



# Terms of Reference (ToR) for Core Standard Development

(To harmonise the structure and content of all current ASC Standards)

*‘Harmonised where possible, specific where needed’*

This TOR is publicly available on the ASC website.  
Comments are welcome and appreciated. Form for submitting comments is in the Annex.

## Document history

| Version | Date       | Description of amendment | Affected section/<br>page |
|---------|------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1.0     | 15.12.2014 | Public Version 1.0       | n/a                       |
| 1.1     | 15.12.2015 | Updated timelines        | Section 6 on pp. 11-12    |
|         |            |                          |                           |

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## 1. Introduction

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) was founded in 2010 by World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Dutch Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) to be the host of the standards developed by the WWF Aquaculture Dialogues over the years.

The received standards became operational in 2012 after the system of accreditation and certification was up and running.

Currently, the ASC manages seven standards with more than **two** hundred farms certified for various species. Practical experience and learning from certification of those farms have given good insights into what can be improved in terms of (i) consistency across the standards for the ASC to be more efficient as the scheme owner, and (ii) user-friendliness for the standards users.

### **ASC vision and mission**

The vision of the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) is a world where aquaculture plays a major role in supplying food and social benefits for mankind whilst minimizing or eliminating negative impacts on the environment. The goal of the ASC is to help transform aquaculture towards a more environmentally and socially responsible food source. ASC aims to achieve this by promoting standards for best environmental and social aquaculture performance and rewarding responsible farming practices through standard setting and certification.

### **About this ToR document**

This document gives a transparent overview of and guidance for both the ASC and interested parties to develop the Core standard. It explains (i) why the Core standard is needed, (ii) the objectives of ASC in developing this standard, (iii) who are at stake and involved when the standard is developed and how, (iv) detailed steps as well as (v) presumed risks of implementing the developed standard, measures to mitigate and/or avoid those risks.

Normally for standards revision, which is the essence of this process, the TOR will only need to be updated. However, this TOR is newly developed due to the fact that (i) all existing ASC standards have been developed by WWF Aquaculture Dialogues and each had its own Process guidance document and guidance; and (ii) this is the first time that the ASC, as an independent standard setting organisation, undertakes this review and revision process to mainly combine common issues addressed across the standards for increased consistency.

This TOR is open for public comments within one month after the date it is published (in the Document history table on page 1). Comments on this TOR should be submitted in the form provided in the Annex and sent to the ASC contact person indicated on the form.

## 2. Justification of need

ASC launched its first standards to the market in 2012 and the first farms were certified later that year. Certified and labeled products have become increasingly available in a growing number of markets globally since. The ASC has now gained practical implementation experience of the certification programme, and is now in a good position to consider how to restructure the content of its scheme documents to improve collective efficiency in their delivery and consistency in their application. This will provide a foundation to develop a simpler structure for the standard content and the supporting documentation found in the certification methodology, audit manuals and training materials. Additionally, while the current set of 7 standards covers 12 species 'groups' that represent most of the main commercially farmed species traded internationally, to truly deliver on its vision - to transform aquaculture at large towards sustainability – the ASC will need the ability to add more species to its programme. The development of a core standard that

contains the content that lends itself to harmonisation will be the future building block for new standards. This core standard will be supported by 'species' or production-based modules consisting of requirements specific to that 'species' that do not lend themselves to harmonisation. An overall objective of the project will be not to alter the performance requirements (on average) currently enshrined in the standards.

'On average' in the context of harmonisation:

If we see that the requirements as set across species vary for no clear or valid reason, or if we see there is one (two or three, etc) outlier for no clear reason, we will explore ways to align these to the extent possible.

What does this mean? An example:

*(FYI: this example does not relate to a requirement in any of our standards)*

E.g. a random requirement has been set at 5 (just a random number) in the current standard for species X.

AND, for species X this represents the performance level of the better performing 60% of the industry.

