

# **ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Certification and Accreditation Requirements**



**Version 1.0, 22 November, 2017**

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The ASC and the MSC prohibit any modification of part or all the contents in any form.

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## Versions issued

Version no.	Date	Description of amendment
1	22 November 2017	First version issued for application by CABs

## Responsibility for these requirements

The Seaweed Standard Committee (SSC) of the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) and the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) advises the ASC and the MSC Boards (ASC Supervisory Board and MSC Board of Trustees) on this document's content. The ASC and the MSC Boards hold responsibility for this document.

## About this document

This document specifies the mandatory requirements that Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) must follow when carrying out audits of seaweed production units who wish to make a claim that the seaweed product/s they produce are from well-managed and sustainable source/s, as defined by the ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Standard.

Part A provides general requirements relating to CABs offering certifications against the ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Standard, while Part B provides specific operational requirements for CABs conducting seaweed production unit audits. The numbering of the sections follows the ISO 17065 approach.

## Standard development process

The ASC and the MSC have developed a joint standard to certify sustainable and responsible seaweed production units under a single certification system. In accordance with the ISEAL Standard Setting Code, the Standard was developed following a participatory process. A joint governance body, the Seaweed Standard Committee, comprising representatives from the ASC and MSC Technical Advisory Groups, Boards, and additional seaweed industry and NGO stakeholders was formed to guide the standard's development. Joint procedures were developed to ensure a robust, credible process. Notably, stakeholder workshops were held in Indonesia, Japan and China. Two 60-day online consultations were held to seek views on drafts of the Standard and associated assessment process. These were supported by webinars, meetings and local outreach to the seaweed industry and affected stakeholders. Academics provided detailed technical input and a workshop was held with Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) in London.

## Implementation

The Seaweed (Algae) Standard v1.0 ("the Standard" thereafter) and the Seaweed (Algae) Certification and Accreditation Requirements v1.0 ("the CAR" thereafter) were approved by the ASC Supervisory Board and the MSC Board of Trustees in July–August 2017. The Standard was published 22 November 2017 and is effective from 1 March 2018. Seaweed production units who wish to enter assessment against the Standard can apply from 1 March 2018, or earlier subject to approval by the ASC-MSC.

## Standard review

The CAR will be reviewed 12 months after the effective date to evaluate the implementation of the program and incorporate outcomes of planned program improvements. Certificate holders will be required to comply with the most recent version of the Standard and the CAR at recertification (i.e. three years after first certification).

Subsequent reviews of the Standard will occur at least every five years to ensure they continue to be relevant and effective in meeting their stated objectives in accordance with the ISEAL Standard Setting Code.

The ASC-MSC welcomes comments on the Standard and CAR at any time. Comments will be incorporated into the next review process. Please submit comments by email to [seaweedstandard@msc.org](mailto:seaweedstandard@msc.org).

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## Part A – General requirements for CABs

### 1 Scope

Part A of the ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Certification and Accreditation Requirements (CAR) includes requirements for CABs carrying out audits of seaweed production units that wish to make a claim that the seaweed they are selling is certified to the ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Standard, and where desired to use the MSC/ASC label/s to promote a product.

### 2 Normative references

The latest versions of the documents listed below, by reference in this text, become part of the CAR.

#### Guidance Section 2

CABs are encouraged to review the most recent editions of the documents and any guidance documents available to gain further insight about the requirements they need to comply with.

- a. ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Standard
- b. MSC Chain of Custody Certification Requirements (CoC CR)
- c. MSC Chain of Custody Default Standard and the two variants: Group and Consumer-Facing Organisation (CFO) versions
- d. MSC Chain of Custody Program – Supplementary requirements for application of the ASC- MSC Seaweed Program
- e. ASC Group/Multi-Site Requirements
- f. ISO 17065: Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services
- g. ISO 19011: Guidelines for auditing management systems
- h. The accreditation procedures and rules of the accreditation body
- i. Client Application Checklist
- j. Templates applicable to seaweed certification:
  - i. ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Pre-Audit Reporting Template
  - ii. ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Audit Reporting Template
  - iii. ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Surveillance Reporting Template
  - iv. ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Variation Request Template
  - v. ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Interpretation Request Template
  - vi. ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Audit Announcement Template
  - vii. ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Critical Condition Reporting Template
  - viii. ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Cancellation, Suspension or Withdrawal Template
  - ix. ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Stakeholder Input Template
  - x. ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Notice of Objection Template
  - xi. ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Complaints and Appeals Template
- k. IT Platform Guidance Manual

### 3 Terms and definitions

The vocabulary below defines concepts, terms, phrases and abbreviations used in the Standard and the CAR.

Term	Definition
<b>Abuse</b>	The intentional use of power, including verbal abuse, isolation, sexual or racial harassment, intimidation or threat of physical force.
<b>Aquaculture operation</b>	A (commercially managed) operation aimed at farming of aquatic organisms.
<b>Alien species</b>	A species, subspecies or lower taxon, introduced outside its natural past or present distribution, including any part, gametes, seeds, eggs, or propagules of such species that might survive and subsequently reproduce (CBD).
<b>Basic needs wage</b>	See living wage.
<b>Beach-cast seaweed</b>	Seaweed that has been washed up or stranded (cast) on the beach or other parts of the shoreline, including seaweed that is still drifting in the water at the front of the beach, but likely to be stranded in the near future.
<b>Bonded labour</b>	Refers to workers that have received loans from employers, where these loans are subject to unreasonable terms and conditions such as excessively high interest rates.
<b>CAB</b>	See Conformity Assessment Body.
<b>CBD</b>	Convention on Biological Diversity.
<b>Certification</b>	Procedure by which a third party gives written or equivalent assurance that a product, process or service conforms to specified requirements.
<b>Child</b>	Any person less than 15 years of age. A higher age would apply if the minimum age law stipulates a higher age for work or mandatory schooling. If, however, the local minimum age law is set at 14, in accordance with developing country exceptions under ILO Convention 138, lower age will apply.
<b>Child labour</b>	Any work by a child younger than the age specified in the definition of a child, except for light work as provided for by ILO Convention 138, Article 7.
<b>CITES</b>	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna.
<b>Collective bargaining agreement</b>	A contract specifying the terms and conditions for work, negotiated between an organisation (e.g. employer) or group of employers and one or more worker organisation/s.
<b>Community</b>	A group of people with possibly diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and are joined by collective engagements within a geographically confined area. Includes all stakeholders of the resource such as neighbours and other users like fishermen.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Comprehensive Strategy</b>	A complete and tested strategy made up of linked monitoring, analyses, and management measures and responses.
<b>Conflicts</b>	Situations wherein one party perceives hindrance in legitimate interest as caused by the other party's actions or absence of actions. One party is the production unit owner or manager. The other party is either a surrounding community or group of stakeholders in the community. Conflicts, for the purpose of this standard, exclude complaints made by single individuals unless verified/supported by a community leader or community organisation. The production unit may not necessarily be at fault if conflicts arise, but they shall exercise due diligence to avoid any harm done to the legitimate interests of people in the surrounding community.
<b>Conformity Assessment Body</b>	Body that performs conformity assessment services and that can be the object of accreditation.
<b>Consensus</b>	General agreement, characterised by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interests and by a process seeking to take into account the views of interested parties, particularly those directly affected, and to reconcile any conflicting arguments. NOTE: Consensus need not imply unanimity.
<b>Consequence Spatial Analysis (CSA)</b>	The Consequence Spatial Analysis (CSA) is a tool within the RBF and is a semi-quantitative approach to examine several consequence and spatial attributes to provide a relative measure of the risk of the UoA to the habitat. Each habitat (scoring element) is assigned its own CSA score.
<b>CSA</b>	See Consequence Spatial Analysis.
<b>Cultivation</b>	Cultivation implies some form of human intervention in the rearing process to enhance production, and should be taken to include strategies such as regular stocking, feeding and individual or corporate stock ownership.
<b>Discrimination</b>	Any distinction, exclusion or preference, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment. Not all distinction, exclusion or preference constitutes discrimination. For instance, a merit or performance-based pay increase or bonus is not by itself discriminatory. Positive discrimination in favour of people from certain under-represented groups may be legal in some countries.
<b>Disciplinary practices</b>	Disciplinary procedures make sure that a company's standards of conduct and performance at work are followed. They also provide a fair and humane method of dealing with workers who fail to meet these standards.
<b>Due diligence</b>	The effort made by an ordinarily prudent or reasonable party to avoid harm to another party. As applied in PI 5.2, the process of resolution is documented and meeting minutes are kept. Minutes include an agenda, the list of concerns raised, resolutions or agreements reached, a list of who shall take what action by when, and a list of participants. Local government and, if available, at least one civil society or customary organisation chosen by the community shall have access to the conflict resolution process and the documentation.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Endangered, Threatened or Protected Species</b>	Species recognised by national legislation and/or binding international agreements to which the jurisdictions controlling the production unit under assessment are party. Species listed under Appendix I of CITES shall be considered ETP species for the purposes of the assessment, unless it can be shown that the particular stock of the CITES listed species impacted by the production unit under assessment is not endangered.
<b>ETP</b>	See Endangered, Threatened or Protected Species.
<b>False apprenticeship scheme</b>	The practice of hiring workers under apprenticeship terms without stipulating terms of the apprenticeship and wages in the contract. It is a “false” apprenticeship if the purpose is to underpay people, avoid legal obligations or employ children.
<b>Fair and decent wages</b>	See living wage.
<b>Production unit social impact assessment</b>	An assessment carried out by the production unit into its impact on surrounding community, affected stakeholders (e.g. fishermen, neighbours, or other resource users) or other group coming into contact with the production unit or its activities. The assessment should follow the guidance included in this document and in the case that the assessment is not transparent, is inaccurate or finds insufficient resolution to issues then a p-SIA should be conducted.
<b>Forced or compulsory labour</b>	Work or service that is extracted from any person under the menace of any penalty for which said person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily or for which such work or service is demanded as a repayment of debt.
<b>Group Management Body</b>	The person or group of people who manages and is responsible for the actions of the group.
<b>Group members</b>	Harvester/farmer operating one or several production sites and participating formally in a group for the purpose of applying for, obtaining and maintaining MSC-ASC certification as part of a Group.
<b>Habitat</b>	The chemical and bio-physical environment, including biogenic structures, where harvesting/farming takes place.
<b>Habitat function</b>	The range of services provided to an organism, including, but not limited to, mediating trophic interactions, reproduction, shelter, and feeding, and influencing the behaviour of organisms.
<b>Habitat structure</b>	The arrangement of physical and biogenic formations that support plant, algal and animal communities.
<b>Harvest strategy</b>	The combination of monitoring, stock assessment, harvest control rules and management actions, which may include a Management Procedure (MP) or an implicit MP and be tested by a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE).
<b>Harvesting</b>	The collection of seaweed from the wild environment. The Standard uses the term “production unit” where applicable to cover both wild harvesting approaches and farming systems.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Hazardous work</b>	Work that, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health or safety of workers.
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization.
<b>Implemented successfully</b>	There is objective evidence that the production unit is following the practice/s required by the measure or strategy, and that some expected consequences of that measure/s are seen in the performance of the production unit. It is not necessary to have evidence that the measure or strategy has resulted in benefits to the component being modified.
<b>Incidence</b>	When reliable corroborated evidence is established of the event taking place (as used in Principle 4 PIs).
<b>ISEAL</b>	International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling.
<b>IUCN</b>	International Union for the Conservation of Nature.
<b>Labour-only contracting arrangement</b>	The practice of hiring workers without establishing a formal employment relationship for the purpose of avoiding payment of regular wages or the provision of legally required benefits, such as health and safety protection.
<b>Light work</b>	Work that is 1) not likely to be harmful to a child's health or development and 2) not likely to prejudice their attendance at school, participation in vocational orientation or training programs or diminish their capacity to benefit from instruction received.
<b>Living wage</b>	Consistent with the ISEAL Global Living Wage Coalition, the remuneration received for a standard work week by a worker in a particular place sufficient to afford a decent standard of living for the worker and her or his family. Elements of a decent standard of living include food, water, housing, education, health care, transport, clothing, and other essential needs including provision for unexpected events.
<b>Macroalgae</b>	Macroscopic algae.
<b>Management Procedure</b>	The combination of pre-defined data, together with an algorithm to which such data are input to provide a value for a Total allowable catch (TAC) or effort control measure; this combination has been demonstrated, through simulation trials, to show robust performance in the presence of uncertainties. Additional rules may be included, for example to spread a TAC spatially to cater for uncertainty about stock structure.
<b>Management Strategy Evaluation</b>	Usually synonymous with MP approach; often used to describe the process of testing generic MPs or harvest strategies.
<b>Maximum Sustainable Yield</b>	The highest theoretical equilibrium yield that can be continuously taken (on average) from a stock under existing (average) environmental conditions without affecting significantly the reproduction process.
<b>May</b>	A permitted course of action, within the limits of the standard.
<b>Measure</b>	Actions or tools in place that either explicitly manage impacts on the component or indirectly contribute to management of the component

