ASC Monitoring & Evaluation System

September 2017

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Executive Summary

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council’s (ASC) mission is to transform aquaculture towards environmental sustainability and social responsibility using efficient market mechanisms that create value across the chain. A robust Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system is key to understanding and improving the effectiveness of ASC’s activities and strategies, as well as to demonstrate results and impacts to our stakeholders.

This document explains how the ASC M&E system was developed and how the different components of the M&E system (theory of change, results chains, indicators, in-depth evaluations and reporting) are linked. It also outlines how the design of the M&E system will be integrated into normal business operations to increase effectiveness, particularly in terms of ongoing performance monitoring.

This document also describes the procedures collecting, analysing and managing M&E data and how this data is used for reporting of results. It shows how ASC uses its M&E system to measure short and medium-term change, monitor its activities and their results on a continuous basis, and periodically evaluate the actual results against the intended ones. It allows ASC to understand how short and medium term results contribute to long term impacts and how the M&E system helps ASC to be accountable to stakeholders (prove) and for internal learning purposes (improve).

It is important to note that continuous improvement is a part of all processes at ASC. This document should be seen as part of the learning process that will evolve and improve over time, with feedback loops from our M&E systems, as well as input from stakeholders.

This document is based on extensive stakeholder consultation that took place internally in Q1 2017 and externally from May to September 2017. The external consultation included a series of webinars and an online survey. The survey and summary results can be found in the Annex. Overall the feedback received was positive on the level of transparency and quality of the information on the M&E system. The survey included several specific suggestions related to the standard content that have been shared with the standards and technical team to take under review.
1. Introduction and Background

Over half of the seafood consumed globally comes from aquaculture. As the world's population continues to increase, the drive for responsible, protein-rich food sources increases with it. Aquaculture is currently the fastest growing food-production system in the world. As the sector grows, so does its footprint on the environment and local communities.

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) was established in 2010 by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) to address this very challenge, together with other existing and future initiatives and organisations. The ASC aims to transform the world’s seafood markets by promoting and rewarding responsible fish farming practices through a market-oriented certification and labelling programme, resulting in minimised negative environmental and social impacts. This forms the basic “theory” of ASC:

![Minimized Negative Environmental and Social Impacts](image)

This theory was further outlined in a high level narrative Theory of Change (ToC) that was approved by ASC’s Board in 2014, see Annex 1. In the past year, ASC has been investing in elaborating the ToC and developing a M&E system around it in order for ASC and its stakeholders to:

- better understand the effectiveness of its activities and strategies in contributing to change in the sector
- provide valuable information on improvement areas including implementation of the standard, uptake and gaps in the compliance requirements.

ASC makes use of the best practices guidelines as set out by the ISEAL Alliance Code of Good Practice for Assessing the Impacts of Social and Environmental Standards (the Impacts Code). The Impacts Code offers a framework for building a M&E system capable of tracking and examining implementation and results of these activities. As a full ISEAL member, ASC is committed to implementing the Impacts Code including publicly reporting on the results.

The guiding principles for the ASC M&E system include: keeping it simple and practical (lean), build upon strengths, broad participation of users, accountability, and transparency.

The initial M&E system was based upon the 2014 ToC document and organisational documents including the organisational Logframe and Strategic Plan. Consultation with ASC staff in 2015 and 2016 led to the development of the draft results chains and the determination of critical pathways. Indicators with definitions and protocols were drafted to set up a practical and yet functional M&E framework.

Testing of the indicators showed two main areas for improvement: data accessibility and data quality. An important data source are audit reports. Significant advances were made in the past year by introducing measures to check (100%) completeness (of the data) in audit reports and implementing an IT solution to improve data quality and better manage data. The organisational wide database is expected to be operational in 2018. In the meantime, a number of measures being implemented in order to improve data quality, including creating a template for audit...
reporting, regular calls/webinar with auditors and a yearly in-person meeting with certification assessment bodies (starting from 2016).

Based on the data analysis and lessons learned, the results chains and indicators went through another round of internal consultation at the end of 2016. This included a broad organisational review with all of the departments to understand the different user information needs. Feedback and adjustments were made, as well as internal alignment with other organisational planning and management tools. This process has improved the value of the M&E system with additional benefit of creating organisation buy-in and support for the M&E system.

The indicators and definitions have been reviewed to consider key international frameworks and initiatives including WWF and IDH, as well as alignment with the SDGs and ISEAL’s Common Core. ASC is also working with partner organizations to share and leverage data from other processes such as chain of custody with Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and assurance with Accreditation Services International (ASI).

The improved results chains and indicators were presented to the ISEAL M&E Peer Learning group for further input and adjustments in March 2017 and can be found in Annex 2.

2. Scope and Boundaries

The scope of the ASC M&E system is reflected in the M&E framework (see page 9) and focuses on three major result areas:

(i) social and environmental performance of the farm
(ii) system effectiveness and efficiency and
(iii) market performance.