AND, for all other standards the same requirement has been set at a performance level representing 25% of the industry, then we face an odd outlier.

If there is no valid reason why for this species this requirement was set at such a different level, we will consider (and discuss) [within an ISEAL compliant standard setting revision process bringing](#) the outlier in line with the others.

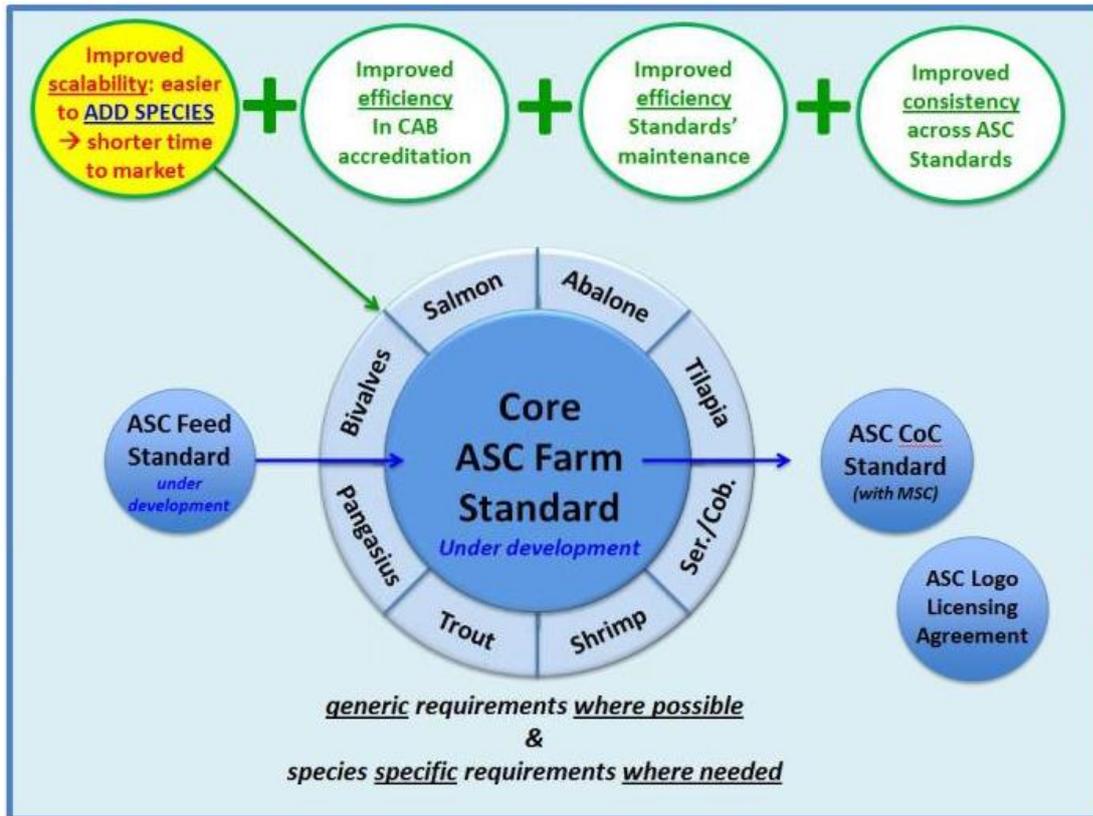
### 3. Objectives of the standard

The Core standard aims to:

- maintain the high quality and rigour of the initial species-specific standards
- deliver a higher level of consistency across the current standards,
- provide greater clarity to farmers, auditors and other external stakeholders,
- align the content and structure of the standard, based on the intent of the requirements in the current standards, and,
- allow the ASC to expand its reach and impact

To achieve the above stated objectives, it is expected that at the end of this revision process there will be:

- A core standard (structure, content [and guidance](#))
- Species-specific annexes [or guidance](#)
- Production-specific annexes [or guidance](#)
- Requirements (re-)formulated to enable metric reporting, where possible
- All guidance for farms and auditors (re-)formulated to:
  - a. Be more guiding and less prescriptive (to promote innovation)
  - b. Improve consistency in implementation (by farms)
  - c. Improve consistency in assessment (by auditors)
- Audit Checklist (for metric reporting)
- *(Audit Preparation Checklist)*



#### 4. Stakeholder mapping

The same major groups of stakeholders that were involved in the Aquaculture Dialogues to develop the standards will be invited and reached out to be part of this revision process. Those stakeholder groups are:

- Farmers, now including those with certified farms. Revision of the standards as well as the revised ones will mostly affect this group of stakeholders.
- Communities adjacent to farms seeking certification
- Industry, including suppliers and retailers
- Civil society organisations with focus on both major areas of the standards – environmental and social
- Scientists
- Conformity assessment bodies (CABs), especially those having audited and certified the farms.

The table below outlines major stakeholder groups, their respective relevance and interest in this revision process as well as the revised standards, their key issues, how the ASC is going to involve them in this process.

Besides, the ASC will be monitoring participation of stakeholders over the life cycle of this revision process to strive for balanced and effective stakeholder participation.

| Main stakeholder groups  | Relevance (why they should participate in the process)  | Interest in the process and standards  | Outreach strategies for participation in revision  | Communication means   | Participation goal   |
|--|---|--|--|---|--|
| <p><b>Aquaculture farms, both certified and working towards certification (all ASC species)</b></p> <p><i>(including farm trade bodies / representative organisations)</i></p> | <p>Most directly affected group. In order for standards to be effective, requirements in these must be possible in practice. Fish farms can provide these practical insights.</p> | <p>Clearer and more consistent standards; less changes, but if necessary, as simple as possible implementation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- direct contact with farms in the system</li> <li>- where necessary, translation of certain process documents (e.g. this TOR, draft standards, synopsis, final standards</li> <li>- via Conformity assessment bodies (CABs)</li> <li>- local/regional workshops, where and when necessary</li> <li>- participation in pilot</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- E-mail newsletter (if possible)</li> <li>- Website (if possible)</li> <li>- Webinars (if possible)</li> <li>- In person to the extent possible (e.g. workshops)</li> <li>- Through trade associations</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Farms in all species</li> <li>- Farms in all active countries and regions</li> </ul>                      |
| <p><b>Communities (around certified farms and farms in assessment)</b></p> <p><i>(This group may be represented by SNGO's, see below)</i></p>                                  | <p>Indirectly affected group due to structural and to some extent also content changes</p>  | <p>Need a fair voice in assessment process of farms.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- where necessary, translation of certain process documents (e.g. this TOR, draft standards, synopsis, final standards</li> <li>- via social ngo's where possible</li> <li>- local/regional workshops, where and when necessary</li> <li>- participation in pilot</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- E-mail newsletter (if possible)</li> <li>- Website (if possible)</li> <li>- Webinars (if possible)</li> <li>- In person to the extent possible (e.g. workshops)</li> <li>- Through (local) social / environmental ngo's</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- People living around certified farms in all active countries and regions</li> </ul>                       |
| <p><b>Processing companies / Trade</b></p>   | <p>Processing and trade companies match supply and demand. Changes on either side may affect their work directly.</p>   | <p>Costs for sourcing and availability of certified products must be in line with demand and sales of those.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Direct contact with these companies (e.g. through ASC Outreach colleagues)</li> <li>- Face-to-face meetings at or around conferences/trade fairs</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- E-mail newsletter</li> <li>- website</li> <li>- webinars</li> <li>- In person to the extent possible (e.g. workshops)</li> <li>- Trade press</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Companies trading some or all species</li> <li>- Companies in all active countries and regions</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Retail</b></p>   | <p>Continuous supply at</p>   | <p>Price and availability</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Direct contact with these</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- E-mail newsletter</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Companies trading</li> </ul>  |

