



## **ASC Responsible Aquaculture Feed Project**

### **Process guidance document**

*Version 1.0 (January 2014)*

#### **Overview**

The Responsible Aquaculture Feed Project is a science-based platform started by the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) in 2013. The goal of the project is to develop a measurable, performance-based standard that promotes responsible sourcing of the raw materials used in aquaculture feed production, while permitting the industry to remain economically viable. The project brings together a wide range of stakeholders, including producers and other members of the market chain, researchers, NGOs and government officials to identify and agree upon the main global environmental and social impacts of aquaculture feed production. The Responsible Aquaculture Feed Project is open to a wide range of participants and is a platform to listen and respectfully address potential negative impacts of aquaculture feed production and conflicts among stakeholders.

Working under the direction of a ten person Steering Committee, participants will use a transparent, consensus-building process to approve the goals and objectives, as well as identify and agree on the main impacts of aquaculture feed production.

This document outlines key elements of the Responsible Aquaculture Feed Project and is written by ASC based on the transparent, multi stakeholder process guidelines outlined in the ISEAL (International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance) Code of Good Practise for Setting Social and Environmental Standards.

This document is approved by the Projects' Steering Committee and will be revised as needed and is effective as of the date noted at the bottom of each page.

## **Governance and Decision Making**

### **1. Decision-Making Body**

- a. The Steering Committee (SC) is the primary decision-making body of the Project. SC decisions will be informed to all Full Stakeholder Group, Technical Working Groups, and External Stakeholders. For definitions, see chapter “Project Participants”.
- b. The SC is made up of a range of stakeholders representing different sectors and regions interested in aquaculture. The SC is currently composed of the following stakeholders, represented by the individuals listed below:
  1. Ally Dingwell – Sainsbury’s
  2. Andrew Jackson – IFFO
  3. Blake Lee-Harwood – Sustainable Fisheries Partnership
  4. Daniel Fegan - Cargill
  5. Eduardo Goycoola – Blumar/GSI-partner
  6. Karl Tore Maeland – Ewos
  7. Niels Alsted – Biomar Group
  8. Michael Phillips – World Fish Centre
  9. Michael Tlustly – New England Aquarium
  10. Piers Hart – WWF-UK
  11. Tor Eirik Homme – Grieg Seafoods/GSI-partner
  12. Trygve Berg Lea – Skretting Group

### **2. Decision-Making Protocol**

- a. Consensus:

Consensus is the primary form of decision making of the SC. The definition of “consensus” applies to the SC decision making process for standards, as well as other key decisions (e.g., process and communications). The SC uses the definition of “consensus” used by the International Organization of Standards (ISO), which is:

“General agreement, characterized by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interests and by a process seeking to take into account the views of interested parties, particularly those directly affected, and to reconcile any conflicting arguments. Consensus need not imply unanimity.”

- i. Clarifying terms in the ISO definition
  - *Sustained opposition* - sustained opposition means that an important part of concerned interests has indicated, despite meaningful discussion of an issue that the position or solution put forward continues to be unacceptable to that interest.

- *Substantial issues* - issues that materially affect the standards or decision being taken as appropriate.
  - *Important part of concerned interests* - clearly recognized representative of a segment of concerned interests that have been engaged in the discussions as a member of the decision-making body, such as all Steering Committee members.
  - *Interested parties* - any party that has participated substantively in the dialogue process, including those outside the Steering Committee, that may present issues for the steering committee to debate and decide.
  - *Directly affected* - includes those whose lives or livelihoods would be altered by the proposed decision or standard financially or otherwise, as well as the affected public.
  - *Consensus need not imply unanimity* - under consensus, one or more parties may not fully agree with a decision, but is able to accept it.
- b. Alternate decision-making protocol:
- In the case that consensus cannot be reached, the following alternate decision-making protocol will be used by the SC.
- Supermajority voting will, if necessary, be used by the SC to approve measures and make decisions.
    - *Supermajority voting* - a provision must achieve at least 80%, with rounding, in each sector engaged in the Feed Project discussion. Within the SC, the sectors are industry/commercial and non-governmental. Rounding implies that if, for example, there are 4 individuals within a sector, 3 out of 4 must agree in a vote (80% of 4 is technically 3.2 so this has been rounded to the closest number).
  - A provision will only go to a vote after ample time and effort has been given to trying to achieve consensus. This includes developing technical working groups and committees to work through difficult issues first.

### **Dialogue Participants**

A key aspect of the project is engaging multiple stakeholders in the process of creating the Responsible Aquaculture Feed Standard.

Any directly-linked stakeholder can participate in the project. The decision to do is voluntarily. If certain stakeholder groups are not well-represented, the decision-making body of the project will proactively encourage participation from those groups. Factors to consider that the project includes a mix of stakeholders are:

- *Geography*: stakeholders will include a mix of people from around the world.
- *Expertise*: people with different areas of expertise/interest will be involved.