In terms of farm level performance, the ASC programme covers a wide range of aquaculture species and the list of species is expected to grow. In order to ensure an effective system, specifically in the area of farm social and environmental performance, ASC is adopting a stepwise approach for its M&E system that considers the main potential impact in terms of coverage and hotspot impact areas. The initial focus will be on the two key species, salmon and shrimp, (out of current eight species standards) for which ASC offers certification. These species also have the largest number of certified farms to date.

The intention is to include all other farmed species covered by the programme in the long run. Once the framework has been tested and validated, the ASC will gradually roll it out to other species and other areas of work for internal use. As such, this document should be seen as a living document that will change over time to reflect learning and improvement.

For this defined scope of salmon and shrimp, the following sustainability areas have been identified as the most critical at this pilot stage. They may be adapted for other species and after the pilot phase of the next 3 years:

- Water quality
- Benthos state
- Feed utilisation
- Antibiotic use/disease management
- Wildlife
- Habitat loss or rehabilitation
- Working conditions, including overtime
The M&E system focuses on measuring sustainability impacts of producers that are in compliance with ASC performance based standards. The criteria and indicators in the standards serve as both compliance and M&E data points, tracking on-farm results. The M&E system will monitor at a farm/producer level as well as at supply chain level. The Theory of Change is designed for the ASC system as a whole and the result chains focus on the key desired outputs and outcomes and associated strategies to realise the change. Not every issue can be monitored, nor every aspect of the Theory of Change tested, especially in this initial phase of the M&E system build-up. Being a young organisation, some main constraining factors for a M&E system include availability and accessibility of quality data, limitations of collecting data through the audit process and data management systems.

The other two main areas of the M&E system, system effectiveness and market performance, will be organization wide.

### 3. Defining the Intended Change

The long-term goals and desired impacts of ASC are set out by the mission, vision and Theory of Change.

The mission of the ASC is

> To transform aquaculture towards environmental sustainability and social responsibility using efficient market mechanisms that create value across the chain.

By carrying out this mission, ASC aims to achieve its Vision:

> A world where aquaculture plays a major role in supplying food and social benefits for mankind whilst minimising negative impacts on the environment.

The building blocks of the ASC M&E system include the Theory of Change, more detailed results chains, the M&E Framework and indicators.

### 3.1 ASC’s Theory of Change

The ASC initially defined its intended change in a high level narrative Theory of Change which was formally adopted by the ASC Board in 2014. ANNEX 1. The narrative Theory of Change was later complemented with detailed results chains, which show causal relationships between the change ASC wishes to make (goals) and how it expects to get there. Based on the more detailed results chains, indicators were developed to closely monitor if the expected outcomes are achieved. By making explicit how we expect our activities to lead to our intended change, and testing this
through our M&E system, the Theory of Change enables us to continuously learn and refine our strategies.

The ASC will be seen to have achieved its mission if, as a result of ASC actions:
- Aquaculture is transformed towards environmentally sustainable and socially responsibility
- There is an increased global demand for (sales of) ASC certified seafood.

These two effects will together be called ASC’s Vision of Success. The ASC’s vision of success is captured and explained in the Theory of Change (ToC). As the name suggests, the Theory of Change highlights the intended changes that hypothetically will occur as a result of implementation of a ASC strategies. ASC core strategies are:

- Strengthen and develop the ASC global standards and certification programme. This will include defining responsible fish farming performance and practices. The ASC Standards are developed for species with high economic value. Based on global best practices\(^1\), social and environmental requirements for aquaculture of these species are identified.

- Increase the Output of certified seafood and availability of labelled products through focus on key countries particularly in Asia, Europe and the Americas. Driving changes in farming practices by harnessing market forces. Increasing stakeholder awareness on a retail-level and exposing consumers to the ASC’s logo, will increase the global demand for responsibly farmed seafood such that it is a viable practice.

- Promote ASC successfully with stakeholders, including consumers, and raise awareness of the programme. To do this successfully ASC will employ rigorous independent and transparent accreditation and certification processes. The processes follow the FAO guidelines and the ISEAL Codes of Good Practice (the Assurance Code). They are implemented by professional and competent bodies and their personnel. Credibility of the programme gives standard users confidence and trust leading to more buy-in and more demand for ASC certified products.

- Agree and make operational ASC collaboration with other relevant certification and ratings organisations. Collaborating with actors in the aquaculture sector, scientific community, environmental and social groups, existing standard schemes (including and not limited to fisheries and aquaculture), and other stakeholders to gain synergies and efficiency in reaching the ultimately shared goal of more responsibility in the sector.

- Strengthen ASC organisational development. Last but not least, healthy development of the ASC as an organisation is of paramount importance to create a strong foundation for realising its mission and vision.

The Theory of Change reflects the long-term process of how we bring about change, to achieve our mission in the long run. It also reflects the most important external factors that influence the success of our program.

3.2 Results chains

The results chains complement the ToC and illustrate the process of how ASC sees the change takes place and can be found in Annex 2.