| Main stakeholder groups    | Relevance<br>(why they should participate in the process)                      | Interest in the process and standards  | Outreach strategies for participation in revision  | Communication means   | Participation goal   |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|---|--|
|                            | reasonable price.<br>Credible, attainable standards.                           | of products is important.<br>Retail likes to make sure relevant issues will be covered by the ASC certification program. | companies (e.g. through ASC Outreach colleagues)<br>- Face-to-face meetings at or around conferences/trade fairs | - website<br>- webinars<br>- In person to the extent possible (e.g. workshops)<br>- Trade press       | some or all species<br>- Companies in all countries and regions involved in producing or buying ASC-   |
| <b>Environmental NGO's</b> | Standards are aimed at reducing the environmental impact.                      | Standards must address key environmental concerns.   | - Direct contact with these organisations<br>- Face-to-face meetings at or around conferences/trade fairs        | - E-mail newsletter<br>- website<br>- webinars<br>- In person to the extent possible (e.g. workshops) | - Between 1 to 5 engo's (who could be regarded as representatives of engo's at large. This should include local organisations to the extent reasonably possible) actively participating<br>- A wider group to provide input during rounds of public consultation |
| <b>Social NGO's</b>        | Standards are aimed at reducing the social impact (farm workers & communities) | Standards must address key social concerns.  | - Direct contact with these organisations<br>- Face-to-face meetings at or around conferences/trade fairs        | - E-mail newsletter<br>- website<br>- webinars<br>- In person to the extent possible (e.g. workshops) | - Between 1 to 5 sngo's (who could be regarded as representatives of sngo's at large. This should include local organisations to the extent reasonably possible) actively  |

| Main stakeholder groups                    | Relevance<br>(why they should participate in the process)   | Interest in the process and standards   | Outreach strategies for participation in revision   | Communication means  | Participation goal  |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|
|  |   |   |   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>participating</li> <li>- A wider group to provide input during rounds of public consultation</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs)</b> | Standards' structure and content directly relates to CABs' internal processes/documents.  | CABs need to be able to build a viable business model based on credible assessments of the standards        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Direct contact with these organisations</li> <li>- Face-to-face meetings at or around conferences/trade fairs</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- E-mail newsletter</li> <li>- website</li> <li>- webinars</li> <li>- In person (e.g. workshops)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1 or 2 CABs (who could be regarded as representatives of CABs at large) actively participating</li> <li>- A wider group to provide input during rounds of public consultation</li> </ul> |
| <b>Funder(s), funding this project</b>     | These will not participate in the project will be informed on the progress.   | n/a   | n/a   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- E-mail newsletter</li> <li>- website</li> <li>- webinars</li> <li>- In person</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To fund the project</li> <li>- To fund the project-related pilots</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Suppliers (feed, broodstock, etc.)</b>  | In order for standards to be effective, requirements in these must be possible in practice. Suppliers to fish farms can provide these practical insights. | Clearer and more consistent standards; less changes, but if necessary, as simple as possible implementation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- direct contact with suppliers</li> <li>- where necessary, translation of certain process documents (e.g. this TOR, draft standards, synopsis, final standards</li> <li>- local/regional workshops, where and when necessary</li> <li>- possibly, participation in pilot</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- E-mail newsletter</li> <li>- website</li> <li>- webinars</li> <li>- In person to the extent possible (e.g. workshops)</li> <li>- Trade press</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Delivering to farms in different species</li> <li>- Delivering to farms in all active countries and regions</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Scientists /</b>                        | ASC aims to bring   | Providing scientific  | - direct contact with   | - E-mail newsletter  | - Research potentially  |

