

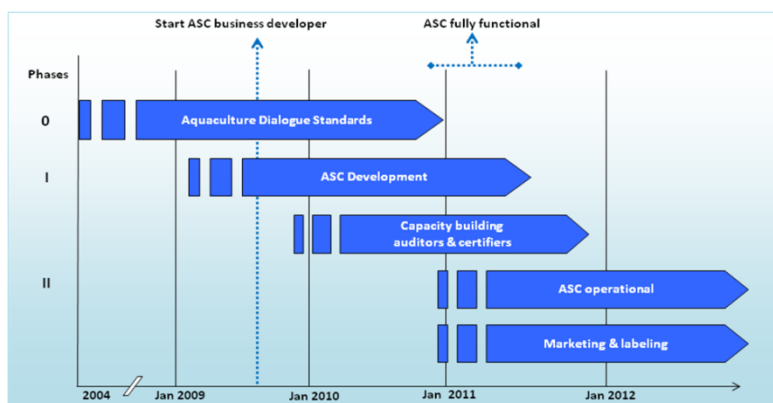
Part II: Building the Aquaculture Stewardship Council

Creating change on the water

Introduction

In August, 2009 an update on the ASC was released which showed the expected time line for the development phase and the ambition to be operational by mid-2011. As we enter into the beginning of 2011 we are happy to share an update on the ASC and report that the development is on track.

Figure1. Timelines from August, 2009 update



This update will address what has taken place during the development phase of the ASC, including an update on the governance structure, the Aquaculture Dialogues and a timeline for deliverables, the verification process, commercial outreach and producer support. A look into the immediate future of the ASC will also be provided.

ASC Governance

Established as an independent, not for profit foundation and based in Utrecht, the Netherlands, the ASC has a provisional governance structure in place with a Supervisory Board and Executive Board.

Foundations in the Netherlands require a deed or bylaws. The ASC deed has been developed along with regulations prescribing the role and duties of the Executive and Supervisory Boards. This deed is publically posted on the ASC website. In accordance with the deed, plans are currently in place to transition from the development phase to a permanent structure.

Part of the transition process involves expanding the Supervisory Board initially consisting of 4 individuals to 7 to 9 individuals. The ASC is now accepting recommendations for board membership. Selection is based on individuals committed to the ASC values and mission and providing additional knowledge, skills and geographic representation (for information on how to apply see the ASC website – www.ascworldwide.org). There is an Executive Board of one individual, the CEO. In due course, this can be expanded to 3 individuals. As planned, after serving his tenure as development director, the current CEO is preparing to step aside and make way for the soon to be appointed permanent CEO of the ASC.

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The ASC Governance Structure diagram shows the relationships between the Aquaculture dialogues and the ASC. A Technical Advisory Group (TAG) composed of 2 representatives from each of the 8 dialogues has been formed. This advisory group will create a link between the ASC governance and AD governance and areas of focus will include standards alignment, interpretation issues, implementation and verification of the standards, and continuous improvement. Plans are also in place to engage stakeholders in work groups to focus on specific projects eg the ASC verification process. In due course from such groups a wider Stakeholder Advisory Group will be formalised.

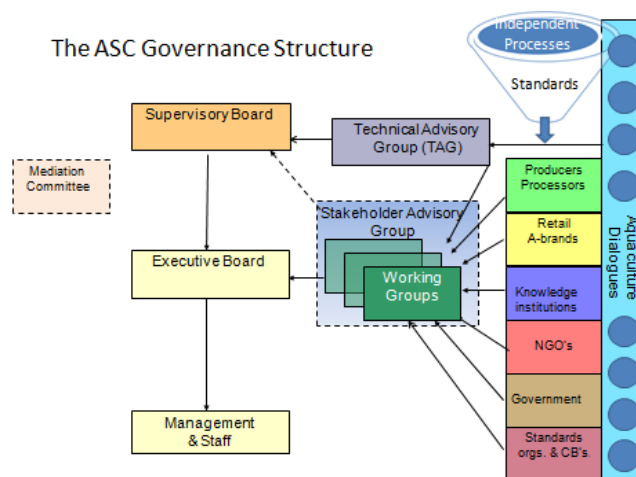


Figure 2. The ASC Governance Structure

The development of the ASC governance structure has been driven by core values these values stem in part from the ISEAL Codes of Good Practice. While the Aquaculture Dialogues are an associate member of ISEAL, a process is underway for the transfer of 'AD' associate membership to ASC. The ASC can elect to apply for 'full membership' and will then have 1 year to complete all the ISEAL requirements to attain membership.