\(^1\) ASC definition of ‘best practice’: at the launch of a standard, approximately 15 per cent of the best performing farms will be able to meet that standard’s requirements.
Drafting the results chains starts at the Vision of Success and ASC’s goals. The questions asked areas to, what has to happen in order to achieve the desired goals and how do we define the results? This also helps us identify and understand - IF we have not achieved our goals – what has to change in order for us to reach our goals? Through the results chains, we make explicit how we expect our strategies will lead to the expected outcomes and how these outcomes contribute to impacts.

The results chains are displayed in four stages: long term and short term outcomes, outputs and activities. This is highlighted in the following example of one simplified results chain.

**Intended Short and Longer Term Impact and Results**

ASC’s Mission is to transform aquaculture towards environmental sustainability and social responsibility that preserves the environment, biodiversity and water resources, while improving farmers, workers and communities’ wellbeing.

Expected outcomes that will contribute to these impact areas will occur at different rates depending on many factors, including enabling and hindering factors, as well as many assumptions. Some of these are highlighted here and more details in the M&E Framework (page 9).

**Longer term outcomes**

- Minimised negative effect of aquaculture on the environment
- Improved working conditions and enhanced positive effect of aquaculture on the local community
- Increased efficiency through reduced production costs, and
- Increased sales of ASC certified fish to make responsible farming viable.

**Shorter-term outcomes:**

- Increased number of farmers implementing the ASC standards and better aquaculture practices.
- Credible system that rigorously and transparently verifies changes on the farm level and that inspires stakeholders with trust and confidence, leading ultimately to more demand for responsible certified products.
- Market preference for certified products. When a buyer chooses to purchase ASC certified fish, certified farms are rewarded for their responsible practices through that market preference. Purchasing preferences increase demand and market access for certified products.
**Outputs** are direct results from the implementation of activities. Outputs are the stepping stone to shorter-term outcomes and include:

- Farmers are aware of the benefits of ASC certification
- Accessibility of the ASC programme
- Effective, efficient and transparent programme
- Expansion of the programme scope
- Increased awareness of benefits of ASC certified fish

As the programme becomes more visible to the public, there is more awareness of the benefits by both farmers, buyers and consumers. The assumption is that this increased awareness of the benefits leads to more farmers embarking on implementation of the ASC standards, and more influence on market preference for certified fish creating more demand on farmers to implement the environmental and social requirements of the standard to get certified.

**Assumptions**
The Theory of Change and results chains are *theories* of how the ASC programme works. There are many *assumptions* built in the results chains that are important to the ability of ASC to achieve its mission and have impact:

- Assumptions that explain why each result or change is necessary to achieve the long-term impact
- Assumptions about the context in which ASC operates as a global standard
- Assumptions about the connection between specific activities and the incremental results they are expected to generate.

There are assumptions at all levels of results, assumptions about how certain activities will lead to specific results and how these in turn can lead to further changes. The M&E system will be testing these assumptions to build evidence on what works under what conditions and to adjust activities and focus.

It is important to note that the reality of change is much more complex. However, by keeping the results chains simplified, we can focus on core strategies and results, see Annex 2.

### 3.3 M&E Framework

The ASC M&E Framework describes the sustainability issues that ASC is responding to at farm and sector level, the long-term goals, expected outcomes, strategies to achieve them and the assumptions in order to be successful in bringing about change. See the ASC M&E Framework on the following page.
### Long term Vision

To transform aquaculture towards environmental sustainability and social responsibility that preserves the environment, while improving farmers, workers and communities wellbeing.

### Long term Outcomes

1. Minimized negative effect of aquaculture on environment
2. Improved working conditions and enhanced positive effect of aquaculture on the local community
3. Increased efficiency through reduced production costs
4. Increased sales to make responsible farming viable

### Sustainability Issues Sector

1. Increasing global demand for fish
2. Increasing pressures on wild fish stocks
3. Ungoverned expansion
4. Supply base largely uncertified and fragmented
5. Consumers unaware or unwilling to pay for sustainably sourced products

### Sustainability Issues Farm

1. Disruption of local ecosystems:
   - Feed pollution
   - Mangrove clearing
2. Biodiversity
3. Waste Water
4. Use conflict
5. Social Issues
   - Working conditions
   - Labour rights
   - Community involvement

### Assumptions

1. Critical mass uptake
2. Consumers and business see value in credible certification
3. Market access
4. Regulatory enforcement

### Shorter Term Outcomes

1. Increase farmers implementing the ASC standards.
2. Credible system that rigorously and transparently verifies changes on the farm level inspires stakeholders with trust and confidence, leading ultimately to more demand for responsible certified product.
3. Market preference for certified product creates incentives

### Outputs

1. Farmers are aware of benefits of ASC certification.
2. Accessibility of the ASC programme
3. Effective, efficient and transparent programme
4. Expansion of programme scope
5. Raised stakeholder awareness of benefits of certified fish

### Programme Strategies

1. Outreach to farmers and groups (training and support)
2. Defining best practices and system requirements (standard setting, policies and systems)
3. Quality Management system (Certification Bodies, assurance)
4. Adherence to most rigorous internal guidelines
5. Promoting market uptake with companies, NGOs
6. Building consumer awareness

### Institutional Strategies

1. Build capacity and external support
2. Collaborating with other organizations
3. Monitoring and evaluation for continuous improvement
### 3.4 Unintended effects

The Theory of Change and the results chains are the hypothesis or theory of how ASC intends to make change happen. While it is based on the best knowledge, there can be changes (positive and negative) that occur that ASC did not anticipate – these are unintended effects.

