



The ASC programme is growing quickly. Oyster farms on the British island of Jersey are among the most recent seafood companies to be awarded sustainability certification.

Shrimp and oysters come under the remit of the ASC

More than 1,000 products with the ASC logo are now available. Especially Pangasius catfish, salmon and Tilapia. Newly on board: Shrimp and oyster farms.

In April 2012, the logo of the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) was introduced. It was initiated by the WWF environmental organisation and the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) for the purpose of administering the certification procedure for responsible fish farming throughout the entire world.

The new certifications mean that the rising demand for products with the blue seal of approval can now be covered. Now, shrimp farms in Ecuador and Vietnam have been certified, along with, for the first time ever, three oyster farms - all of which are on the British island of Jersey.

The ASC logo is intended to signal to consumers that the fish originates from a sustainably run business that limits negative impacts on the environment and the local social structure.



In the midst of nature: workers at the Omarsa shrimp farm in Ecuador

According to the ASC website, the organisation "aims to be the world's leading certification and labelling programme for responsibly farmed seafood". According to the organisation, enterprises certified in accordance with ASC standards have been able to demonstrate that the water bodies they operate have a clean bed, clean water and healthier fish, that they are in the process of maintaining

biodiversity and wild populations as well as adhering to strict feeding instructions, and that they guarantee to uphold the ideal of social responsibility. Over 1,000 products with the ASC logo are now available in about 40 countries worldwide. The first ASC-certified shrimp from farms in Ecuador and Vietnam have just been added to the list. In addition, ASC-certified oysters are now on the market in the wake of the certification of three companies in Jersey.

Shrimp from Ecuador and Vietnam

The family-owned Omarsa company in Ecuador was the first shrimp farm ever to be certified according to ASC standards. "ASC certification is helping us strengthen our position as a responsible shrimp exporter," says Managing Director Sandro Coglitore. Numerous measures have been initiated to achieve the objectives, he adds. For example,

he goes on, projects have been initiated to replant mangroves.

"This is a real milestone for us," says ASC Managing Director Chris Ninnes with satisfaction. "The market is eager for ASC-certified shrimp." The first products were supplied to Scandinavian customers at the end of October. Farms in Vietnam whose products are in future to be permitted to carry the ASC label are also contributing to the availability of farmed shrimp from production means with sustainability certification: "Quoc Viet" from Vietnam was the first Asian farm to be awarded the certification. "ASC certification makes economic sense, has improved our market access and is opening up new opportunities for us," says Ngo Quoc Tuan, Vice President of "Quoc Viet". The global shrimp market is very competitive, he adds, so it is important to satisfy the enormous demand in a responsible way. In all currently certified shrimp farms, including, of course, Ecuador, P. Vannamei shrimp are farmed.



Ngo Quoc Tuan: "ASC certification makes economic sense and has improved our market access."

ASC oysters for Christmas

No fewer than three companies have been awarded ASC certification for the farming and sale of their oysters. The companies are "Jersey Sea Farms", "Jersey Oyster Ltd." and "Seymour Oysters", all three of which are to be found on Jersey, one of the British Channel Islands. The company opted to apply for ASC certification together and helped and supported each other in the certification process.

Now they are looking to expand their Christmas business in Europe with the addition of sustainably produced delicacies in the form of ASC-certified Pacific rock oysters and native European oysters. Here it is particularly worthy of note that Jersey Sea Farms aspires to an annual production of 75 tonnes of the European oyster (*Ostrea edulis*), whose wild population is in drastic decline and which, as a species, is deemed to be at risk.

Until now, the ASC-certified fish range has consisted of three species. According to the ASC, the majority of certified fish products are Pangasius, at 63 percent, followed by salmon, at 23 percent, Tilapia, at 14 percent and, more recently, trout. The Aquaculture Stewardship Council assumes that this balance will soon shift with the new certifications, especially for shrimp.

ASC as a fundamental condition of long-term corporate success

Godaco recently opened the doors of its farm in Vietnam to fish buyers to demonstrate how environmentally sound and social sustainable its production of Pangasius catfish is.

In early 2013 the Godaco Seafood Joint Stock Company was one of the first companies to be awarded ASC certification for two of its catfish farms. The company has its own closed production chain including feed plant, hatchery and fish farms. Although Godaco already exports to more than 40 countries, certification in accordance with ASC was nonetheless of great importance for the company.

The Godaco Seafood Joint Stock Company, headquartered in Tien Giang in Vietnam, exports half of its catfish production to Europe. ASC certification is especially crucial for this sales market.



The company maintains that responsible production is the only way of guaranteeing its long-term success. "Our European customers know exactly how important sustainability is, and they expect the products to be certified," says Nguyen Huu Nghia, quality manager at Godaco. "Pangasius is a very popular product in many European countries, especially in the Netherlands and Germany," confirms Esther Luiten, Marketing Manager at ASC.

However, these markets are highly competitive and have exacting standards when it comes to sustainability. "And Pangasius often suffers from image problems, for example in Germany," Luiten continues. For this reason, many Vietnamese producers have worked on improving their conditions, she says.

Thanks to ASC certification, many have succeeded in expanding their business in spite of the difficulties, Luiten goes on. "ASC certification gives consumers the positive extra assurance they need that their Pangasius comes from a farm that operates in an environmentally and socially responsible manner," the marketing manager says by way of promotion of her seal of approval.

Godaco is initially focusing on expanding its own fish farms in order to ensure a high-quality supply and to reduce its dependence on external sources. According to its own information, the company has managed to cover nearly 100 per cent of the need of the processing plants for fish from its own operation.

Aquaculture, however, poses two possible risks to the environment: waste water from the breeding grounds and sludge from the ponds.

In order to implement the ASC requirements, for instance, Godaco was forced to change the purification system for the water from the breeding ponds. Here, the company says, the ASC required the construction of waste water treatment ponds and sewers to improve the quality of the water before it is pumped into the Mekong. In addition, Godaco employs its own engineers with the specific task of monitoring strict adherence to the standards in the breeding process. In order to meet the ASC standards the company had not only to take account of environmental protection and sustainability issues but also to develop programmes and policies to improve the working conditions of the staff and the wellbeing of the local community.

According to company sources, the employees now work a guaranteed eight-hour day and have a day off on Sunday.

According to Godaco, the workers also have access to a canteen, good accommodation and leisure facilities. A further example is provided by the support offered by the company to the local authority in the development of infrastructure for the local population. According to the ASC there are now 44 certified Pangasius farms. This year, Godaco wants to apply to the ASC for the certification of two additional fish farms.

Catfish fishing at Godaco: in addition to protection of the environment and fish, the ASC seal also brings about improvements for the workers.