| Main stakeholder groups   | Relevance<br>(why they should participate in the process)   | Interest in the process and standards  | Outreach strategies for participation in revision   | Communication means   | Participation goal  |
|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Academics</b>  | together today's state of the art in fish farming and sound scientific evidence.                      | data where decided needed.   | scientists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- where necessary, organise discussions with them</li> <li>- Where necessary, have them do specific research on identified topics.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- website</li> <li>- webinars</li> <li>- In person to the extent possible (e.g. workshops)</li> </ul>                            | related to farms across all active countries and regions  |
| <b>Governments (incl. UN)</b>   | Cross check potential legal implications of proposed changes.   | For governments it is important to be assured that standards are not imposing trade barriers.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- direct contact with government officials (or through consultants)</li> <li>- where necessary, organise discussions with government officials</li> <li>- Where necessary, have them advise on solutions for identified legal topics.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- E-mail newsletter</li> <li>- website</li> <li>- webinars</li> <li>- In person to the extent needed (e.g. workshops)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- related to farms across all active countries and regions</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Service Providers (e.g. consultants who have done BEIAs or p-SIAs)</b> | Can bring in practical experience: what worked well and what should be reconsidered?                  | A more effective (and efficient) approach to BEIA and p-SIA and other parts of the standard(s) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Direct contact</li> <li>- Indirect contact via CABs</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- E-mail newsletter</li> <li>- website</li> <li>- webinars</li> <li>- In person (e.g. workshops)</li> </ul>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1 or 2 individuals (who could be regarded as representatives of service providers at large) actively participating</li> <li>- A wider group to provide input during rounds of public consultation</li> </ul> |
| <b>Other aquaculture standards/schemes (e.g. GlobalG.A.P.,</b>            | In order to facilitate the uptake of sustainability initiatives at large, it is important for schemes | To provide input into the process on future plans which may not yet be available in            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Since the ASC has an MoU in place with BAP and GG, there is regular contact between the 3</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- E-mail newsletter</li> <li>- website</li> <li>- webinars</li> <li>- In person to the extent</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- related to all species the ASC is applicable to and to farms across all</li> </ul>   |

| Main stakeholder groups | Relevance<br>(why they should participate in the process)  | Interest in the process and standards | Outreach strategies for participation in revision  | Communication means   | Participation goal           |
|-------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|---|------------------------------|
| <i>BAP</i>              | like the ASC and others, to be as aligned as possible. Hence the MoU between the ASC, GG and <a href="#">GAA</a> . | the public domain.                    | organisations, as well as 1:1 with either of those.<br>- Like in other projects (e.g. ASC Feed Standard development), we will invite both organisations as observers to relevant meetings. | possible (e.g. workshops)<br>- As observers in relevant meetings. | active countries and regions |

## 5. Guiding principles

It is helpful to bear in mind the ASC programme promotes industry best practice to minimise or eliminate the negative environmental and social footprint of commercial aquaculture. Through its consumer label the ASC promotes certified responsibly farmed products in the marketplace.

To achieve this the ASC programme is:

- **Credible:** ASC standards are developed and implemented according to ISEAL guidelines – multi-stakeholder, transparent, incorporating science-based performance metrics.
- **Meaningful:** including science-based performance metrics, the requirements in the standards are relevant to controlling major impacts, realistic, measurable and auditable.
- **Effective:** a globally recognised, market-oriented programme that aims to promote meaningful improvements in aquaculture production in a credible and cost efficient way that adds real value to producers and buyers of certified products.

Besides, below are guiding principles/ emphasis to be observed in developing this Core standard, in addition to the credibility principles described in the Standard Setting Procedure.