Unintended effects are challenge by their nature – as it requires ASC to try to think of all of the possible “what if’s”. However, ASC works to identify these to reinforce the potential positive “spillover” and take proactive measures to manage (avoid/mitigate) the negative ones. This is an integral part of the stakeholder consultation, farmer surveys and internal risk assessment. We do this by asking ourselves the questions – based on their experience with ASC and similar programmes - - what are the possible negative effects? What are the surprises or positive effects that were not anticipated? Asking farmers of their challenges with the program? The M&E system will question and test the assumptions in the Theory of Change and by

Topmost outcomes that are not prime objectives of the ASC programme but have positive socio-economic results include:

- **Cost reduction.** Requirements on inputs (e.g. on feed, use of chemicals) aiming to improve environmental performance of farming practices, can create economic benefits for farms due to reduced amount of purchased inputs to meet those requirements

- **Opportunities for attracting investment and loan.** Potential investors or banks view ASC certified farms, as opposed to uncertified ones, as reduced risks due to the implementation of better practices and overall professionalization in participating in the ASC programme.

- **Supporting regulatory frameworks.** In countries where national and local regulatory frameworks are either lacking or ineffective in terms of enforcement, the ASC standards and assurance system are instrumental for governments for meeting their goals.

- **Transparency of farm performance.** Lack of accessibility of quality data has been a challenge to the understanding of farm changes as well as sector level trends. The ASC’s transparency policy stipulating that all audit reports are publicly available in an accessible format allows for external stakeholders (including researchers) to analyse and build models to test assumptions, outcomes (intended and unintended), etc. ultimately leading to improved interventions and outcomes.

The main negative outcomes that are not intended as part of ASC interventions, but have been identified as potential effects include:

- **High implementation and certification costs.** The more stringent the standards and requirements for the assurance scheme, the more likely that costs for farms to get certified are high, especially in regard to initial investment costs in improving farm infrastructure.

- **No further improvement** due to performance-based nature of the standards. It is of a concern that once certified farms have fully met all ASC requirements (performance thresholds), there is little room or incentive for farms to improve their practices unless the standards are revised to raise the bar.

- **Ungoverned expansion of land/water use for fish farming.** Successful ASC certification may motivate farms to expand their production in areas that may compete with other staple crops (e.g. rice), or other sources of incomes (e.g. tourism), or cause detriment to the environment and surrounding community (areas of high conservation values). This would be rather critical if it would happen in countries with ineffective enforcement of legislation.
- Small scale fisheries do not have the economic models to participate in global value chains and are eliminated or left out by market forces. (ADDED from stakeholder consultation)

The unintended negative effects will also be carefully monitored so that ASC can steer its interventions, and where possible, to mitigate those effects. These will be done at Level 2 monitoring including longitudinal analysis of non-compliances in audit reports and performance data to look for positive (improved performance) and/or no further improvements. Costs and benefits will be monitored at Level 2 cost benefit analysis and Level 3 impact assessments.

3.5 Influencing factors

ASC operates in a complex environment and change is not linear. The success of ASC in achieving its mission is dependent on other external factors, often outside of its control. These can be both enabling and hindering factors. Similar to unintended effects, external factors need to be regularly assessed, identified and appropriate actions taken. Over time and with change, opportunities may arise that ASC can leverage or challenges occur that must be addressed to respond to potential negative effects.

Influencing factors include:

- Increased awareness of nutritional values of seafood has led to a steady growth of aquaculture due to the stable production of wild catch. The ASC programme can contribute to sustaining aquaculture in a responsible manner.
- Some of the larger seafood consuming markets are not yet receptive to certified products, making the uptake pace on the demand side mismatched with the supply speed.
- Policy may change on various levels, international or national, and the change could go either way, in or out of favour for the ASC programme.
- Disease outbreaks or natural disasters. Farmers may have to step out of certification to focus their resources on coping with the issue and consequent financial damage.
- Climate change and extreme weather patterns. As with the previous, this can affect farmers directly with impacts on production and productivity and disrupt supply chains.
- Literacy levels of farmers (especially smallholders)

Currently these are not reflected in the ToC, but are considered by senior management as part of the strategic review. Within M&E, these factors will be considered for contextual analysis in the future annual monitoring report and outcome and impact evaluations.

