



Fact sheets Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC)

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About the Aquaculture Stewardship Council

- The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) is an independent not for profit organisation established in 2010 by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and The Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH). It works to promote best practice within aquaculture globally and aims for a world where everyone has access to responsibly sourced seafood.
- The ASC manages the most advanced certification programme for the aquaculture industry. Its certification criteria have been developed in partnership with all relevant stakeholders including fish farmers, coastal communities, environmental groups and food companies.
- ASC certified produce is clearly marked with the ASC consumer logo. It enables consumers to select seafood that comes from farms that limit their impacts on the environment and communities.
- Since the summer of 2012 the ASC logo is on packaging across 37 regions: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Republic of (South) Korea, Luxemburg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, United Kingdom, United States and Uruguay.

Key facts about aquaculture

- Aquaculture has rapidly developed to supply the increasing global demand for seafood. There is a natural limit to the amount of fish that can be taken from capture fisheries and many of these are overfished.
- With around half of the world's seafood now sourced from aquaculture, it is the fastest growing food production system in the world.



- The United Nations' food agency has noted that aquaculture output is expected to rise by a third over the next decade. Given this growth, the ASC's work is both timely and vital to promote best practice and establish aquaculture as a leading industry in responsible seafood production.
- Today over 16 million people are directly employed by the fish farming industry and hundreds of millions dependent on it as a source of animal protein. Securing livelihoods and improving the employment conditions of those employed is a task of global significance.

The ASC standards

- The standards were developed over eight years by a series of eight round tables organised around the world. More than 2,000 participants took part to help create the aquaculture standards that will reduce the impact of the sector worldwide. Representatives from the global aquaculture and fish processing sectors, retail and food service organisations, NGOs, government organisations and scientific community attended.
- The outcome of the so called 'Aquaculture Dialogues' was the creation of eight global standards that define how the responsible farming for 12 different types of fish and shellfish (salmon, shrimp, tilapia, trout, pangasius, abalone, mussels, clams, oysters, scallops, cobia and seriola) should take place. The cultivation of these fish can have a huge impact on natural surroundings and the environment. Their market value and (potential) international commercial value are also high. It was precisely for such reasons that these 12 species were chosen. Promoting farming practices that minimise their impact on the environment and communities is the ultimate goal.
- Scientific insights, management systems and technology all change over time. To keep abreast of these developments, the ASC standards are reviewed every three to five years (or sooner if necessary) to consider how and when these changes should be incorporated into the standards. A special task force - the Technical Advisory Group - is responsible for this. It includes participants of the round table discussions. The effectiveness and credibility of the whole organisation relies on these well-developed and maintained standards. Therefore, all standards are:
 - Based on the latest scientific findings
 - Performance-based – defined by measurable performance as opposed to technology or management systems and processes, thereby encouraging innovation
 - Measurable
 - Developed by a diverse but balanced group of stakeholders from around the world
 - Focused on reducing 'key impacts' that 'best-practice' farms are currently implementing. This makes the certification process feasible but one that will drive change in the majority of farms not currently operating as such levels
 - Accessible to all ensuring small-scale fish farmers can collectively access the certification programme.

- **ASC's seven principles**

The ASC standards require:

1. Comprehensive legal compliance
2. Conservation of natural habitat and biodiversity
3. Conservation of water resources
4. Conservation of species diversity and wild population through prevention of escapes
5. Use of feed and other inputs that are sourced responsibly
6. Good animal health (no unnecessary use of antibiotics and chemicals)



7. Social responsibility for workers and communities impacted by farming (e.g. no child labour, health and safety of workers, freedom of association, community relations)

