list that may increase the cost of certification and would be harder for small-scale farmers to adopt.

Both Dialogues integrated feedback from more than 400 people during two public comment periods, as well as input provided during Dialogue meetings, to develop the final standards. Also, outreach meetings were held with small-scale pangasius farmers, agriculture farmers and farm employees in Vietnam and Bangladesh, as well as bivalve farmers in China, Australia and Canada.

"Our work in engaging a broad and diverse group of people in the process of developing the standards has paid off," said Tom Pickerell of the Shellfish Association of Great Britain, who is a member of the bivalve Dialogue's Global Steering Committee. "We are very pleased with the outcome and are confident the standards will become the standard of choice for the bivalve aquaculture industry."

The certification process for these standards will be overseen by the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), a new entity that is expected to be operational by mid-2011. The standards will be amended regularly to incorporate new science and technology, as well as to encourage continuous improvement on farms.

To read the pangasius standards and watch a video about them, go to www.worldwildlife.org/pangasiusstandards. To read the bivalve standards, go to www.worldwildlife.org/bivalvestandards.

For more than 45 years, WWF has been protecting the future of nature. The largest multinational conservation organization in the world, WWF works in 100 countries and is supported by 1.2 million members in the United States and close to 5 million globally. WWF's unique way of working combines global reach with a foundation in science, involves action at every level, from local to global, and ensures the delivery of innovative solutions that meet the needs of both people and nature. Go to worldwildlife.org to learn more.

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