4. Ongoing Monitoring System

Based on the Theory of Change and results chains, the M&E system has been developed to support ongoing monitoring of results, incorporating learning to adapt the ASC programme. While the purpose of the ASC M&E system is to track and report progress on results at all levels – from outputs, outcomes to impact, as well as to “test” the hypotheses articulated in the Theory of Change and results chains - it would be extremely difficult and challenging to try to do all of this in a meaningful and feasible way. Thus, ASC is taking a strategic approach to looking at different “levels” of monitoring and evaluation:
4.1 Indicators

ASC has been collecting basic data on certified operations and markets since the start of its operations in 2012. These are made available in monthly reports on the ASC website. Starting in 2017, a broader set of indicators will be collected to track progress towards our goals and “test” through regular collection of data on a prioritised set of indicators.

For the prioritised result chains, 30 key indicators were defined at different levels.

- 9 for outputs
- 5 for shorter term outcomes
- 16 for the longer-term outcomes

These indicators are explicitly linked to the intended change and the stage in the results chain. They were selected and refined by all of the departments based on the criteria: relevant to the Theory of Change, technically sound (consistent, accurate and timely) and feasible (resources, IT).

Most of the core M&E indicators are quantifiable and expressed in terms of change (e.g. increased number of, or reduced amount of, etc.) or comparison (e.g. ratio between certified/non-certified). Some of the M&E indicators are qualitative (e.g. increased coverage of local CABs).

With each indicator, the area of data collection and specific data or data points are also specified. The indicators need to be further broken down in the actual pieces of data that needs to be captured, how it is captured, frequency, by whom, etc. These specifications are considered the indicator protocols. This is important for ensuring consistency over time and robust data sets.

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<th>Intended change</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Areas of data collection</th>
<th>Data to be captured</th>
<th>Data collection protocol</th>
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The full list of M&E indicators, respective data points and data collection protocol is in Annex 3.

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ASC in Numbers

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4.2 Performance monitoring

The majority of the indicators will be regularly collected from ongoing operations such as audit reports, assurance records, training records, outreach activities and media monitoring. These will be related to program reach and delivery, as well as uptake of activities. This information will also serve as key characteristics and baseline for outcome and impact evaluations.

Being a performance-based scheme, many metrics regarding farm performance and results are collected through assurance activities and will be used for both compliance assessment and monitoring & evaluation. The audit report template is constructed in the way that facilitates this data collection during the audit. All audit reports arriving into the system are checked to make sure that data is at least complete. This data on outcomes will also be collected across all certificate holders as part of ongoing operations.

While much of the data will be collected on an ongoing basis, there will be different reporting frequencies based on needs and priorities. This also allows for flexibility in the system to respond to specific issue areas that may arise.
At level 1, monthly reports will continue to be provided on the reach and market output indicators. In addition, data will be collated and analysed on a yearly basis with the main focus on tracking the programme’s progress and direct results. At a minimum, the analysis is vis-à-vis the output and some shorter-term outcome indicators.

4.3 Outcome and Impact Evaluation

At Level 2 and 3, the topics and area of focus will be determined on a yearly basis responding to the needs of the organisation as well as the requests from stakeholders. The outcome level data will be used for these periodic analyses for both internal learning purposes and external reports.

This data will be augmented with additional data from certified operations through other mechanisms such as surveys and data from other sources including FAO, national or sector baselines and/or counterfactuals depending on the design of the survey or study.

Summaries of all outcome and impact evaluations will be made publicly available on the ASC website once they are finalized and where possible all full reports as well. ASC also intends to support the “Sustainability Impacts Learning Platform” from WWF, ISEAL and the Sustainable Food Lab http://www.sustainabilityimpactslearningplatform.org and will encourage researchers to post reports as well as put any ASC commissioned research on the platform.

Outcome and impact evaluations will enable ASC to:
- Understand the direct and indirect impact of ASC Certification,
- Create cost benefits analysis for farmers and supply chain actors,
- Understand the impacts of the ASC logo and the contribution of ASC certification to the sustainability of the sector,
- Support and review the effective implementation of ASC’s Standards and identify where additional guidance is needed,
- Understand the effectiveness of market penetration in new and emerging markets.
5. Use of results for internal learning

The M&E system will be used internally to learn for improving the system effectiveness and the standards. By gathering regular data over time through ongoing performance monitoring, we will be able to identify and analyse trends in system effectiveness to target training of auditors and farmers. The system will provide data to test the assumptions in the standard including thresholds.

The outcome evaluations will be used for targeted deeper dives into research questions of what is working, under what conditions and to identify influencing and enabling factors.

6. Transparency and Stakeholder engagement

ASC is designing and developing its M&E system in close cooperation with its stakeholders. By engaging its stakeholders in dialogue ASC wants to develop an understanding of what social and environmental issues matter the most to them (in relation to ASC’s long-term goals), gain their input and expertise in developing ‘solutions’ to address and measure these matters (through its M&E program), and align expectations and create acceptance of its program.