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
	under assessment having been designed to manage impacts elsewhere.
<b>Microalgae</b>	Microscopic algae.
<b>Minimum wage</b>	The legal minimum wage set by law in the country.
<b>MP</b>	See Management Procedure.
<b>MSE</b>	See Management Strategy Evaluation.
<b>MSY</b>	See Maximum Sustainable Yield.
<b>Native range</b>	Natural limits of geographical distribution of a species (modified after Zaitsev and Ozturk, 2001).
<b>Negligible</b>	So small or unimportant as to be not worth considering; insignificant.
<b>Introduction</b>	The human-mediated movement of a species outside its present distribution.
<b>Overharvesting</b>	Harvesting higher than the level that results, in the long term, in the stock being at Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY).
<b>Partial strategy</b>	A cohesive arrangement which may comprise one or more measures, an understanding of how it/they work to achieve an outcome and an awareness of the need to change the measures should they cease to be effective. It may not have been designed to manage the impact on that component specifically.
<b>Participatory Social Impact Assessment (p-SIA)</b>	An assessment of positive and negative consequences and risks of a planned or ongoing project of a production unit (here: a farm, harvesting or farm development) undertaken in such a manner that all stakeholder groups have input into the process, results, and outcome of the assessment, and that steps taken and information gathered are openly accessible to all. A p-SIA should only be conducted if the production unit social impact assessment determines that it is necessary.
<b>Penalty</b>	Penalty can imply monetary sanctions and physical punishment, such as loss of rights and privileges or restriction of movement (or withholding of identity documents). As used in PI 5.2.
<b>Performance Indicator</b>	The level in the assessment tree at which the performance of the production unit is scored by the team (sub-divided into scoring issues in some PIs).
<b>PI</b>	See Performance Indicator.
<b>PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)</b>	Protective clothing, helmets, goggles, or other garments or equipment designed to protect the wearer's body from injury or infection.
<b>Premium rate</b>	A rate of pay higher than the regular work rate. Must comply with national laws, regulations and/or industry standards.
<b>Principle</b>	The highest level in the assessment tree used as the basis for defining a well-managed and sustainable production unit.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Production unit</b>	The harvesting unit or farm from which the seaweed is produced (the extent of the production unit is defined explicitly as the UoA).
<b>Production system</b>	The type of gear or production methodology employed in the production unit.
<b>p-SIA</b>	See Participatory Social Impact Assessment.
<b>Remediation of child labour</b>	All support and actions necessary to ensure the safety, health, education and development of children who have been subjected to child labour, as defined above, and whose work has been terminated.
<b>Risk Based Framework</b>	A framework of assessment tools for scoring the “outcome” Performance Indicators in cases where insufficient information is available to score the UoA using the default Scoring system.
<b>RBF</b>	See Risk Based Framework.
<b>Scoring element</b>	The different parts of a Performance Indicator, where more than one part exists and covering related but different topics (e.g. different species scored in Principle 2).
<b>Seagrass</b>	Flowering plants (angiosperms) which grow in marine, fully saline environments. Not to be confused with seaweed.
<b>Seaweed</b>	The term seaweed should be interpreted as equivalent to “algae”, including both macroalgae (i.e. large, multicellular algae easily observed without a microscope, such as kelps, rockweeds, wakame, kombu, nori, etc.) and, by extension, microalgae (i.e. microscopic algae, often unicellular).
<b>Seed</b>	The term seed should be interpreted as both the vegetative propagules (cuttings) and spores, or gametes and zygotes, which can be used as planting materials. Stocks of seeds used in seaweed production units may come from natural stocks or from cultivation.
<b>Serious or irreversible harm to “structure and function”</b>	<p>Serious or irreversible harm to “structure and function” means changes caused by the UoA that fundamentally alter the capacity of the habitat or ecosystem to maintain its structure and function.</p> <p>For the habitat component, this is the reduction in habitat structure, biological diversity, abundance and function such that the habitat would be unable to recover to at least 80% of its unimpacted structure, biological diversity and function within five to 20 years, if harvesting/farming were to cease entirely.</p> <p>For the ecosystem component, this is the reduction of key features most crucial to maintaining the integrity of its structure and functions and ensuring that ecosystem resilience and productivity is not adversely impacted. This includes, but is not limited to, permanent changes in the biological diversity of the ecological community and the ecosystem’s capacity to deliver ecosystem services.</p>
<b>Shall</b>	A requirement that is always expected to be followed.
<b>Should</b>	A requirement that shall be followed unless there are reasons not to. If so, the justification for not following the requirement shall be recorded.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Site</b>	A discrete physical location.
<b>Species</b>	In biology, a species is the basic unit of biological classification and a taxonomic rank. The Standard does not, however, distinguish between different strains, varieties or any other lower level taxonomic rank of the same species, considering all of them as equivalent, in particular when applying requirements related to the introduction or translocation of species.
<b>Sporeling</b>	A sporeling is a young plant, alga or fungus produced by a germinated spore, similar to a seedling derived from a germinated seed. They occur in algae, fungi, lichens, bryophytes and seedless vascular plants.
<b>Standard</b>	A document established by consensus and approved by a recognised body that provides for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context.
<b>Stock Assessment</b>	An integrated analysis of information to estimate the status and trends of a population against benchmarks such as reference points.
<b>Stock Region</b>	A textual description of the geographic area within which the harvesting is taking place. When harvesting natural populations of seaweeds, the smaller well-defined area, water body/bodies or site/s that is/are managed as an independent unit.
<b>Strategy</b>	A cohesive and strategic arrangement which may comprise one or more measures, an understanding of how it/they work to achieve an outcome and which should be designed to manage impact on that component specifically. A strategy needs to be appropriate to the scale, intensity and cultural context of the harvesting/farming system and should contain mechanisms for the modification of harvesting/farming practices in the light of the identification of unacceptable impacts.
<b>Translocation</b>	The human-mediated movement of living organisms from one area, with release in another. Translocations may move living organisms from the wild or from captive origins. Translocations can be accidental (e.g. stowaways) or intentional. Intentional translocations can address a variety of motivations, including for reducing population size, for welfare, political, commercial or recreational interests, or for conservation objectives.
<b>Unit of Assessment (UoA)</b>	The extent of the specific production unit/s that is/are to be assessed for compliance with the Standard requirements.
<b>Unit of Certification (UoC)</b>	The unit entitled to receive an ASC/MSC certificate.
<b>Water-based structures</b>	Structures that are part of production unit and/or production unit equipment used in water or in contact with water, situated in or around the production unit (e.g. rafts, nets, boats, buoys, etc.).
<b>Worker</b>	Non-management personnel carrying out work or labour.
<b>Young worker</b>	Any worker older than the age recognised as a child and under the age of 18.