- **Accessibility** - to reduce barriers to implementation, standards system's costs and compliance efforts to the extent possible. This includes facilitating access to information about meeting the standard, training to build capacity at the farm level and for actors within the supply chain.
- **Auditability** - all criteria shall allow for credible audit outcomes. The TWG will review current audit guidance and make recommendations for revision. If audit outcomes cannot be credibly determined then such criteria must be revised or removed from the standard.
- **Consistency** - the current 8 standards vary considerably in content and structure. In many cases for no obvious reason. This project aims to streamline these inconsistencies as much as reasonably possible: harmonising where possible, but keeping specifics when needed.
- **Current standards** - this project recognises that all content in the current 8 ASC standards has been collected through a credible process, yet the level of consistency across these is fairly low at this stage. This project aims to keep the levels of performance currently stated, on average, intact. However, adjustments will be proposed for individual standards to make sure ASC's overall standards' set up will become more consistent across different species groups, while maintaining the highest possible level of environmental and social achievement.
- **Documents** - information shall be placed in relevant documents only (e.g. no audit guidance IN the standard, but in the Audit Manual. No definitions IN the standards, but in the generic definitions list)
- **Focus** - standards shall continue to focus on key social and environmental impact areas. Other topics may be considered, but will not become a mandatory part of the standard (e.g. food safety, food quality, farm economics) but could be added as self-contained modules to be implemented as the market demands.
- **Interpretation** - criteria and requirements shall be formulated to facilitate consistent interpretation.
- **Language** - language used shall be as clear and as simple as possible to facilitate understanding by as wide a group of stakeholders as possible, taking into account lower educational levels of certain groups.
- **Metric** - where possible, all criteria shall be formulated in such a way so that measurable

numbers and clear values are required to demonstrate compliance. This will allow for better monitoring and evaluation.

- **Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)** - the collection of, as yet underdetermined, precertification information shall be required within certification methodology, to provide a monitoring and evaluation benchmark of the programme. This will allow for future improvements.
- **Redundancy** - there shall be no unnecessary overlap between criteria.
- **Scalability** - the certification model shall enable the ASC organisation to expand its reach to an increasing number of farms globally in an effective and efficient manner (i.e. streamlined certification process, streamlined accreditation process, simplified back-office handling)
- **Science based** - when applicable criteria shall be based on credible, published, peer-reviewed scientific information.
- **Simplicity** - this project aims for a simpler, yet more effective set of scheme documents. In the words of Albert Einstein: 'As simple as possible, but not simpler.'

## 6. Process of standard development

The **initial aim was** to complete this project from initial meeting to delivered products (see deliverables above) in 15 months. **However this timeline has been extended by another 6 months to take account of the complexity of the task.**

| Activity   | Deadline               | Output  | By:   |
|--|------------------------|---|---|
| Compare content current 8 Standards                          | 15 Oct 2014            | Overview showing overlap, similarities and differences between current standards  | ASC Secretariat                                   |
| Develop Terms of Reference                                   | 15 Dec 2014            | Terms of Reference published on ASC website<br><br>Announcement sent to relevant stakeholders (direct and via publications in relevant media) | ASC Secretariat (approved by TAG)                 |
| <del>Assemble TWG</del>                                      | <del>15 Jan 2015</del> | <del>TWG members published on ASC website</del>   | <del>ASC Secretariat + TAG (approved by SB)</del> |
| <del>Develop working plan</del>                              | <del>15 Feb 2015</del> | <del>Working plan available to TWG</del>  | <del>ASC Secretariat + TAG</del>                  |
| <del>Assemble sub-TWG on identified themes (if needed)</del> | <del>15 Feb 2015</del> | <del>Sub-TWG members published on ASC website</del>   | <del>ASC Secretariat + TAG</del>                  |
| Development harmonized standard draft v1.0                   | 15 Jun 2015            | Draft v1.0 internally available   | TWG (approved by TAG)                             |
| Internal coordination meetings                               | August 2015            | Draft v2.0 internally available   |   |
| Presentation to the TAG                                      | 16 September 2015      |   | Guidance and support provided by                  |