Aquaculture Dialogue Standards

Well over 2000 participants have been involved in a standard development initiative called the Aquaculture Dialogues. The Aquaculture Dialogue standards are being developed in independent, multi-stakeholder roundtable discussions which have been completed or are nearing completion. The ASC's primary role is to manage and implement standards for twelve species groups once developed by the Aquaculture Dialogues. These standards were selected because of their potential impact on the environment and society, their market value and the extent to which they are traded internationally or their potential for such trade. The standards for seven species (tilapia, pangasius, abalone, clams, mussels, oysters, and scallops) are complete. The remaining standards are expected before the end of 2011. Each Aquaculture Dialogue has committed to three deliverables: standards, an auditor guidance manual; and a BMP manual. Auditor guidance manuals are essential as they will help farms to better prepare for audits, be used by certification bodies in the field, as part of the accreditation process, and to ensure audits are consistent across certification bodies and different geographical locations. BMP Manuals will be the foundation of aquaculture improvement projects (AIPs) by providing information to farms on how to improve practices. On the next page is a recap of the AD progress to date on the three deliverables along with estimated completion dates.



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Dialogue	Current Status	Completion date
Tilapia Aquaculture Dialogue (TAD)	Standards - complete Auditor guidance manual –complete	Standards - December 17, 2009 Auditor guidance manual –December 29, 2010 BMP Manual – January 07, 2011
Pangasius Aquaculture Dialogue (PAD)	Standards - complete Auditor guidance manual – complete	Standards – August 31, 2010 Auditor guidance manual – February, 2011
Bivalve Aquaculture Dialogue (BAD)	Standards - complete Auditor guidance manual – complete	Standards - December 17, 2009 Auditor guidance manual – February, 2011
Abalone Aquaculture Dialogue (AAD)	Standards - complete Auditor guidance manual –under development	Standards – October 14, 2010 Auditor guidance manual* – Quarter 1, 2011
Freshwater Trout Aquaculture Dialogue (FTAD)	Standards - 1 st public comment period complete	Standards* – Mid - 2011 Auditor guidance manual* –Quarter 4, 2011
Shrimp Aquaculture Dialogue (ShAD)	Standards - undergoing 2 nd public comment period	Standards* – Mid - 2011 Auditor guidance manual* –Quarter 4, 2011
Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue (SAD)	Standards - 1 st public comment period complete	Standards* – Mid - 2011 Auditor guidance manual* –Quarter 4, 2011
Seriola and Cobia Aquaculture Dialogue (SCAD)	Standards - under development	Standards* – Quarter 4, 2011 Auditor guidance manual* –Quarter 1, 2012

* = estimated date

Figure 3: Aquaculture Dialogue recap (* = estimated date)

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The Verification Process, Capacity Building - auditors and certifiers

The verification process and options for emerging standard setting and holding bodies are described by ISEAL in document: E026 ISEAL Emerging Initiatives Module 3. Verification July07 and the FAO draft Technical Guidelines for Aquaculture provides specific guidance on the structure of a certification scheme and how to maintain integrity throughout the certification scheme processes. Figure 4 shows the components of a typical certification scheme based upon FAO guidelines with ASC equivalents.

Figure 4: Components of a typical certification scheme and ASC equivalents.



Having addressed standard development and governance through the Aquaculture Dialogues and the ASC organizational structure, the next step in the above diagram is accreditation. The importance of independent accreditation cannot be overstated. The credibility and effectiveness of any 3rd party certification scheme depends not only on standard setting, standards, documentation, checklists, but also on the quality and credibility of the accreditation body, training, quality of auditors and audits. The ASC has therefore identified consistency of audits, additional management of certification bodies through an international accreditation body and implementation of a transparent verification process as critical to the long term success of the ASC.

An accreditation body endorses Certification Bodies' competence, credibility, independence and integrity in carrying out their conformity assessment activities. The ASC has learned (and continues to do so) from the experience of other certification systems such as MSC and FSC in developing its accreditation and certification procedures and documentation. In September of 2010, after a detailed study of available options and to provide the maximum credibility and effectiveness of the ASC verification system, the ASC appointed Accreditation Services International (ASI) to fill the role of the accreditation body in its certification scheme. ASI is an independent third- party accreditation body which operates according to the international ISO/IEC 17011 general requirements. Since the appointment of ASI in September, 2010 fifteen Certification Bodies with international scope have expressed their interest to become accredited.