## 4 General requirements

### 4.1 Requirements of accreditation

- 4.1.1 The CAB shall have its application for accreditation approved by the ASC-MSC's seaweed accreditation body prior to selling certification services for the scope of the Standard.
- 4.1.1.1 In cases where the CAB is already accredited for ASC farm or MSC fishery, they shall apply for a scope extension and inform the accreditation body before announcing the first audit.

#### Guidance 4.1.1.1

The accreditation body will treat seaweed as a scope extension. Where this happens, the accreditation body will undertake a desk review and a risk assessment to decide whether the first seaweed audit undertaken by the CAB should be witnessed by the accreditation body.

- 4.1.2 The CAB shall only award certificates once it is accredited and only within the scope of its accreditation.
- 4.1.3 The CAB shall recognise that certificate holders that have been certified by other accredited CABs conform to the Standard.
- 4.1.3.1 If a CAB believes that the recognition of a certificate issued by another CAB is not warranted, they should write to the accreditation body detailing their concerns.
- 4.1.4 The CAB shall authorise the accreditation body to publish on its website, the CAB's company name, full address and contact persons' details.
- 4.1.5 The CAB shall authorise the accreditation body to publish, including on its website, witness assessment and desk review reports.

### 4.2 Conformity to ISO 17065 and the ASC-MSC seaweed requirements

- 4.2.1 The CAB shall conform to the requirements of ISO 17065 and all other ASC-MSC requirements relevant to the scope of accreditation applied for or held.
- 4.2.1.1 The CAB shall conform to the ASC-MSC requirements specified in this document in case of conflict with ISO 17065.
- 4.2.2 In line with ISO 17065 on public information, the CAB shall make available on request the following information on the fees charged to clients:
- a. An indicative average man-day rate.

#### Guidance 4.2.2.a

For example, the CAB could calculate this using all seaweed audits carried out over the past year.

- b. The criteria used for determining the cost of a seaweed initial, surveillance or re-certification audit, such as the production unit size, complexity of the unit of certification, number of target species, location, etc.
- c. Likely additional costs of predictable elements such as report production.
- d. An explanation of how subsistence, travel expenses and auditor rates are calculated on a per project basis.

#### Guidance 4.2.2.d

Ways in which these rates might be explained are:

- a. Expenses charged at actual cost without overheads, and unless otherwise specified by the client.
- a. The least expensive means of travel practicable should be used wherever possible.
- b. The daily audit fees charged to the client are based on the rates charged by subcontracted auditors and these rates vary regionally. When using subcontracted auditors, every effort is made to use auditors geographically proximate to the location of the audit to minimise excess travel costs and cost of living discrepancies between the auditors' home location and the location of the audit.
- c. Often, assessors from the developing world or areas distant from North America and Europe have lower rates, which can help to reduce audit costs in those areas.

- 4.2.3 The CAB shall have processes in place to:
- a. Calculate individual quotes for specific seaweed clients in line with these criteria.
  - b. State all costs clearly in advance of the client signing the seaweed audit contract.

#### **Guidance 4.2.3**

The intent of this requirement is that all costs are laid out as clearly as possible in advance of the client signing the contract in line with the criteria listed in 4.2.2. This includes day rates for any additional work that may be needed.

### **4.3 Normative appendices**

- 4.3.1 The CAB shall follow in full all normative appendices of the CAR where they are required to be used.

### **4.4 ISO 19011**

- 4.4.1 The CAB audit personnel shall follow guidance on auditing provided in ISO 19011.

### **4.5 Compliance with legal requirements**

- 4.5.1 The CAB shall comply with the legal requirements in the countries in which they operate.
- 4.5.2 Key personnel shall show understanding of applicable legislation and regulations.

### **4.6 Certification decision-making entity**

- 4.6.1 In addition to the requirements of ISO 17065 clause 7.6, the CAB's decision-making entity shall authorise any changes to the status of certification including changes to conditions.

#### **Guidance 4.6.1**

ISO 17065 Section 7.6 confirms that it is the CAB decision-making entity that decides whether to certify the production unit.

### **4.7 Communication with the ASC-MSC**

- 4.7.1 All CAB communication with the ASC-MSC shall be in English.
- 4.7.2 The CAB shall communicate with the ASC-MSC using the:
- a. Formats specified in this document, or
  - b. Online templates on ASC-MSC websites.

- 4.7.3 The CAB shall use the:
- a. Interpretation Request Template to request any interpretations of the Standard or the CAR.
  - b. Variation Request Template to request any variations to these normative requirements.
- 4.7.4 The CAB shall be responsible for control of all confidential information submitted to the ASC-MSC as specified in any confidential annexes (see [17.9.4](#)).
- 4.7.5 The CAB shall be responsible for keeping their data entries on the ASC-MSC seaweed database up to date.
- 4.7.6 The CAB shall submit all required information using the ASC-MSC seaweed database.<sup>1</sup>

## 4.8 Contract

- 4.8.1 The CAB shall have a written contract with the production unit client seeking certification.
- 4.8.2 Prior to signing a contract, the CAB shall verify that:
- a. The applicant is not already certified.
  - b. The applicant has not had a certificate suspended or withdrawn, or has failed a certification audit within the previous 12 months.
- 4.8.2.1 If the applicant is currently certified, the CAB shall follow the certificate transfer requirements in [Section 4.12](#).
- 4.8.2.2 If the applicant has had had a certificate suspended or withdrawn, or has failed a certification audit within the previous 12 months, the CAB shall follow the certificate transfer requirements in [4.12.3](#) (pre-transfer review) before accepting the new contract.
- 4.8.3 The contract shall be signed prior to commencement of the audit.
- 4.8.4 The contract shall specify:
- a. The deliverables that the CAB will produce.
  - b. The expected certification timeline.
  - c. That the ASC-MSC retains the right to change the Standard and the CAR and that certification is conditional on conforming to any new or revised requirements within the timeframes established by the ASC-MSC.
  - d. That the ASC-MSC shall have full access to all audit products including audit evidence, audit findings, audit reports and confidential information.
  - e. That the ASC-MSC shall have the right to observe audits conducted by the CAB.
  - f. That the accreditation body shall have the right to conduct audits of the applicant/certificate holder, including unannounced audits, to monitor CAB conformity.
  - g. That the CAB should be informed of any previous MSC and/or ASC audit conducted within the previous 12 months.
    - i. The CAB shall be provided with any such audit reports.
  - h. The complaint procedures (see [Section 7.3](#)) of the CAB by including a copy or by reference to publicly available documents.
    - i. An explanation shall be provided of when and how the accreditation body and the ASC-MSC may be engaged in the case that the complaint process escalates beyond the CAB authority.

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<sup>1</sup> Derogation: Until CABs receive notification from the ASC-MSC that the ASC-MSC seaweed database is operational, CABs shall submit all information using the Excel (XLS/XLSX) templates on the website.

- i. That the applicant has the right to raise their concerns or object to any of the proposed audit team members (see [Section 7.3](#)).
- j. That the CAB shall not conduct an audit until the client has completed and the CAB accepted the ASC-MSC Seaweed Client's Application Checklist.
- k. That it is the CAB's responsibility to make known to the public any upcoming site visit at their premises (e.g. for initial, surveillance or recertification audits) to allow for interested parties and stakeholders to provide their input to and comment during the audit.
- l. That the applicant has the responsibility to inform the CAB if any changes are made in the operation that may require oversight from the CAB. This can include but is not limited to:
  - i. Changes in species harvested or farmed (regarding any impact this may have on the seaweed Unit of Assessment).
  - ii. Changes in the number of sites.
  - iii. Changes that may affect the scoring of the production unit (such as administration of new/different medication at some or all sites).
  - iv. Changes that may impact the start of the Chain of Custody.

## 4.9 Content of certificates

4.9.1 The CAB shall issue an English language certificate which, in addition to the requirements in ISO 17065 clause 7.7, shall contain:

- a. The MSC and/or ASC label, which shall be no smaller than the logo of the CAB,

### Guidance 4.9.1.a

Production units harvesting wild seaweed (category A) will be eligible to use MSC label only, aquaculture systems in which supply from the wild stock is not required or negligible (categories Bii and Cii) will be eligible to ASC label only, and enhanced production units where seeds are supplied from the wild (categories Bi and Ci) should use both the ASC and the MSC labels together.

- b. A unique certificate number (e.g. A.CABXYZ.123456)
  - i. The first part being the letter "A", "BI", "BII", "CI" or "CII" for seaweed certificates depending on the production unit category defined in Table 2 of the [Standard](#).
  - ii. The second part being the CAB's initials or name.
  - iii. The third part being a unique registration number or code issued by the CAB.
- c. An issue number (for re-issued or renewed certificates).
- d. The point at which certified products may enter the Chain of Custody.
- e. The date of issue.
  - i. The date of issue shall be the date the certificate was registered on the ASC-MSC seaweed database.
- f. The date of expiry of the certificate together with the disclaimer "The validity of this certificate shall be verified on [specific URL to be announced]".
- g. The name and address of the CAB.
- h. The legal name and registered address of the certificate holder.
- i. Any trade names and other addresses that will be used for sales invoices.
- j. The name and physical address of any additional sites included in the Unit of Certification.