| Activity   | Deadline   | Output   | By:  |
|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  | TAG  |
| <del>Prepare guidance for stakeholders to comment (e.g. scope for commenting, format for sending comments)</del> | <del>15 Jun 2015</del>   | <del>User friendly guidance/ format for commenting</del>   | <del>ASC Secretariat</del>   |
| Revisions to the Core Standard including internal workshops  | November 2015  | Draft version 3  |  |
| Prepare TWG ToR  | November 2015  | TWG ToR  | ASC Secretariat  |
| Assemble TWG   | 15 Jan 2016  | TWG members published on ASC website   | ASC Secretariat + TAG (approved by SB)                               |
| Develop working plan   | 15 Feb 2016  | Working plan available to TWG  | ASC Secretariat + TAG  |
| Assemble sub-TWG on identified themes (if needed)  | 15 Feb 2016  | Sub-TWG members published on ASC website   | ASC Secretariat + TAG  |
| Prepare guidance for stakeholders to comment (e.g. scope for commenting, format for sending comments)            | 15 Jun 2016  | User-friendly guidance/ format for commenting  | ASC Secretariat  |
| Public Consultation – draft Standard v1.0  | (starts: 30 Jun 2016)<br>31 Aug 2015 – <i>this period may be suboptimal due to overlap with Summer holiday season in Western hemisphere and may be reconsidered.</i> | Draft v1.0 published on ASC website<br><br>Announcement sent to relevant stakeholders (direct and via publications in relevant media)<br><br>Comments from external stakeholders | ASC Secretariat  |
| Process comments from external stakeholders  | 31 Oct 2016  | Summary of comments + TWG’s reaction to it and list of anonymous organization-based comments published on website  | ASC Secretariat (structuring feedback) + TAG (processing on content) |
| Processing feedback into draft Standard v2.0   | 30 Nov 2016  | Draft v2.0 internally available  | ASC Secretariat (approved by TAG)                                    |
| Determination if 2 <sup>nd</sup> round of public consultation is needed  | 15 Dec 2016  | Decision (no consultation, 30 days’ or 60 days’ consultation)  | TWG (advises)<br>TAG (decides)                                       |
| Design pilot   |  |  | ASC Secretariat  |

| Activity   | Deadline   | Output   | By:                               |
|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| approach   |  |  | (approved by TAG)                 |
| Request for pilot partners                               |  | Request published at the ASC website   | ASC Secretariat                   |
| Pilot partners identified & ToRs signed                  | TBD  |  | ASC Secretariat                   |
| Pilot  | TBD – e.g. in parallel to public consultation round 1? | Feedback from auditors & farms   | ASC Secretariat                   |
| Processing feedback                                      | TBD – e.g. in parallel to public consultation round 1? | Draft v2.0 internally available  | ASC Secretariat (approved by TAG) |
| <i>TBD - Public Consultation – draft Standard v2.0</i>   | <i>TBD</i>   |  |                                   |
| <i>TBD - Process comments from external stakeholders</i> | <i>TBD</i>   |  |                                   |
| <i>TBD- Processing feedback into draft Standard v3.0</i> | <i>TBD</i>   |  |                                   |
| Processing all feedback into final draft standard        |  | Final draft standard published on the ASC website  | ASC Secretariat (approved by TAG) |
| Final approval standard                                  |  | Final standard v1.0  | Approved by SB                    |
| Developing Audit Manuals                                 | TBD  |  | ASC Secretariat Approved by TAG   |
| Developing Training materials                            | TBD  |  | ASC Secretariat Approved by TAG   |
| (re)training internal staff                              | TBD  | Training sessions executed   | ASC Secretariat                   |
| (re)training trainers                                    | TBD  | Training sessions executed   | ASC Secretariat                   |
| (re)training auditors (including ASI staff)              | TBD  | Training sessions executed   | ASC Secretariat                   |
| Transition requirements (for CABs, for farms)            | TBD  | Requirements published on ASC website.<br><br>Announcement sent to relevant stakeholders (direct and via publications in relevant media) | ASC Secretariat                   |

## 7. Governance structure, working approach and decision making procedure

A Technical Working Group (TWG) will be formed according to the decision of the ASC's Supervisory Board (SB) to take lead of this revision process under the guidance of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG). The ASC secretariat will coordinate the project throughout.