ASC has imbedded stakeholder engagement within its governance structure. Through this structure, ASC ensures that the interest of various stakeholder groups is balanced, subject matter expertise and the stakeholders that are materially affected are included, and decision making is inclusive and non-discriminatory.

In addition to this basic structure ASC specifically engages stakeholders with the monitoring and evaluation system through:

- **Webinars**: targeted stakeholder specific webinars presenting the M&E system to solicit input.
- **Public consultation**: Putting the M&E framework up for public consultation in order for all stakeholders to provide comments

7. Annexes

7.1 Annex 1: ASC’s Theory of Change
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7.3 Annex 3: ASC’s list of M&E Indicators
7.4 Annex 4: Definitions
7.5 Summary of ASC M&E System Report Online Stakeholder Survey


Annex 1: Theory of Change Infographic

ASC's Theory of Change

Aquaculture is the fastest growing food production system globally. As the sector grows, so does its environmental and social footprint. ASC aims to transform aquaculture towards environmental sustainability and social responsibility, creating value across the chain.

These purchasing preferences increase the demand for responsibly farmed fish. When consumers buy ASC certified fish, they reward responsibly managed farms.

Based on robust standards, the ASC programme aims to improve fish farming practices.

Greater demand for responsibly farmed seafood influences more farms to be assessed against the ASC standards. The more farms that become certified, the greater the environmental and social improvements.

ASC certified farms create less pressure on the environment and ensure social responsibility.
Annex 2: Results Chains

Activities
- Outreach to farmers
- Defining best practices and system requirements
- Collaborating with other organizations
- Adherence to most rigorous international guidelines
- Training
- Outreach to stakeholders
- Facilitating communication with stakeholders

Outputs
- Farmers are aware of benefits of ASC certification
- Accessibility of ASC certification
- Efficient, effective and transparent system
- Raised stakeholder and consumer awareness of benefits of ASC programme and certified product

Outcomes
- (More) farmers implement ASC Standards
- Credible programme
- Market preference for certified product

Shorter-term Outcomes
- Improved working conditions and enhanced positive effect of aquaculture on the local community
- Minimized negative effect of aquaculture on environment
- Market preference for certified product
- Increased demand to make responsible farming viable

Longer-term
- High implementation and certification costs
- No further improvements
- Improved working conditions and enhanced positive effect of aquaculture on the local community
- Ungoverned expansion of production areas

Vision of success
- To transform aquaculture towards environmentally and socially responsible by increasing the global demand for certified seafood

Other processes: Management, Fund raising, Finance, Human resources, IT-system
Annex 4: Definitions
(from ISEAL IMPACTS Code)

**Effects** - Intended or unintended change due directly or indirectly to an intervention. (Adapted from OECD Glossary, 2002)

**Impacts** - Positive and negative long-term effects resulting from the implementation of a standards system, either directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. (Adapted from OECD Glossary).

**Indicator** - Quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement of outcomes, to reflect the changes connected to a standards system, or to help assess the performance of an organisation. (Adapted from OECD Glossary, 2002).

**Indicator Protocol** - An indicator protocol is a detailed description that explains how an indicator is constructed. It includes the metrics needed for an indicator, units of measure, definitions for key terms, data source(s), data collection frequency and approach, scope and other technical references.

**Input** - A resource mobilized by a standards system to support activities to further desired long-term impacts. Examples of inputs include physical, human, financial, and capital resources. (Adapted from Rainforest Alliance Glossary, 2013).

**Monitoring and Evaluation System** - An ongoing process through which an organisation draws conclusions about its contribution to intended outcomes and impacts. A monitoring and evaluation system consists of a set of interconnected functions, processes and activities, including systematic collection of monitoring data on specified indicators and the implementation of outcome and impact evaluations.

**Outcome** - The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term results from the implementation of a standards system’s strategies. (Adapted from OECD Glossary, 2002).

**Outcome Evaluation** - Systematic and objective in depth ex-post assessment of the short-term and medium-term results or effects from the implementation of a standards system. These studies seek to shed light on the extent to which standards system’s desired changes are occurring as well as why the system is or is not working. Unlike impact evaluations, outcome evaluations are not designed to draw conclusions about the extent to which an intervention can be attributed to the intervention of a standards system.

**Output** - The products, capital goods, and services that result directly from the activities of a standards system. (Adapted from OECD Glossary, 2002)

**Performance Monitoring** - A continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide indications of the extent to which outputs and short and medium-term results are being achieved. (Adapted from OECD Glossary, 2002)
Annex 5. Summary of ASC M&E System Report Stakeholder online Survey

Summary of ASC M&E System Survey – open consultation on the M&E system report version 0.3 with guided questions. Twelve respondents completed the survey, providing quite detailed input and feedback. Below is a summary. Overall the feedback received was positive on the level of transparency and quality of the information on the M&E system. The survey included several specific suggestions related to the standard content that have been shared with the standards and technical team to take under review.