- k. A description of the scope of the certificate, including the Unit of Certification covered by the certificate, a reference to the specific standard (and version) against which the certificate holder has been evaluated, and confirmation of certification.
    - i. An ASC-MSC seaweed certificate shall only include species certified against the ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Standard.
  - l. A reference to the ASC-MSC seaweed database of registered certificates [specific URL to be confirmed].
  - m. A clear statement to the effect that the certificate shall remain the property of the CAB that issued it, and that the certificate and all copies or reproductions of the certificate shall be returned or destroyed if requested by the CAB.
  - n. The signature of the individual/s that the CAB assigned this responsibility.
  - o. A disclaimer stating: “This certificate itself does not constitute evidence that a particular product supplied by the certificate holder is ASC-MSC certified. Products offered, shipped or sold by the certificate holder can only be considered covered by the scope of this certificate when the required ASC-MSC claim is clearly stated on invoices and shipping documents”.
- 4.9.2 The CAB may issue certificates in other languages as well as the English version providing they bear a disclaimer in at least 10-point font that the certificate is an unverified translation of the English certificate, and in case of differences the English version shall take precedence.
- 4.9.3 The CAB shall register the certificate by sending all the information outlined in 4.9.1 to the ASC-MSC for posting on the website.
- 4.9.3.1 Certificates which are not posted on the ASC-MSC website shall not be valid.

## 4.10 Information for certificate holders

- 4.10.1 The CAB shall inform the certificate holder that it has the right to claim that, subject to the scope of its certificate, its operation is certified in accordance with the ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Standard.
- 4.10.2 The CAB shall inform the certificate holder that:
- a. It may claim that its seaweed products are the result of “Responsible Aquaculture Farming” and/or “Certified Sustainable Seafood”.

### Guidance 4.10.2.a

Further detailed guidance for certificate holders on joint messaging relating to ASC-MSC certified seaweed products is available in the ASC/ASC label licence agreement on the ASC-MSC website.

- b. It is eligible to apply for an MSC/ASC label licencing agreement.
- c. It shall not make any claim about ASC-MSC certification on consumer facing products without a valid MSC/ASC label licence.

## 4.11 Use of the MSC, ASC and CAB trademarks

- 4.11.1 All uses of the MSC and/or ASC trademarks by a CAB shall be subject to a MSC/ASC label licence agreement.
- 4.11.2 The CAB shall have documented procedures for the issue and use of any label or trademark of the CAB for the MSC and/or ASC programs, including procedures for pre-publication review and authorisation by the CAB of all uses of the CAB's logo by MSC and/or ASC certificate holders.

## 4.12 Transfer of certificates

### Guidance 4.12

A decision to transfer CABs is voluntary by the certificate holder/applicant, unless the CAB issuing the current certificate no longer offers seaweed certification services for whatever reason. In this case, the client must transfer to another CAB to keep the certification.

### Principles for transfers of certificates between CABs

- 4.12.1 A CAB shall only accept a transfer of a certificate holder/applicant if:
- The certificate holder has not transferred CABs previously within the period of validity of a certificate.
  - The certificate is not suspended (if already certified), withdrawn, or cancelled.
  - All critical conditions have been closed.
- 4.12.2 If any of the conditions in 4.12.1 are not met, the succeeding CAB shall treat the certificate holder/applicant as a new client and repeat the full ASC-MSC initial audit.

### Procedure for transferring a certificate – Pre-transfer review

- 4.12.3 On receiving an application for transfer from a certificate holder/applicant, the succeeding CAB shall:
- Work together where practical to exchange information about the audit and certification.
    - The preceding CAB shall share all the documentation about the certificate holder/applicant (records, including reports and history of conditions, confidential information and annexes) with the succeeding CAB, unless it is provided by the certificate holder.
  - Review the reasons for the requested transfer.
  - Conduct a desk-based pre-transfer review to:
    - Confirm that the certificate holders' activities are within the scope of the succeeding CAB's accreditation.
    - Confirm that the certificate is valid (authenticity, duration, scope).
    - Confirm that the certificate holder is not suspended.
    - Consider any audit and surveillance reports, including any certification conditions.
    - Become aware of any complaints received and actions taken to address complaints.
    - Review any other relevant documentation.
- 4.12.4 Depending on the findings from the pre-transfer review, the succeeding CAB shall decline the contract or accept the contract.

### Procedure for transferring a certificate

- 4.12.5 If the succeeding CAB accepts the contract as per 4.12.4, the succeeding CAB shall agree on a transfer date with the preceding CAB and the certificate holder/applicant on which all rights and obligations for maintaining the certificate shall be passed from the preceding to the succeeding CAB.
- 4.12.5.1 The expiry date of the succeeding certificate shall be the same as the expiry date of the preceding certificate.
- 4.12.5.2 Both CABs shall keep a record of the agreed transfer date.
- 4.12.6 The preceding CAB shall:

- a. Before the transfer date, ensure that all the client's records are up-to-date, including those held on the ASC-MSC seaweed database.
  - b. On the transfer date, cancel the certificate.
    - i. All obligations of the preceding CAB shall end after the transfer date.
- 4.12.7 The succeeding CAB shall:
- a. At least five days in advance of the transfer date, inform the MSC-ASC of the agreed transfer date.
  - b. On the agreed transfer date, issue the new certificate (if relevant) in the ASC-MSC seaweed database.
  - c. Continue with the certificate holder's existing surveillance or audit program.
  - d. Not change the status of certification including any certification condition, until the next surveillance audit following the requirement in [Section 17.23](#).
    - i. For applicants that have not published the Public Comment Draft Report (PCDR) at the time of the transfer, [4.12.7.d](#) does not apply
- 4.12.8 The results of any accreditation body assessment regarding the compliance of the certificate holder with the scheme requirements shall be applicable to the succeeding CAB.
- 4.12.9 If the succeeding CAB considers that a change of certification status and/or conditions should be made before the surveillance audit, the CAB shall treat the certificate holder as a new client and conduct an initial audit.

#### **Guidance 4.12.9**

This is to encourage the client to consider the timing issue in the decision to transfer to another CAB. The initial site visit may be combined with the surveillance site visit if well planned.

## **5 Structural requirements**

### **5.1 Mechanism for safeguarding impartiality**

- 5.1.1 The CAB shall have a documented impartiality structure which safeguards impartiality within the CAB and its operations.
- 5.1.1.1 The structure shall be described in the documents that establish the CAB's legal status or by some other means that prevents change which could compromise the function of the structure to safeguard impartiality.
  - 5.1.1.2 This may be through vesting authority to the impartiality structure for approval of policies and some significant procedures such as the rules of procedure for the operation of the impartiality structure itself.
  - 5.1.1.3 The impartiality structure may be an impartiality committee or equivalent structure.
  - 5.1.1.4 The structure may be independent of management or combined with management function.
- 5.1.2 The CAB shall be responsible for:
- a. The adequacy of the process for identifying and involving the relevant interested parties.
  - b. The impartiality structure itself to demonstrate the adequacy of the interested parties' participation.
  - c. Providing all the information required for the impartiality structure to perform its role, including, but not limited to, the reasons for:

- i. All significant decisions and actions.
  - ii. The selection of persons responsible for the activities related to certification.
- 5.1.3 The impartiality structure shall involve all parties concerned with the development of principles and policies for the functioning of the CAB certification system.
  - 5.1.3.1 This shall include interested and affected parties throughout the supply chain.
    - a. These may include, but not be limited to, the CAB itself, regulatory authorities, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), consultants, academics, primary producers, processors, wholesalers, retailers, food service providers, restaurants and consumers.
  - 5.1.3.2 This should be a high-level group with the responsibility for ensuring impartiality and not predominantly a technical or sector based group.
  - 5.1.3.3 The membership shall not be selected to reflect the technical expertise of the CAB.
    - a. When necessary it may be supported by technical experts as required.
    - b. No single interest shall predominate.
- 5.1.4 Documentation for the mechanism for safeguarding impartiality shall include:
  - a. Rules of procedure that establish the duties and rights of members (e.g. rules for attendance, quorum and voting).
    - i. Members shall sign declarations of confidentiality.
    - ii. Members shall sign annual declarations of the absence of conflicts of interest.
  - b. The principle that impartiality shall be established at three levels within the CAB:
    - i. Strategies and policies.
    - ii. Decisions on certification.
    - iii. Auditing.
- 5.1.5 The impartiality structure shall conduct annual reviews that include:
  - a. The current and intended activities of the CAB.
  - b. The competence of key personnel.
  - c. The potential risks associated with the CAB's operation.
- 5.1.6 The function of the structure shall ensure that:
  - a. Commercial and other considerations do not prevent the objective provision of certification services.
  - b. The period of time specified by the CAB for which personnel shall not be used to review or make a certification decision for a product for which they have provided consultancy shall be no less than two years.
  - c. No audit or certification services shall be provided to clients if any of the products or services provided by the CAB, related bodies or the CAB's personnel are still in use by the client.

## 5.2 Confidentiality

- 5.2.1 In addition to ISO 17065 clause 4.5, specific requirements on confidentiality are detailed in the Seaweed Certification and Accreditation Requirements Part A and Part B.

### Guidance 5.2.1

When undertaking its work, the CAB has access to commercially-sensitive information. The ASC-MSR requires that a policy and instruction on confidentiality need to be documented to:

- Ensure the CAB considers all aspects of confidentiality.
- Allow the accreditation body to review the policy and subsequent procedures for completeness.