### **TWG's responsibility**

The TWG has the task to:

- Review the current standards and related logged issues
- Co-develop an improved system set up (see section 3 above) with other relevant stakeholders (see section 4 above).
- Provide feedback on different issues. Issues of specific attention are:
  - Transparency with regards to the entire certification process
  - Consistency between aquaculture standards (internally between the ASC standards and between external aquaculture standards)
  - Feasibility for smaller farmers to join the ASC programme.

### **TWG's membership**

- Members of this Technical Working Group are able and willing to share relevant knowledge and expertise on accreditation, certification, and relevant, related issues and will be able to spend sufficient time to support this project. Members must demonstrate affinity with the
- ASC's objectives and the membership of the Working Group must reflect a balanced representation of areas of relevant expertise and background.
- Appointment of its committee members needs the prior approval in writing of the ASC Supervisory Board.
- The Working Group will select from among its membership a Chair, who will be main point of contact to ASC's Standards Director.

### **Reporting requirements**

- The Chair shall cause to be kept minutes of all proceedings at meetings of the Working
- Group, including the names of those members of the Working Group present at each such meeting, and all views, advice, recommendations and opinions of the Working Group.
- Chatham House Rules will be applied for all public documents related to this project.

### **Decision-making procedure**

- The TWG (and its sub-TWGs, if applicable) strives for consensus. If TWG is unable to reach consensus, it will apply the principle of 'majority voting' and will report the different options, the number of votes for each option and a summary of each of the points of view. TWG will share its advise with the TAG. TAG will advise ASC's Supervisory Board (SB) for the SB to take a final decision.

### **Expenses**

- Upon request and at the explicit discretion of the Chair, members of the Working Group may be paid all reasonable travelling, hotel and other expenses properly incurred by them in connection with their attendance at meetings of the Working Group or otherwise in connection with the discharge of their duties.

### **Meetings**

- The ASC strives to work in a cost and time efficient manner and has a strong preference to work primarily via e.g. teleconference and e-mail. If attendants come from different time zones participants will determine meeting times in such a way that all participants can attend at reasonably convenient times. Given the nature of this project it is foreseen that in-person meetings will also be part of this project.

## **8. Assessment of risks**

In random order the ASC has identified the following risks for the project and the resulting standard set up and strategies to mitigate those risks:

**Identified risk-1:**

The standard's rigour and related implementation and certification costs may prove to be the main risks for the ASC to reach out to small farmers in developing countries.

**Risk mitigation strategy-1:**

The ASC has been working on operate the group certification possibility as a means to mitigate the identified risk.

**Identified risk-2:**

Auditors will need to be retrained to safeguard consistent implementation of the new standard. It may prove difficult to have all auditors (re)trained in time, especially if an in-person training is decided to. This may lead to the situation that certain auditors may not be (re)trained timely to perform planned audits or surveillances.

**Risk mitigation strategy-2:**

Development of training materials and planning of training will be planned as far in advance as reasonably expected.

**Identified risk-3:**

For requirements which are common across most of ASC's current standards, but which may (unintendedly) not be included in some, it may be considered to decide to make those applicable across species. This may lead to the fact that certified farms may have to show compliance against this (for them) additional requirement, which was not in the original, species-specific ASC Standard.

**Risk mitigation strategy-3:**

For these farms a reasonable transition period will be proposed, where needed. This will include companies which have certified product in storage when the new standard is published.

**Identified risk-4:**

In the transition period between the use of (only) the current standards and the use of (only) the new, harmonised standard, there will be a period in which certified products may be certified against the 'old' standard or the 'new' standard. This may lead to confusion in the market (B2B or B2C).

**Risk mitigation strategy-4:**

Although we consider this as an unavoidable and minor risk, we feel that timely and clear communication to relevant stakeholder groups can mitigate this risk.

## 9. Contact information

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## 10. Annex

10.1 Comment submitting form, see below.