Q1. Reviewing the M&E system report, what is your opinion on the following:

1. Overall M&E system?
2. ASC’s intended change or Theory of Change - what we are trying to achieve?
3. ASC's goals and impact areas?
4. ASC strategies to achieve these goals? How we are working?

In all 4 areas, responses were 75% or more positive with either very clear and meaningful or generally makes sense. Comments were mainly technical related to the standard (and not the M&E system and were shared with the standards technical team. One suggestion was to reflect things more positively – rather than reducing negative impacts focusing on the positive. This was considered in a rapid review to frame things more positively to be more “inspirational”.

Q2. Are there any key impact areas you think are missing from this list?

The priority impact areas for the M&E scope were presented and stakeholders overall agreed with them. The areas identified in the survey as potential additional areas are all related to the standard content and have been shared with the technical team to take under consideration. Some topics are already within the standard such as legal, conflict areas and management systems. No change was made to the current list of priority impact areas for the M&E system.

Q3. Based on your experience are there potential areas for positive or negative outcomes that are not reflected here (unintended effects)?

The M&E system report highlighted several key positive and negative potential unintended outcomes. Respondents added to these areas some general suggestions – such as have longitudinal studies that were unrelated to the question. These were passed on to the technical team for consideration. On suggestion was to consider unintended effects specifically to smallholders. This has been in integrated into the report.

Q4. Are there any assumptions that we are missing or are not clear?

The M&E system report outlines some of the key assumptions behind the cause and effect of outputs to impacts, as well as assumptions in the context in which ASC operates. Survey respondents provided several important points and/or questions that have been passed on to the technical team for consideration in both the process of setting thresholds in the standard and when creating longitudinal studies.

Q5. Your name and organization. no attribution will be made to any responses or comments.

All respondents provided name and email for further contact and information indicating interest in the process. All respondents will receive a direct email thanking them for their input and a summary of the survey.
Q.6 Additional comments and questions

Half of the respondents provided some in-depth specific comments, with the majority of them positive feedback, with questions or input on technical aspects of the standards. These have been shared with the technical team for consideration. One respondent highlighted the need to focus on the “bottom of the pyramid” and need to drive change faster, learning from good practices more sector wide. This is important advice in developing future strategy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase in results chain</th>
<th>Intended change</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Areas of data collection</th>
<th>Metric</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic stats</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reach</td>
<td>Volumes</td>
<td># MT of certified production/species/country</td>
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<td>Farms</td>
<td># certified farms/species/country</td>
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<td>Farm size in ha/species/countries</td>
<td>% of pens, cages, ponds, RAS, extensive/intensive</td>
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<td>CoC holders</td>
<td># CoC certificate holders/species</td>
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<td>License holders</td>
<td>Countries of certified farms/species</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Labelled products</td>
<td># partners (who buys ASC certified fish)</td>
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<td>Markets (countries)</td>
<td># products with ASC logo</td>
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<td>Other certifications</td>
<td>countries of certified farms/suppliers</td>
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<td>Workers</td>
<td># of farms holding other certification (GAA, GG)</td>
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<td>License holders</td>
<td># logo license holders</td>
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<td>Labelled products</td>
<td># products with ASC logo</td>
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<td>Markets (countries)</td>
<td># markets (receptive/less receptive)/countries</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Other certifications</td>
<td># of farms working at certified farms/species/country</td>
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<td>Workers</td>
<td># workers working at certified farms/species/country</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Outputs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Farmers are aware of benefits of ASC certification</td>
<td>Farmer survey</td>
<td># of surveyed farmers mention about benefits of ASC</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Farmers engaging in ASC led public consultations</td>
<td># farmers providing feedback during public consultation and feedback periods</td>
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<td>Certified farms</td>
<td># of certified farms/species/country</td>
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<td>Farmer outreach</td>
<td># of farms leaving the programme/species/country</td>
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<td>2. Accessibility of ASC certification</td>
<td>Group certification</td>
<td># group certificate holders</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Certified farms</td>
<td># qualified auditors/species/country participating in certification</td>
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<td>Traceholders engagement</td>
<td># stakeholders in certification process</td>
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<td># closed cases with satisfaction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Effective, efficient and transparent assurance system</td>
<td>Complaints/Incidents (#appeals)</td>
<td># incidents/complaints raised against CABs</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-conformities</td>
<td># incidents/complaints raised against ASC</td>
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<td>Suspensions</td>
<td># incidents/complaints raised on farm</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Accreditations process</td>
<td># incidents/complaints raised on CoC holder</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Certification process</td>
<td># NCS CABs received from ASI</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># of complaints accepted by CABs</td>
<td># accreditation suspensions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># days to close VR</td>
<td># farm certificates suspended</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># days to provide QA feedback</td>
<td># accreditation suspensions</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td># of farms certified online</td>
<td># farm certificates suspended</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># comments of QA accepted by CABs</td>
<td># accreditation suspensions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># days to provide QA feedback</td>
<td># farm certificates suspended</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Increased numbers of supply chain companies engaged the ASC programme</td>
<td>ASC Standards</td>
<td># species covered by ASC standards</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Logo use</td>
<td># of licensing agreements signed</td>
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<td>Events</td>
<td># of marketing undertaking agreements signed</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># awareness and promotion activities organised by ASC</td>
<td># of licensing agreements signed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># awareness and promotion activities organised by partners (companies and NGOs)</td>
<td># of marketing undertaking agreements signed</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contact</td>
<td># of licensing agreements signed</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Media coverage</td>
<td># of companies for logo use/country</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Consumer awareness</td>
<td># of licensing agreements signed</td>
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<td></td>
<td># of markets</td>
<td># of markets</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># of labelled products/species</td>
<td># of labelled products/species</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># of species</td>
<td># of species</td>
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</table>