## 6 Resource requirements

### 6.1 CAB personnel

6.1.1 The CAB shall:

- a. Register all auditors working with the ASC-MSC seaweed program with the ASC-MSC and the accreditation body,
- b. Ensure that all auditors carrying out ASC-MSC seaweed certification audits have demonstrated the required competencies for their role as described in [Annex A](#),
- c. Ensure that all personnel involved in ASC-MSC seaweed certification services understand the aims and objectives of the ASC-MSC seaweed programme, and
- d. Ensure that all technical reviewers and certification decision makers are experienced and qualified to evaluate the verification processes, working papers and associated evidence and recommendations made by the assessment/audit team (ISO 17065 clause 7.5).

#### Guidance 6.1.1.d

For reviewers and decision makers, CABs are reminded that the criteria of ISO 17065 clause 6.1.2.1 will apply. CABs will still have to demonstrate that the reviewer and/or decision maker is competent. One way of demonstrating this competence would be for the reviewer and/or decision maker to pass the online training module for ASC-MSC lead auditors, or attend the face to face training.

### Maintenance of competency

6.1.2 The CAB shall have a written procedure to confirm annually that every auditor and all CAB personnel involved in the audit are qualified and competent as described in [Annex A](#) and registered with the ASC-MSC as required.

6.1.2.1 This procedure shall include:

- a. Regular performance evaluation of CAB personnel involved in the ASC-MSC seaweed audit activities.
- b. Regular calibration sessions to ensure consistent practice among auditors and other CAB personnel.

#### Guidance 6.1.2.a.ii

This may include calibration sessions organised by the ASC-MSC.

6.1.2.2 The CAB shall implement its procedure and keep records of all training and calibration sessions, including a record of the individuals that participated.

## 7 Process requirements

### 7.1 Information for applicants

7.1.1 The CAB shall send the following to applicants:

- 7.1.1.1 The current versions of the ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Standard, Client Application Checklist and any other requirement relevant to the seaweed audit.
- a. The CAB shall maintain a record identifying the document/s, including the version/s, sent to each applicant and certificate holder.

7.1.2 The CAB shall send the following to applicants in a language appropriate to the applicant:

- a. A copy of the CAB's standard audit and certification contract, and
- b. Information about the use of the MSC/ASC label/s, including:
  - i. The website where the rules for the MSC/ASC label/s may be found, and
  - ii. An explanation that a MSC/ASC label licence agreement will be required with the MSC and/or ASC prior to the use of the label/s.

7.1.3 In cases where documents are translated for the convenience of the client, if any differences between the original English documents and translated versions are found then the original English version shall prevail.

### 7.2 Suspension, withdrawal and cancellation

#### Guidance 7.2

A seaweed certificate may be suspended by a CAB for the reasons outlined in this section. If the terms of the suspension are not met within the allowed response time, the certificate may be subsequently withdrawn by the CAB. While a suspension may be lifted by the CAB if the issues are resolved, a withdrawn certificate is permanently withdrawn. When an applicant voluntarily decides to interrupt an assessment and leave the audit process, it is considered a cancellation. The term "self-suspension" is used when a certificate holder (certified client) voluntarily decides to enter a period of suspension. For example, if a client wishes to remain certified but is not selling certified product at the time, the client may enter self-suspension to temporarily avoid the cost of surveillance audits.

#### Suspension of a certified production unit

7.2.1 A CAB may suspend or withdraw a certificate for contractual or administration reasons.

#### Guidance 7.2.1

Some examples of cases where a CAB may suspend or withdraw a certificate for a contractual or administrative reason include:

- Late payment of CAB invoices.
- Delay in the audit schedule due to unforeseen circumstances.
- A request from the production unit certificate holder to enter a period of "self-suspension" or withdrawal of the production unit certificate.

7.2.2 A CAB shall suspend a certificate:

- a. If a critical condition is raised during the validity of the certificate, or
- b. If the number of conditions becomes more than the maximum number of conditions allowed in each Principle given in Table 4 of the [Standard](#), or

- c. If progress against a condition is not back “on target” within 12 months of falling “behind target”, or
  - d. If the production unit no longer conforms with the Standard.
- 7.2.3 A certificate shall not be suspended more than once in a three-year certification cycle, unless:
- a. For reasons outside the client's control, or
  - b. The client requests “self-suspension”.
- 7.2.4 The maximum duration of a suspension shall be six months, unless the reasons for the suspension are outside the client's control.

#### Withdrawal of a certified production unit

- 7.2.5 The CAB shall withdraw a certificate if:
- a. Suspension is required by the requirements in 7.2.2 but the production unit has already been suspended once within the current certification cycle, and 7.2.3.a or b do not apply, or
  - b. A suspension is not lifted within the allowed six months and 7.2.4 does not apply.
- 7.2.6 The CAB shall not reinstate the certificate after it is withdrawn.

#### Withdrawal of a production unit while in initial audit

- 7.2.7 The CAB shall withdraw a production unit applicant where:
- a. Critical conditions are not closed within the allowed three or six months, or
  - b. The Final Report is not published within 12 months of the announcement, or
  - c. The applicant decides not to proceed with the audit (cancellation).

#### Steps for suspension, withdrawal or cancellation

- 7.2.8 The CAB shall inform the ASC-MSC of any suspension, withdrawal or cancellation of a certificate or audit process within five days of the decision using the Cancellation, Suspension, or Withdrawal Template, for posting on the ASC-MSC seaweed website.
- 7.2.8.1 The CAB shall specify the date of suspension/withdrawal as the date when the CAB made the decision of suspension/withdrawal.
  - 7.2.8.2 The CAB shall specify the date of cancellation as the date that the certificate holder or applicant informed the CAB and/or the ASC-MSC of its decision of cancellation.
  - 7.2.8.3 The CAB shall request the ASC-MSC to update the status of the production unit on the seaweed website.
- 7.2.9 Once a certificate is suspended or withdrawn, the CAB shall immediately instruct the certificate holder:
- a. Not to sell any product harvested from the date of suspension or withdrawal as ASC/MSC certified or with the ASC/MSC label/s.
  - b. To advise existing or potential customers in writing of the suspension or withdrawal within four calendar days of the suspension or withdrawal date.

## 7.3 Complaints and appeals

### Complaints about team member

- 7.3.1 The CAB shall have a documented procedure for dealing with an applicant's concern about a member of the team proposed to carry out the audit.

- 7.3.2 This procedure shall include the following elements:
- a. Considering the merits of each concern raised by an applicant.
  - b. Taking appropriate action/s, which may include leaving the team unchanged if warranted.
  - c. Maintaining records of the justification for its action/s.

### General complaint procedure

- 7.3.3 The CAB shall have a documented procedure for handling complaints and appeals that in addition to the requirements of ISO 17065 Section 7.13.1 includes:
- a. A description of the complainant's option to complain to the accreditation body if they are not satisfied with the CAB's response to their complaint and also their option to complain to the ASC-MSC if they are not satisfied with the accreditation body's response.
  - b. A reference to the accreditation body's dispute resolution mechanisms, including the incidents, complaints and appeals handling processes.
  - c. The appointment of an independent member of the CAB's management team who shall report the outcome of the complaint or appeal to the top management of the CAB.
  - d. Encouragement for the complainants to submit copies of their complaints directly to the ASC-MSC at:
    - i. Email: [seaweedstandard@msc.org](mailto:seaweedstandard@msc.org).
    - ii. Mailing address: P.O. Box 19107, 3501 DC Utrecht, The Netherlands and/or Marine House, 1 Snow Hill, London, EC1A 2DH, United Kingdom.
- 7.3.4 The CAB shall send to the ASC-MSC and the accreditation body all complaints and appeals using the Complaints and Appeals Template, no less than 30 days prior to the annual accreditation body surveillance visit.
- 7.3.4.1 In the case of suspension or withdrawal of the accreditation of the CAB, all logged issues shall be sent to the accreditation body and the ASC-MSC as part of the suspension or withdrawal process using the Complaints and Appeals Template no later than the final date of accreditation.

## 8 Management system requirements for the CAB

### 8.1 Internal audits

- 8.1.1 The CAB shall comply with Section 8.6 of ISO 17065 but may choose to perform their internal audits once every 12 months (+/- three months from the previous audit).
- 8.1.2 Internal audits shall cover all ASC-MSC seaweed requirements included in this document in a planned and systemic manner.

## 9 Heading not used at this time

## 10 Heading not used at this time

## Part B – Certification requirements

### 11 Scope

Part B of the ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Certification and Accreditation Requirements defines the specific procedures for CABs to follow when carrying out audits of production units against the ASC- MSC Seaweed (Algae) Standard.

### 12 Normative references

The normative documents in [Section 2](#) of Part A also apply to Part B.

### 13 Terms and definitions

No additional requirements to Part A.

### 14 General requirements

No additional requirements to Part A.

### 15 Structural requirements

No additional requirements to Part A.

### 16 Resource requirements

#### 16.1 Audit teams

16.1.1 Teams shall include a lead auditor and should include additional team member/s.

##### Guidance 16.1.1

The number of auditors in the team may vary depending on the size and nature of the Unit of Assessment. In most cases, two to three auditors that meet the competencies specified in this document, will be needed to form a team. However, for small units of assessment in production categories A, Bii or Cii in Table 2 of the [Standard](#), the team may be composed of only one auditor if he/she meets all the competency requirements in [Annex A](#).

16.1.2 Teams shall include member/s that have the experience and expertise outlined in [Annex A](#).

16.1.3 When translation services are needed, the CAB shall retain translators that are independent of the client and skilled in translation from the national or local language into the operating language of the audit team.