ASC uses a robust and independent certification process

- The ASC is a standard setter and responsible for the management of the standards. The ASC does not undertake the farm audits, this is the work of independent certifiers, nor is it involved in the management of the certifiers' performance. The ASC monitors the impact of the certification process to ensure that the expected scientific and social benefits are being realised.
- The certification process involves the following steps and components:
 - Accreditation and certification: ASC makes use of a third-party and independent accreditation and certification processes. ASC has appointed Accreditation Services International (ASI) to oversee an independent and robust process for ensuring credible certification against the standards. ASI also delivers accreditation and other services to the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and other certification schemes worldwide.
 - Certification: Fish farmers that have successfully passed their ASC audit receive a certificate. In some circumstances, a group of cooperating fish farmers are joint holders of a certificate. The certificate is not issued directly by ASC, but by the independent certification body that audited the farm against the ASC standard. The certifier is the 'owner' of the certificate.
 - Engagement of stakeholders: Credibility and independence, core values of the ASC, are underpinned by the transparency of its audit process. Stakeholder views are actively sought (in fact certifiers are required to seek these views and respond to their questions professionally) as part of the audit process. All reports are made public, a unique feature of the ASC programme, to ensure that the principles of inclusiveness and openness are adhered to. These principles are also enshrined within ASC's organisational structure and approach.

From farm to fork

- The ASC certification requirements do not end at the farm level. From 'farm to fork', ASC products are fully traceable. All companies involved in the supply of ASC certified products also have to be ASC certified (so called 'chain of custody'). These companies are required to ensure that ASC certified fish can never be mixed with non-ASC certified fish and can always be traced back to the certified farm.

ASC logo

- ASC certified produce is marked clearly with a logo, enabling consumers to select seafood that comes from farms that limit their impacts on the environment and communities.
- The logo strongly communicates to consumers, positively reinforcing the purchasing decision and adding value to the seafood brand.
- The ASC logo was launched in the summer of 2012. Now more than 1053 tilapia, pangasius and salmon products that bear the ASC logo are available across 37 countries.

Key facts about tilapia

- Tilapia is the second most important group of farmed fish after carp, and the most widely grown of any farmed fish (FAO, 2005-2010). In the last ten years, the global aquaculture



production of tilapia has steadily increased. It more than doubled in Asia, Latin America and Africa, where production is concentrated. Currently, it is estimated that production is over three million tonnes per year.

- Tilapia farming takes place in over one hundred countries, mostly for domestic consumption. The major tilapia-producing countries are China, Egypt, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand.
- Currently there are 24 ASC certified farms in Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Honduras, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Columbia, Mexico and Taiwan.

Key facts about pangasius

- The production of pangasius is mainly concentrated in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam, but is also in the Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh and India. The Mekong Delta is a traditional habitat of the pangasius.
- The production of pangasius has increased heavily in the last 10 years, from 500,000 tonnes to 1.5 million tonnes. Half of the volume is exported to Europe. The export to Germany was 32,500 tonnes in 2011.
- ASC standards are a solution to critical aspects of pangasius farming, addressing: pollution of the Mekong-river, uncontrolled catch of wild fish for feed production, misuse of antibiotics and high density in ponds.
- Responsible farming in compliance with ASC means not more than 0.5 kilo fish in feed for 1 kilo pangasius.
- 10 per cent of the Vietnamese people (around eight million) work in the pangasius industry.
- Currently there are 43 ASC certified farms in the Mekong Delta supplying ASC certified pangasius.

Key facts about salmon

- Nearly two thirds of all salmon consumed globally is farmed. In total, 2,4 million tons salmon are farmed per year.
- Leading salmon farm regions include Norway, Chile, European counties such as Scotland and Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.
- The ASC Salmon Standard helps to reduce the adverse impact of salmon aquaculture. The standard promotes a cleaner sea bed, cleaner water within and around the farm, healthier fish, the prevention of escapes, feed and improved social responsibility.
- The first salmon farm gained ASC certification in January 2014. At the time of writing (May, 2014), five more salmon farms have become ASC certified, and an additional 13 farms in Canada, Chile, Norway and Australia have been assessed.
- In August 2013 the Global Salmon Initiative (GSI), which represents approximately 70 per cent of the global farmed salmon industry, committed to bring farms operated by its members up to the ASC standard and achieve certification by 2020.

Key people

Chris Ninnes, Chief Executive Officer

Chris's career has involved advising industry leaders, elected ministers and departmental heads about the importance of sustainability and responsibly sourced seafood. He is the former Deputy Chief Executive of the Marine Stewardship Council, which, like the ASC, works to ensure sustainable production within the fishing industry.



Bas Geerts, Standards Director

Prior to joining the ASC, Bas worked at Utz Certified as manager of traceability services and new business developer. Utz Certified is a worldwide certification body for sustainable standards for coffee, tea and cocoa. Prior to this he was the new business manager at the Netherlands office of the WWF.

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