

## Promoting Environmentally Sound and Socially Responsible Feed in the Global Aquaculture Industry

### **General Stakeholder Information**

*This is a public document, please feel free to circulate*

<b>Project initiator:</b>	Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC)
<b>Project duration:</b>	30 months
<b>Proposed start date:</b>	Second Quarter 2013
<b>Proposed finish date:</b>	December 2015
<b>Impact target:</b>	10-12% of the volume of world aquaculture feed production certified by 2020
<b>Management structure:</b>	Project Executive Committee (EC) and Project Technical Working Group (TWG) reporting to the ASC Supervisory Board.
<b>Main Deliverables:</b>	ASC Feed Standard, Audit Manual, Field tests, Training Material
<b>Project Direction ASC:</b>	Chris Ninnes, CEO
<b>Key ASC contact:</b>	Michiel Fransen <a href="mailto:michiel.fransen@asc-aqua.org">michiel.fransen@asc-aqua.org</a>

### **Project Introduction**

Most seafood species that are farmed need feed in order to complete their growing cycle. But while feed is an essential element in fish farming, it is also a major contributor to the overall environmental impact of aquaculture. This is because the production of some of the key ingredients used in making feed itself creates environmental pressures that need to be addressed urgently.

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) is developing a project to tackle this problem. It will create a new, globally applicable, ASC Feed Standard. The Standard will set out the requirements for the aquaculture feed industry to operate on a more environmentally sound and socially responsible basis. The project will introduce consistency into the way in which the aquaculture feed industry has been asked to address sustainability and social responsibility issues concerning feed. The project will be undertaken over three years and is expected to be financed by interested Foundations and the aquaculture industry.

Increasing fish production through aquaculture is one of the best ways in which the growing world demand for food can be met. We already directly consume as much fish from aquaculture production as we do from wild capture fisheries. And the proportionate share of aquaculture in total world seafood production is rising and will continue to rise. But without improvements in management and technology, production at ever-higher levels will lead to unsustainable pressures on the environment worldwide.

Feed is the most costly input in fish farming. This of itself has driven innovation in feed composition and increased efficiency of use. But increasing production of farmed fish will lead to an increase in demand for fishmeal and fish oil. Reducing the fishmeal and fish oil component in aquaculture feed is a high priority for users of intensive and semi-intensive systems of fish production. Achieving this will require a mix of interventions. Initiatives and innovation are needed and needed now to ensure that

the aquaculture industry has feed available that is made in an environmentally sensitive and optimal way. This will require that best practice is followed as widely as possible and that a way is found of disseminating knowledge of best practice and ensuring that it is applied properly. Independent certification programmes such as the ASC's are a way of meeting these aims.

The industry currently faces an inconsistent "ask" from NGOs and the public about how the environmental impacts from feed production and use can be modified. These inconsistencies make it difficult to develop environmentally friendly feeds in a cost efficient way that can be used by farmers universally. But, perhaps more significantly, these inconsistencies also dilute the supply chain pressure and resulting market incentives that can and should stimulate producers to reduce the potentially damaging environmental impact of the feed they make. A consistent "ask" to feed ingredient suppliers from the aquaculture industry is needed. This 'ask' will require engagement with other certification programmes that address the sustainability and social impacts of key feed components (e.g. wild fisheries through the Marine Stewardship Council; Soy through the Round Table for Responsible Soy etc.). It is envisaged that this will promote the wider uptake of these certification programmes; notably those engaged or engaging with the ISEAL platform or those that define transitional steps towards achieving such certification.

The new ASC project will address these issues. The standard that will be developed will be consistent with the general ASC certification and labeling programme approach. The ASC seeks to promote change in and through the marketplace that delivers improvements in the way that the aquaculture industry operates in the production of a range of the species that dominate commercial farmed fish production.

The project will not only develop the content of a feed standard, but it will research, draft and field test the operational feasibility of the standard and the related audit manual that will be needed to guide auditors when conducting assessments against the feed standard. The credibility of the standard depends, in part, on it being applied consistently all around the world by a range of certification companies. Both the development of the standard and the audit manual will require a range of issues to be reviewed, researched and analysed to provide a robust and scientifically clear underpinning for the content of both of these documents. Current best practice will be taken into account at all stages.

On the conclusion of the work, the ASC Feed Standard will be available to all who want to use it. This approach is the best way in which to improve the environmental performance of the feed part of fish farming and to develop a cohesive and consistent tool on behalf of the broader aquaculture industry. Reducing the environmental impact of the aquaculture feed industry is an important goal to strive for. It is needed now and is a prize that is achievable through the strategy to be followed in this project.

## Project Planning and Deliverables

The project will begin in the second quarter of 2013. Depending on the outcome of field testing and the possible need for further review the standard could, be ready for approval at the end of 2015.

The project will deliver a single ASC Feed Standard applicable globally to all types of aquaculture feed production facilities and usable by all certification programmes. It will be developed through an ISEAL<sup>1</sup> compliant multi-stakeholder consultation process and delivered, primarily, through consulting work. It is for decision whether the feed itself or the production facility will receive a certificate. An Audit Manual that will guide feed manufacturers in the use and implementation of the standard and auditors in their assessment of whether feed producers meet the Feed Standard will also be developed and tested in the field. During the development of the final draft of the standard, training

---

<sup>1</sup> ISEAL is the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance  
<http://www.isealalliance.org/>

materials will be developed. Auditors will be required to undertake a training course successfully before they can undertake assessments against the standard.

The outcomes from this project will be:

1. Feed for aquaculture enterprises that is more environmentally sound and socially responsibly produced than ever before. The ASC Feed Standard (and supporting documents) produced under the project will be applicable globally to all types of aquaculture feed production facilities and usable by all certification programmes.
2. Stronger market based incentives for more environmentally sound and socially responsible feed production, especially for key wild capture fisheries supplying aquaculture feed producers to move to more sustainable methods of operation.
3. To encourage the sourcing of the key feed components used in the production of fish feed from credible certified sources.

The scale of the benefits from the project is hard to forecast. Nevertheless the ASC has set a target that **by 2020 some 10-12% of total aquaculture feed production (so 7- 8.4 million tonnes) should be certified to the ASC Feed Standard.**

The immediate benefits of the project will materialise as feed manufacturers produce feed in compliance with the new ASC Feed Standard. Through improved sourcing, development and supply of feed it will be possible for aquaculture farmers to have their key input available in forms that can have a positive, not potentially negative, impact on the environment and society.

The ASC believes that this desirable outcome is achievable.

### More information...

---

- For more information on the progress of the Feed Project, please send an e-mail to [michiel.fransen@asc-aqua.org](mailto:michiel.fransen@asc-aqua.org).
- For more information on possible participation in the Technical Working Group, please send an e-mail to [michiel.fransen@asc-aqua.org](mailto:michiel.fransen@asc-aqua.org).