## 17 Process requirements

### Guidance Section 17

Certification is a multi-step process that includes four major steps:

- a. Pre-audit: A confidential report tells a production unit if it is likely to achieve certification. The report may also be used by the client as a guide to preparing for the initial audit.
- b. Preparation: The client prepares for the initial audit in response to pre-audit findings and other relevant information, including completion of the Client Application Checklist.
- c. Initial audit: This stage includes multiple sub-steps leading to a determination of whether the production unit conforms to the Standard. The process is led by an appointed CAB and its expert team. It involves consulting with stakeholders, reviewing evidence to score the Performance Indicators (PIs), evaluating the production unit, identifying areas where the production unit should strengthen its performance (if needed), and making a draft and then final determination about whether the production unit meets the Standard. This is an intensive process that calls for a high level of information to be provided by the client and other stakeholders.
- d. Post-audit: Surveillance audits are conducted by the appointed CAB.

Production units are encouraged to make the most of certification by marketing products using the ASC and/or MSC logos, supported as necessary by the [MSC Chain of Custody Standard](#) for seafood traceability (see the [MSC Chain of Custody Certification Requirements](#)).

### 17.1 Pre-audit

17.1.1 The objectives of the pre-audit stage are to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the production unit and assess the likelihood of achieving certification.

17.1.2 The pre-audit stage is optional.

#### Guidance 17.1.2

Pre-audit can identify potential issues, the likelihood of a production unit of meeting the Standard, and/or highlight major barriers to achieving certification. It can also assist the team with its planning of the initial audit. Production units may undertake pre-audits themselves or use CABs, independent consultants or another relevant qualified auditor/organisation.

17.1.3 The Pre-Audit Reporting Template can be found at [www.asc-aqua.org/seaweed-standard](http://www.asc-aqua.org/seaweed-standard).

17.1.4 The process and outcomes of the pre-audit are confidential unless otherwise directed by the client.

17.1.5 The CAB shall provide the ASC-MSC with a copy of any Pre-Audit Report/s it has written for the production unit.

17.1.6 If the CAB is aware of any other Pre-Audit Report/s written by other parties, it shall inform the ASC-MSC of the report's author.

### 17.2 Initial audit timelines

17.2.1 The period from the announcement of the initial audit to the receipt of the Final Report shall be no more than 12 months.

17.2.1.1 The CAB shall withdraw the applicant from the audit process following [Section 7.2](#) of Part A, if [17.2.1](#) is not met.

### 17.3 Confirmation of scope

- 17.3.1 When receiving the application, the CAB shall confirm that the production unit is within scope of the [Standard](#) and verify that it is eligible for certification by reference to the scope criteria in Section 2 of the [Standard](#).
- 17.3.2 During the audit/validity of the certificate, the CAB shall withdraw/suspend the production unit from the audit process if it does not continue to meet the scope requirements in Section 2 of the [Standard](#).

### 17.4 Unit of Assessment and Unit of Certification

- 17.4.1 The team shall define the Unit of Assessment (UoA) and the Unit of Certification (UoC) based on information provided by the client and as otherwise available, following the requirements in Section 3 of the [Standard](#).
- 17.4.2 The team shall define if the client will be assessed as a single, multi-site or group arrangement, as defined in Section 4 of the [Standard](#).<sup>2</sup>

#### Guidance 17.4.2

Group certification will enable groups of farms to apply collectively for certification. Multi-site certification has been designed for clients that own or have full operational control of multiple production sites and wish to have them all certified under a single certificate.

### 17.5 Preparation for initial audit

- 17.5.1 The CAB shall ensure that before the initial audit is announced, the applicant receives the following written information:
- a. Expected scope of audit.
  - b. That the traceability system will be evaluated to determine whether the applicant is required to obtain a Chain of Custody certificate in addition to a production unit certificate.
  - c. Draft work schedule.
  - d. Names and affiliations of proposed team members.
  - e. An explanation of the requirement/s for and process of stakeholder consultation.
  - f. Sufficient information about the audit process so that the applicant can make proper preparations for the audit.
    - i. This shall include the Client Application Checklist, listing the type of information that will be required by the team prior to the site visit

#### Guidance 17.5.1.f.i

The intent of this checklist is that the client and the CAB ensure that all the information needed for the audit is currently available, and that the production unit is fully prepared to proceed with the audit. To that end, the checklist will identify the type and extent of data and information that will be made available for the audit, and any actions that have been taken by the production unit to address critical issues raised in a pre-audit.

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<sup>2</sup> Until the multi-site and group requirements are released, [17.4.2](#) shall not apply and all production units shall be assessed as single sites.

## 17.6 Notice of initial audit

- 17.6.1 The CAB shall announce the production unit audit once the CAB has received from the client the completed Client Application Checklist.

### Guidance 17.6.1

To ensure all information required at the outset of an audit is provided and to promote consistency across the programme, the ASC-MSC has developed the “Client Application Checklist” template, which includes guidance, for the provision of information at the outset of a production unit audit.

- 17.6.2 The team should review and consider the information submitted by clients in the Client Application Checklist prior to going on-site for the audit.
- 17.6.3 The CAB shall formally announce the production unit audit by submitting the Audit Announcement Template for posting on the ASC-MSC website at least 30 days prior to the site visit.
- 17.6.4 The announcement shall be provided in English and in the most commonly used local language/s.
- 17.6.5 If any changes to the announcement are to occur before a planned site visit, the changes shall be made to the published Audit Announcement Template and communicated no less than 10 days before the site visit is scheduled to begin.
- 17.6.5.1 All changes shall be clearly identified in the Audit Announcement Template.
- 17.6.6 The CAB shall notify potential stakeholders of the announcement, and invite their participation at the site visit within five days of the announcement being published.
- 17.6.6.1 Stakeholders shall be informed that if they do not wish or are not able to be interviewed at the site visit, they may send written information to the team.

## 17.7 Site visit timing

- 17.7.1 The initial site visit should be conducted during the harvesting of the principle product included for certification.

## 17.8 Stakeholder engagement

- 17.8.1 The CAB shall keep a list of all stakeholders that are relevant to the UoA and invited to submit comments on the initial audit as per 17.6.6.
- 17.8.2 The CAB shall have a mechanism that allows comments to be submitted at any time during the validity of the certificate, and that specifies how those comments are to be taken into consideration at or before the next audit.
- 17.8.2.1 The CAB shall highlight this at least once, by stating it verbally during interviews, or including the relevant information when acknowledging written comments.
- 17.8.3 The CAB shall acknowledge receipt of all written submissions within five days of receipt.

## 17.9 Audit evidence

- 17.9.1 Only information that is verifiable may be used as audit evidence.
- 17.9.2 The CAB shall record all audit evidence in the audit report.
- 17.9.3 Audit evidence shall include the latest information currently available for each Performance Indicator (PI).
- 17.9.4 Confidential annexes with any commercially sensitive or otherwise restricted information may be included in the audit reports without being included in the published versions.

- 17.9.4.1 The CAB shall agree the content of any such commercially sensitive information with the applicant, which must be accessible by the ASC-MSC and the accreditation body upon request as stipulated in the certification contract.
- 17.9.4.2 If the audit reports include confidential annexes, the CAB shall include an overview of the items which are in the confidential annexes in the public version of the report.

## 17.10 Site visit – Stakeholder consultation and information collection

- 17.10.1 The team shall carry out the site visit as announced.

### Guidance 17.10.1

The team may require further site visits by one or more team members where information is not available or assembled by the client or stakeholders in time for the first site visit to score the production unit.

- 17.10.2 The site visit shall include visits to both production sites and management locations as necessary to review the impacts and management of the production unit.
  - 17.10.2.1 If more than one production system is used (as defined in Table 2 of the [Standard](#)), the CAB shall plan and execute the site visit so that each production system is fully assessed.
- 17.10.3 The team shall:
  - a. Conduct stakeholder interviews to make sure that the CAB is aware of any concerns or information that stakeholders may have.
  - b. Allow private interviews with the team for stakeholders who request one.
  - c. Use any information provided in private in conformity with the confidentiality requirements in [5.2.1](#).

### Additional requirements for Principle 4 and 5

- 17.10.4 Principle 4 and 5 shall be assessed by a social auditor meeting the competencies set out in [Annex A](#).
- 17.10.5 The production unit shall be visited to assess compliance with the social requirements.
- 17.10.6 A minimum sample size of 15% of the workforce employed in the UoA up to a maximum of 40 persons shall be interviewed.
  - 17.10.6.1 Candidates shall be randomly selected for interview allowing for any stratification in the UoA workforce.

## 17.11 Audit findings

### Guidance 17.11

The Standard is defined at two levels (minimum and target). Failing to meet the minimum level triggers a critical condition. Meeting the minimum, but failing to meet the target level, triggers a condition. To achieve certification, any critical condition must be closed out during the audit process, such that all PIs meet at least the minimum level and there shall not be more than the maximum number of conditions allowed in each Principle given in Table 4 of the [Standard](#).

- 17.11.1 After the team has compiled and analysed all relevant evidence, they shall assess the conformance of the UoA against the Performance Indicators (PIs) of the ASC-MSC Seaweed Standard.
- 17.11.2 The team shall follow the requirements in Section 6 of the [Standard](#) to determine which PIs are to be scored.

- 17.11.3 For each PI, the team shall:
- a. Discuss evidence together, either in person or remotely.
  - b. Evaluate the balance of evidence.
  - c. Use their judgement to assign a level following the requirements in this section.
  - d. Assign conditions or critical conditions as per [Section 17.12](#) and [Section 17.13](#).

