



Social

Introduction to ASC certification

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) promotes responsibly farmed seafood through its certification and labelling programme. Working together with the aquaculture industry, seafood processors, retail and foodservice companies, scientists and conservation groups, it helps to guide the industry towards an environmentally sustainable and socially responsible future.

Fish farms that meet ASC's standards gain the right to sell their products bearing the ASC logo. This gives farms a public endorsement of their responsible practices, and gives consumers the reassurance that they're making an ethical purchase.

The ASC standards

The ASC farm standards were developed by more than 2,000 stakeholders globally. The standard development process adheres to ISEAL's¹ Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards.

The ASC standards focus on both the environmental and social impact of farming.

- Environmentally, farms must show that they actively minimise their impact on the surrounding natural environment. This extends to careful management of the fish health and resources.
- Socially, farms must be a good and conscientious neighbour. Farms are operated in a socially responsible manner, caring for their employees and working with the local community.

¹ ISEAL is the global membership association for sustainability standards, it defines what good practice looks like along with the core characteristics of credible standards. ISEAL members demonstrate their ability to meet ISEAL's Codes of Good Practice and accompanying requirements, as well as commit to learning and improving to deliver increased positive impacts.

The ASC Social Standard

Aquaculture has been associated with a number of adverse social impacts such as child and forced labour, dangerous working conditions and unfair treatment of farm workers. The ASC certification addresses these concerns through standards that impose strict requirements based on the core conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).² However ASC certification goes beyond the ILO requirements and ensures the rights and cultures of neighbouring communities are respected. Here's what makes ASC certified seafood a responsible choice, helping you to protect farm workers' rights and support local communities:

- **Child labour.** ASC certified farms are prohibited from using any form of child labour. The requirements follow ILO guidelines and protect the interests of both children and young workers – those of working age who are not yet 18 years old – to ensure they are not exposed to work or working hours that are hazardous to their physical or mental well-being.
- **Forced, compulsory or bonded labour.** All forms of forced work are prohibited on ASC certified farms. Each worker on a farm must have contracts that are clearly articulated and understood. Employees must have access to their original identity documents, be permitted to leave the workplace as and when they wish, and be fully allowed to manage their time outside of working hours.
- **Health and safety.** The ASC standards require farms to ensure a safe environment for those working on the farm. Farms must meet best practice such as assessing potential risks and providing appropriate protective equipment. In the event that an incident occurs, corrective action must be taken to identify the root causes and prevent future occurrences of similar incidents. Employers must also assume employee medical costs in a job-related accident or injury.
- **Farm workers' rights.** Workers are treated fairly on ASC Certified farms. Unequal treatment based on sex, race or other characteristic is not permitted, and employers must have an anti-discrimination policy in place. Employees receive fair and decent wages, retain the freedom to associate and bargain collectively, including forming or joining a union, if they so choose. Farms shall never employ threatening, humiliating or punishing disciplinary practices that negatively impact a worker's physical and mental health or dignity. Company policies and practices must also prohibit deductions in pay for disciplinary actions.
- **Local communities.** ASC certified farms must be good neighbours and respect the local community. During assessment, auditors actively seek out and meet with members of the community to conduct a social impact assessment. Farms must maintain clean and orderly sites and take steps to minimise unsocial activities like excessive noise, light or odour. When applicable, indigenous community rights and cultures must be respected and these groups must be consulted and given access to vital resources.

Why the ASC matters

ASC's standards set performance indicators to comprehensively improve farm operations. Farms must not exceed metric-based limits to ensure their output meets all the requirements for certification. During the certification process the independent certifiers' reports are published for public consultation, which informs the certification decision.

Farms that meet the ASC standards deliver real benefits: a cleaner seabed, cleaner water and healthier fish. They also help to preserve local biodiversity, and work in a way that supports their community.

Through chain of custody certification, you can be sure that ASC labelled seafood can be traced back through every step of the supply chain to a well-managed farm that meets the strict requirements of the ASC standards.

² The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is an agency of the United Nations that brings together governments, employers and workers representatives of the 187 member states, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.