### **Role of Project Participants**

Not all participants will be willing or able to participate in the project at the same level. They will participate at one or more of the following levels:

- *Full Stakeholder Group* - the full group of stakeholders interested in the project and committed to supporting its goals and objectives. They will participate in the project meetings to review and comment on the progress toward the goals and objectives, as well as products of other related projects.
- *External Stakeholders (ES)* - individuals who are not active in either the Steering Committee or the Technical Working Groups, but who are free to provide input on draft versions of the Standard. These stakeholders will be consulted via two public consultation rounds.
- *Steering Committee (SC)* - the SC will serve as the decision-making body and represents a balance between industry/commercial and non-industry. SC members will commit to the specific terms of reference for the SC to participate in the project.
- *Technical Working Groups (TWG)* - these groups will be made up of people representing different stakeholders as well as represent a wide field of expertise in the aquaculture feed industry. They will provide the project with valuable input on any technical aspects of the standards but not on any political discussions related to the project. TWG members will commit to the specific terms of reference for the TWG to participate in the project.
- *Project Coordinator (PC)* - the project will be coordinated by an ASC staff member who is charged with keeping the project process moving forward and in line with ISEAL guidelines for creating standards. Responsibilities of the coordinator will include, but not be limited to, co-facilitating meetings, coordinating technical working groups, publicizing and handling logistics for meetings, being the primary contact on issues related to the project, and maintaining content on the project website. ASC will have an equal voice in the decision-making process.



The decision to participate in the project or as an external stakeholder will be made in consultation with ASC. Members of the SC have indicated their interest to participate to ASC, or have been invited by ASC to participate. The composition of the SC is approved by the Supervisory Board of ASC. Members of the Technical Working Groups will be approved by the SC. The dialogue coordinator will be chosen by ASC.

### **Conflict resolution**

It is possible that irresolvable conflict may develop at the decision-making body or Full Stakeholder Group level. All attempts will be made to resolve conflicts internally. However, in case this is not possible, a conflict resolution procedure will be followed. One option is that the project will identify 1-2 professional mediators in advance who can be called on if irresolvable conflict develops. ASC will help identify mediators and the SC will agree on them. The project will be expected to fund the costs of mediators if conflicts cannot be addressed internally.

### **Public Comment Process for Draft Standards**

Draft standards will be posted for public comment on the projects' website. At a minimum, request for comments will be made via email to the project distribution list.

Public Comment on draft standards

1. There is a formal 60-day public comment period on the draft standards.
2. The draft suite of principles to standards will be posted for public comment for 60 days for what will be the central consultation process. At the end of the comment period, all comments will be posted with attribution.
3. The SC will review all comments and all comments will be considered in the revision of the suite of standards.
4. Within 30 days of the close of the public comment period, the SC will post a response to the body of comments as a whole or responses to individual comments as is deemed most appropriate. Simultaneously, a final revised suite of standards will be posted for a second 30-day comment period.
5. At the end of the second 30-day comment period, the SC will review all comments and develop final standards. The final standards will be posted on the Aquaculture Dialogue website.

### **Communication and Transparency**

Transparency is the key to effective engagement in the project. To ensure transparency, the project will develop a communication strategy. The strategy will, at a minimum, include the following:

- Meetings will be publicized on the project website and in the project e-newsletter at least one month prior to each meeting.
- A press release about the meeting will be distributed to seafood and retail trade publications at least one month prior to each meeting.
- The meeting agenda and documents to be discussed at the meeting will be disseminated electronically or via mail to meeting participants and posted on the project website at least one week prior to the project meeting.
- Documents that are outcomes of the meeting will be posted on the project website within four weeks after each meeting. At a minimum, this will include the list of meeting participants, presentations made at the meeting, documents reviewed at the meeting, and a meeting summary.
- Each meeting summary will highlight key decisions made, action points created and proposals presented. Meeting summaries will not be verbatim or identify the affiliation of speakers. This is in line with the Chatham House Rule, which states “When a meeting or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other person may be revealed.”
- Pertinent draft documents (e.g., draft research reports and draft principles) will be posted on the project website for public comment.
- The draft suite of principles, criteria, indicators and standards will be posted on the projects website for public comment. In accordance with ISEAL, there will be two 60-day comment periods, with at least 30 days in between each comment period to address comments. Each comment, with attribution, will be posted on the projects website. Responses from the decision –making body also will be posted. The decision-making body will determine whether to post a response to the body of comments as a whole or responses to individual comments.
- Documents will be made available in English.
- The decision-making body will be responsible for reading and responding to all comments related to the project that are raised during the course of the Project.



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- Within six months after the project begins, a work program will be posted on the
- Projects' website. It will be updated once every 6 months. This is a requirement of ISEAL.
  
- When finalized, the principles, criteria, indicators and standards will be posted on the projects' website.

The project also will rely on other entities, such as local NGOs and government agencies, to disseminate information about the Project.

### **Funding**

Expenses related to the project will be paid from the project budget. If these expenses are paid for by another source(s), no more than 25 per cent of funds will come from one stakeholder.

Contributions can be made directly in cash or through in-kind contributions, such as research, terms of reference, time and travel, hosting of meetings, and collaboration on grant proposals.