#### Guidance 17.11.3

The intent is that the evidence is discussed by the full team appointed by the CAB. Although the team members should discuss the evidence together, the auditor assigned for each Principle should determine the scores for that Principle. Discussions on audit findings may begin at the site visit but may often not be completed until after the team has dispersed, when virtual interactions may be needed (e.g. by teleconference and exchange of emails).

- 17.11.4 The team shall assess all individual PIs against each of the scoring issues at the minimum and target levels.
- 17.11.5 All scoring issues shall meet the minimum levels for the PI to achieve the minimum level.
- 17.11.6 If one or more of the scoring issues does not meet the minimum level:
- a. The PI shall be assigned a critical condition/s as per [Section 17.13](#).

#### Guidance 17.11.6

For example, if one scoring issue does not meet the minimum, no further scoring is required for that scoring issue. However, the remaining scoring issues within the PI should still be scored against the minimum and target levels (if relevant).

- 17.11.7 If all the scoring issues within a PI meet the target level, the PI meets the target level and no further action is required.
- 17.11.8 If one or more of the scoring issues meet the minimum level but do not meet the target level, the PI shall be assigned a condition/s as per [Section 17.12](#).
- 17.11.9 The team shall provide a rationale to support the team's conclusion.
- 17.11.9.1 The rationale shall make direct reference to every scoring issue and whether it is fully met.
- 17.11.10 In Principles 1 or 2, the team shall score all scoring elements (species or habitats) affected by the UoA.
- 17.11.10.1 If any single scoring element fails to meet the minimum level, a critical condition shall be raised, regardless of the situation of other scoring elements, some of which may be at the minimum or target levels.
  - 17.11.10.2 If any single scoring element meets the minimum level, but fails to meet one or more scoring issue at the target level, the PI shall be assigned the minimum level, and a condition shall be raised, regardless of the situation of other scoring elements, some of which may be at the target level.

#### Guidance 17.11.10

In some production units, multiple "scoring elements" may exist within one PI (such as multiple ETP or bycatch species or habitats). For example, if a production unit has impacts on more than one habitat, each habitat should be scored as a different scoring element.

- 17.11.11 The CAB shall not certify a UoA if any individual scoring issue is not met at least at the minimum level.
- 17.11.12 The CAB shall not certify a UoA if it has more than the number of conditions allowed in each Principle given in Table 4 of the [Standard](#).

## 17.12 Setting conditions

- 17.12.1 The team shall set one auditable condition for continuing certification for each individual PI that achieves the minimum level, but not the target level.
- 17.12.2 The team shall draft conditions to follow the narrative of the scoring issue/s not met.
- 17.12.3 The team shall draft conditions to result in improved performance to the target level normally within not more than one year.
  - 17.12.3.1 The timeframe may be extended if the CAB determines that achieving the target level may take longer than one year even if the best possible actions are taken.
- 17.12.4 The team shall create a schedule of conditions stating the specific requirements that are to be met within a specified timeframe, using the Summary of Conditions section of the ASC- MSC Seaweed Audit Reporting Template.
  - 17.12.4.1 The schedule shall confirm which scoring issues need to be met at the target level in each PI, and for which scoring elements, as applicable.
- 17.12.5 The team shall require the client to prepare a client action plan that includes:
  - a. A description of the root cause/s of the condition.
  - b. The corrective action/s to be taken and how these will address the condition to meet the target level.
  - c. Who will undertake the actions in the plan to meet the conditions.
  - d. The specified time period within which the conditions will be addressed.
  - e. How progress to meeting conditions will be shown to the CAB.
  - f. Funding and/or resources of other entities needed to close the condition.
- 17.12.6 The team shall not accept a client action plan if the client is relying upon the involvement, funding and/or resources of other entities without consulting with those entities when setting conditions.
- 17.12.7 If the team cannot find evidence to show that funding and/or resources are, or will be, in place to address conditions, the UoA shall not be certified.

### Guidance 17.12.7

The involvement of external “entities” in delivering conditions is commonly required in the MSC program, such as where management agencies need to be involved in developing harvest control rules with stakeholders. Such external involvement would not normally be needed for farms, but must still be considered in each case.

## 17.13 Critical conditions

- 17.13.1 If a scoring issue does not meet the minimum level, the team shall:
  - a. Issue a critical condition.
    - i. Critical conditions shall be issued using the Critical Condition Reporting Template.
    - ii. Critical conditions shall be issued to the client not more than 10 days after the site visit.

### Guidance 17.13.1

The CAB needs to send the Client Draft Report for the client review after the site visit and scoring of the production unit. However, the Summary of Critical Conditions section of the report should be sent before the Client Draft Report, within 10 days after the site visit. The client has a timeline for closing critical conditions (see [17.13.1.b](#)) and the PCDR will not be published until these are closed

(17.13.2). Failing to close the critical conditions within the specified timeline will mean that the production unit must be withdrawn (7.2.8).

- b. Require that at least the minimum level is met within three months from the date that the Critical Condition Reporting Template is sent to the client.
  - i. The team may extend the timeline for a critical condition to a maximum of six months if it determines that achieving the target level may take longer than three months even if the best possible actions are taken.

#### Guidance 17.13.1.b.i

Situations which could justify extending the timeline to the maximum six-month duration would normally involve something that is outside the client's control, such as natural disasters, etc.

- c. Decide if another site visit is needed to close the critical condition.

17.13.2 All critical conditions shall be closed out before the Public Comment Draft Report (PCDR) is published.

### 17.14 Determining the start of the Chain of Custody

17.14.1 The team shall determine if separate Chain of Custody (CoC) certification is required before the first point of sale.

17.14.2 The CAB shall review and document, in detail, the flow of certified product from harvest to sale within the UoA and the associated traceability system which allows product to be traced from first point of sale back to the harvesting/culturing facilities in the UoA.

17.14.3 This shall include:

- a. The traceability documentation at each stage of handling certified product and how product can be linked from each document (e.g. through batch codes, lot codes, etc.).
- b. A detailed description of the systems used to segregate and identify certified product at each stage of handling.

17.14.4 The CAB shall document whether each of the following risks are currently or potentially applicable:

- a. The possibility of mixing or substitution of certified and non-certified product, including product of the same or similar appearance or species, produced within the same UoA.
- b. The possibility of mixing or substitution of certified and non-certified product, type of production/harvest, including product of the same or similar appearance or species, present during production, harvest, transport, storage, or processing activities.
- c. The possibility of subcontractors being used to handle, transport, store, or process certified products.
- d. Any other opportunities where certified product could potentially be mixed, substituted, or mislabelled with non-certified product before the point where product enters the Chain of Custody.

17.14.5 For each applicable risk, the CAB shall:

- a. Clearly document the risk.
- b. Describe any traceability, segregation, or other systems in place to manage and minimise the risk.

17.14.6 If the CAB determines that any risk factors in 17.14.4 are applicable, a separate chain of custody certification should be required, unless the CAB determines that the traceability and segregations systems in place are sufficient to address the risks and to ensure all products identified and sold as certified originate from the harvesting/culturing facilities in the UoA.

- 17.14.7 If the CAB determines that the traceability and segregation systems are not sufficient, separate CoC certification will be required before the first point of sale, before products can be sold as certified or can be eligible to carry the ASC and/or MSC labels.
- 17.14.8 This determination shall remain in force until revised by the CAB in a subsequent audit or until a valid CoC certification is in place.
- 17.14.9 The CAB shall inform the client if separate CoC certification is required for any entity in the UoA and/or UoC.
- 17.14.10 The same CAB that carried out the seaweed assessment shall conduct all necessary CoC audits and certification within the UoA and/or UoC.
- 17.14.11 The CAB shall clearly document in the audit report the determination and the reasons that separate CoC certification is (or is not) required, including a statement confirming whether products are eligible to enter further chains of custody.
- 17.14.12 If the CAB has determined that the traceability systems are sufficient to allow products to enter chain of custody, the CAB shall document:
- a. The intended point of first sale.
  - b. The point from which CoC is required to begin.

## **17.15 Setting the Eligibility Date for under-assessment product**

- 17.15.1 During the audit, the CAB shall determine the specific date (Eligibility Date) from which product from the operation is eligible to be sold as ASC-MSC certified or with the MSC and/or ASC labels.
- 17.15.2 The Eligibility Date can be set as either:
- a. The date of the certification of the UoA as specified on the certificate, or
  - b. The publication date of the PCDR.
- 17.15.3 The Eligibility Date shall be set as the date of the UoA certification where a determination has been made that separate CoC certification is necessary. The CAB shall:
- a. Record this Eligibility Date clearly in the audit report.
  - b. Communicate this date to the client and the ASC-MSC within five days of the determination being made.
- 17.15.4 If the Eligibility Date is set before the certification date, the CAB shall inform the applicant of the requirements for under-assessment products in clause 5.5 of the [Standard](#).

## **17.16 Client Draft Report**

- 17.16.1 The CAB shall issue a Client Draft Report to the client once the production unit has been scored and any conditions and the point at which the products from the UoA may enter further chains of custody have been determined.
- 17.16.2 The CAB shall use the ASC-MSC Seaweed Audit Reporting Template to create the report.
- 17.16.3 The report shall include:
- a. All written submissions from stakeholders (if any) received during the audit and a summary of verbal submissions received during the site visit.
  - b. Explicit responses from the team to these submissions, stating how stakeholder feedback has been taken into consideration.
  - c. Any conditions raised.
  - d. Any references used to support statements in the evaluation tables of the reports shall be included in the "References" section of the table and an in-text reference (e.g. number or author, date, etc.) made to the relevant source.