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During the development phase, farms have already been audited in pilot programs to the International Standards for Responsible Tilapia Aquaculture (ISRTA) developed by the TAD. These farms have received a “letter of conformance” under the GlobalG.A.P. plus program. The GlobalG.A.P. plus program as designed serves many roles. First, the program provides an opportunity for pro-active farms to be recognized for adopting the standards during the development phase of the ASC. Equally important, the program provided an opportunity to “field test” the standards, the auditor guidance manual, and certification body training requirements. The ASC continuously communicates with GlobalG.A.P., producers, and associated certification bodies to monitor these pilot phase audits. Additionally, in late 2010, ASI was commissioned to participate in a pilot phase audit at a tilapia farm. ASI’s role was to observe and determine any potential gaps in the current verification process and make recommendations for improvements.

Looking ahead and responding to market feedback, one of the objectives of the ASC is to integrate its certification scheme into existing platforms where possible and the ASC has vigorously pursued opportunities for partnership and alignment. For example, GlobalGAP provided CB auditor training for the ISRTA under the interim GlobalGAP plus program. Building on this experience the ASC and GlobalG.A.P. are currently in discussion whereby GlobalG.A.P. will provide a training service on behalf of the ASC for all the ASC aquaculture standards, as they become available. This alignment will be beneficial not only to certification bodies, but also to those producers seeking combined GlobalGAP and ASC audits. The ASC is also engaged in pre-contract discussions with the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) on the potential for alignment of its chain of custody certification process and outsourcing the integration of its chain of custody and label licensing administration. Again, the benefits of such an approach are widespread throughout the stakeholder community.

The ASC Corporate Value Identity

The advertising firm, Ogilvy, was contracted with the ASC on a pro-bono basis to help develop a visual value-based identity. These values are now prominently displayed on stationary and the ASC brochure.



These values now act as the anchor or foundation of the vision, “to transform commercial aquaculture” and the mission, “to reduce the negative impact of aquaculture on the environment and society”.

Figure 5 ASC Core Values

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Figure 6 The ASC in Brussels.

The European Seafood Exposition (ESE) in Brussels provided the venue for the unveiling of the ASC visual identity a manifestation of these values.

The ASC followed up with more than 100 visitors from 25 countries representing 14 different stakeholder groups.

The ASC's website was also redesigned with the new identity. We invite you to visit the ASC website (www.ascworldwide.org) to view how values of the ASC are being incorporated into the development and functions of the ASC.

ASC Marketing & Labeling

The over-arching goal and vision of the ASC is to fulfill a role beyond that of a certification scheme with a consumer label. The ASC seeks to transform commercial aquaculture, to create change on the water. To be successful two functions have been identified as critical: producer support platforms and downstream supply chain outreach. In both these instances multi-stakeholder engagement is an integral component of this vision. By working with multiple stakeholders the ASC shares the value of responsible aquaculture and through this multi-stakeholder process exerts influence to convert supply-chains into "shared-value"-chains.

Particularly with retail outreach the ASC is able to promote the value of responsible aquaculture practices on a farm level with influential CSR, quality control, and purchasing personnel of retailers and foodservice companies. Collectively these "shared-values" become "shared market values" which when integrated into responsible sourcing practices and purchasing policies are transmitted back upstream through various distribution networks.



Figure 7 Supporters of the ASC



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In essence the ASC consumer label, to be launched in mid-2011, will become the mechanism for “shared-value” transmission of responsible aquaculture.

Producer Support

At the same time the ASC works with organizations such as its cofounders, the Dutch Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) and WWF, the German Association for International Cooperation (GIZ) and ICAFIS, a Vietnamese development agency, among others. Using the future ASC standards to improve current practices and performance, these organizations launch farm level aquaculture improvements programs addressing multiple species and across multiple geographical regions.

How to support the ASC

There are several ways to contribute to the development and operations of the ASC

As some major players in the seafood sector are doing already, you can help the ASC by publicly supporting the aims and goals of the organisation and/or by participating in pilot projects. There will be opportunities as the ASC develops to join work groups which will be set up from time to time or to join the Stakeholder Advisory Group when this is formalised. You can follow these developments on the ASC website, ascworldwide.org. Going forward there are opportunities to financially support the ASC.

Please contact us as your feedback on the development and activities of the ASC is encouraged and welcome.



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