**Annex 3: ASC’s list of M&E Indicators**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase in results chain</th>
<th>Intended change</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Areas of data collection</th>
<th>Metric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shorter-term outcomes</td>
<td>6. (More) farms implementing ASC standards</td>
<td>6.1 Increased number of (certified) farms</td>
<td>Farms</td>
<td># farms certified</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># farms in assessment</td>
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<td></td>
<td># farms implementing ASC standards (but not yet certified through funded projects/AIPs)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td># farms leaving the programme</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.1 Increased number of initiatives/ organisations supporting/ recognising/ using ASC programme</td>
<td>7.1 Increased number of initiatives/ organisations supporting/ recognising/ using ASC programme</td>
<td></td>
<td># initiatives recognising/ recommending ASC (e.g. MBA, consumer protection organisations (Öko-test), Good Fish Foundation, WWF, etc)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># of organisations referencing ASC as their preference (e.g. Olympics committees (Rio, Tokyo), IFC, Ecobusiness fund, Rabo Bank, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.2 Compliance with international guidelines for certification</td>
<td>7.2 Compliance with international guidelines for certification</td>
<td>ASC recognition</td>
<td># initiatives ASC is in compliance with (GSSI, ISEAL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.3 Engagement of researchers community</td>
<td>7.3 Engagement of researchers community</td>
<td></td>
<td># academic articles supporting on ASC standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Credible programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td># research institutes engaged in standard development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Market preference creates incentives for certified product</td>
<td>8.1 Ratio (%) between declared certified product volumes vs. certified farm production volumes</td>
<td>Volumes</td>
<td>Volume of ASC certified seafood</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Volume of declared products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase in results chain</td>
<td>Intended change</td>
<td>Indicators</td>
<td>Areas of data collection</td>
<td>Metric</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Minimised negative effect of aquaculture on environment</td>
<td>9.1 Improving water quality</td>
<td>Water quality</td>
<td>kg N/P in effluent per ton fish</td>
<td>Long-term outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.2 Increased protection of wildlife (wild population and marine mammals/predators)</td>
<td>Benthos state</td>
<td>Benthic biomass</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.3 Increased mangrove restoration practices/ decreased wetland converted areas (ha)</td>
<td>Habitat</td>
<td># ha restored/newly planted mangrove</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9.4 Reduced amount of (non-)therapeutic chemicals used</td>
<td>(Non-)therapeutic use</td>
<td># times of (non-)therapeutic treatment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.5 Reduced bFCR and eFCR</td>
<td>bFCR and eFCR</td>
<td>kg chemicals/antibiotics used per kg/tonnes of fish</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.6 Increased % of feed ingredients from sustainably/responsibly certified sources</td>
<td>Feed Ingredient Origin</td>
<td>% farms using ASC Feed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Improved working conditions and enhanced positive effect of aquaculture on the local community</td>
<td>10.1 Improved on farm housing/living conditions</td>
<td>Health and safety</td>
<td># job-related accidents requiring medical treatment</td>
<td>Long-term outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.2 Reduced overtime hours</td>
<td>Overtime</td>
<td># overtime hours</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>10.3 Ratio of the wage at ASC certified farms compared to non-certified farms in the same region</td>
<td>Wages</td>
<td>% of overtime compensation paid at premium rate</td>
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<td>10.4 Increased positive feedback from surrounding community</td>
<td>Community relations</td>
<td># average resolution time of complaints</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>11. Higher yield</td>
<td></td>
<td>survival/mortality ratio</td>
<td>Long-term outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.2 Reduced Input costs</td>
<td></td>
<td>kg chemicals/antibiotics used per kg/tonnes of fish</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Increased sales to make responsible farming viable</td>
<td>12.1 Growth of purchased ASC certified products</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td># retailers and brands making (public) commitments to buy increased amounts of ASC certified products</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.2 % of ASC global production certified/global production</td>
<td>Market expansion</td>
<td>% of ASC products</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>12.3 Improved supply &amp; demand ratio</td>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>Volume/Trade</td>
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</table>

24/05/17