- 17.16.4 The CAB shall give the client time to:
  - a. Provide comments and any objective evidence that would lead to a change in the outcome of the audit and/or conditions raised.
  - b. Develop and submit the client action plan to address any conditions raised.
- 17.16.5 If an action plan to address any conditions raised is not received, the production unit shall be withdrawn from audit.
- 17.16.6 Any comments made by the client and the team shall be documented and retained by the CAB and shall be available upon request to any party.
- 17.16.7 The CAB shall be solely responsible for the content of all reports, including the content of any confidential annexes.

## 17.17 Public Comment Draft Report

- 17.17.1 Following the submission of client comments and client action plan and the closure of any critical conditions, where appropriate, the team shall prepare the Public Comment Draft Report (PCDR).
- 17.17.2 The PCDR shall include, in addition to the items specified in [Section 17.16](#):
  - a. The action plan prepared by the client to address the conditions raised (if any).
  - b. The draft determination on whether the applicant will be recommended for certification.
- 17.17.3 The CAB shall use the ASC-MSC Seaweed Audit Reporting Template to create the report.
- 17.17.4 The CAB shall submit the PCDR to the ASC-MSC for publishing on the website.
- 17.17.5 The CAB shall submit the PCDR in English.
  - 17.17.5.1 A reduced, translated version of the PCDR including the following sections: Executive Summary, Scoring Table, Conditions (if any conditions raised) and Draft Determination, should also be submitted in the national or most common language spoken in the area where the production unit is located.
- 17.17.6 The PCDR shall be made available for comment by stakeholders and the ASC-MSC Seaweed Quality Assurance Team for a period of at least 30 days.
- 17.17.7 The CAB shall:
  - a. Notify stakeholders once the PCDR is published on the website.
  - b. Inform stakeholders that they should provide objective evidence in support of any additional claims or any claimed errors of fact.

## 17.18 Final report

- 17.18.1 The team shall review the PCDR, taking account of any stakeholder and Quality Assurance Team comments received during the consultation period, and revise the report as appropriate to create a Final Report.
  - 17.18.1.1 Changes to scoring shall only be made where:
    - a. Justified by stakeholder and/or Quality Assurance Team comments received during the consultation.
    - b. The information presented to justify scoring changes was available at the time of publication of the PCDR.
- 17.18.2 The CAB shall use the ASC-MSC Seaweed Audit Reporting Template to create the report.
- 17.18.3 The team shall include in the Final Report:
  - a. All written submissions received during the consultation phase as an annex.

- b. Explicit responses from the team to each submission.
- 17.18.4 The team shall identify specifically:
- a. What (if any) changes to scoring, rationales, conditions, or determination have been made.
  - b. Where changes are suggested but no change is made, including a substantiated justification.
- 17.18.5 The CAB shall give the client time to make any amendments to their action plan if changes to scores resulted in conditions being added or removed.
- 17.18.5.1 Once the amended client action plan is complete, it shall be included in the Final Report.
- 17.18.6 The team shall consider the changes made in the Final Report and shall confirm or amend the draft determination to certify or not the production unit.
- 17.18.7 The CAB shall submit the Final Report to the ASC-MSC for posting on the website.
- 17.18.8 The CAB shall actively notify stakeholders involved in the initial audit process of the existence of the Final Report.

## 17.19 Objections

### Guidance 17.19

Only submissions by stakeholders that have raised the issue previously during the assessment (announcement, at the site visit or at PCDR) may be accepted as an objection.

- 17.19.1 An objection to the certification decision may be lodged in conformity with the Objections Procedure found in [Annex B](#) during a period of 10 working days from the posting of the Final Report on the ASC-MSC website.
- 17.19.2 The CAB shall not make a certification decision until:
- a. The 10-day period for objection is completed and no objections have been received, or
  - b. The objection procedure has finished in conformity with [Annex B](#).

## 17.20 Public Certification Report

- 17.20.1 At the end of the audit process, the CAB shall finalise a Public Certification Report that shall incorporate the Final Report and, if relevant, any written decisions arising from any objection/s.
- 17.20.2 The CAB shall use the ASC-MSC Seaweed Audit Reporting Template to create the report.
- 17.20.3 The Public Certification Report shall confirm the CAB's determination to either certify or fail each UoA in the production unit.
- 17.20.4 The Public Certification Report shall state which entities are allowed to use the certificate that is issued to the client.
- 17.20.4.1 Only seaweed harvested by those operations that are identified by reference to or on a valid certificate by the CAB shall be eligible for CoC certification and subsequent use of the ASC and/or MSC labels.

## 17.21 Certification decision and certificate issue

- 17.21.1 The CAB shall submit the Public Certification Report to the ASC-MSC for posting on the website.

- 17.21.2 After the Public Certification Report and certification decision have been posted on the website, the CAB shall issue the certificate as per Section 4.9 with a maximum duration of three years from the date of issue.
- 17.21.3 The CAB shall provide a statement for MSC-ASC to post on their website defining:
- a. Which parties (vessels, fleets, farms and/or any other client group members, including named companies) are currently eligible to access the certificate.
  - b. Which points of landing or other transfer may be used for the sale of seaweed from the certified production unit into further Chains of Custody.
- 17.21.4 The CAB shall ensure that when changes to the information contained on a production unit certificate are made that they provide the updated copy of the certificate to the ASC-ASC for posting on its website within 10 days of changes occurring.

## 17.22 Production units that fail the audit

- 17.22.1 Where the CAB makes a decision not to award certification and fail the production unit, the Public Certification Report released to the public:
- a. Shall not specify any mandatory conditions or defined actions that would need to be undertaken before the production unit could be reconsidered for certification in the future.
  - b. Shall outline draft and non-binding conditions for any PIs that score less than the target level.
  - c. Shall clearly specify that the conditions outlined are non-binding and serve to provide an indication of the actions that may have been required would the production unit have been certified.
  - d. Shall not include an agreement from the client to address the condition.
- 17.22.2 If a failed production unit re-enters initial audit, the CAB shall repeat again the initial audit process, including preparing full versions of the Client Draft Report, Public Comment Draft Report, Final Report and Public Certification Report.
- 17.22.2.1 The CAB shall develop such reports in full and shall not report only on elements revised between the initial and subsequent audits of the production unit.
- 17.22.2.2 The CAB shall specify in the reports that:
- a. The production unit has re-entered initial audit.
  - b. Summarise the details of the initial audit, including:
    - i. The results of the original audit.
    - ii. The date of the original determination not to certify.
    - iii. Identify those PIs for which scoring and/or the rationale for scoring has changed from the original audit.

## 17.23 Surveillance

### Surveillance audit timing

- 17.23.1 The CAB shall carry out a surveillance audit, which includes a site visit, to monitor the certificate holder's continued conformity with the Standard at least annually from the date of certificate issuance.

#### Guidance 17.23.1

The site visit can take place at the location where the production unit takes place, but it can also be where the client is based. Either location is sufficient if the necessary information can be collected

through face to face meetings with stakeholders, including scientists, managers, client employees and community members.

- 17.23.2 The CAB shall not conduct the annual surveillance audit earlier or later than six months from the anniversary date of the certificate issuance.

### Preparing for a surveillance audit

- 17.23.3 The CAB shall submit an announcement of the upcoming surveillance audit for posting on the ASC-MSC website.

17.23.3.1 The announcement shall be posted at least 30 days before the date of the site visit.

17.23.3.2 The announcement shall be prepared using the ASC-MSC Seaweed Audit Announcement Template.

- 17.23.4 The CAB shall appoint an audit team with expertise that is comparable to the original audit team when conducting surveillance audits.

17.23.4.1 If team members are different to the original team, the selection shall be justified in writing in the Surveillance Announcement and their relevant skills and/or expertise documented.

### Guidance 17.23.4

For instance, if the scope of the surveillance audit will not cover social aspects (P4 and P5), a social auditor may not be needed.

### Surveillance audit activities

- 17.23.5 During each surveillance site visit, the team shall engage face to face with the client and stakeholders.

- 17.23.6 During each surveillance site visit, the team shall assess:

- a. Changes, if any, to the management system.
- b. The capacity of the management system to manage any change in scope, size or complexity within the certified production unit.
- c. Legal and regulatory compliance, including any changes that have occurred in legislation or regulations.
- d. Changes in science relevant to the fishery.
- e. Any complaints or allegations of non-conformity with the ASC-MSC seaweed requirements.
- f. A sample of sites and records to verify that the management systems are effective and consistent covering any high-risk areas or personnel changes,
- g. Any changes affecting the operation's traceability, Chain of Custody, or the ability to trace certified products back to the unit of certification, and
- h. Progress and performance against outstanding conditions.

- 17.23.7 The team shall:

- a. Examine relevant objective evidence relating to each condition, including the client's delivery of its client action plan.
- b. Close out the condition only if the PI is found to fully meet the target level.
- c. Provide a rationale for re-scoring the PI and closing out the condition in the Surveillance Report.

- 17.23.8 In cases where conditions are not closed out within the specified timelines and are considered behind target, the team should either:
- a. Approve an extension of condition timelines (beyond the normal one-year limit as per [17.12.3.1](#)), or
    - i. The team should only approve an extension of condition timelines in cases where it is satisfied, based on objective evidence, that all efforts have been made or are being made by the client to demonstrate conformity.
    - ii. The team shall record the justification in the Surveillance Report.
  - b. Not approve an extension of condition timelines.
    - i. If the team determines that condition timelines should not be changed, the team shall specify the remedial actions including any milestones that are required to bring the condition back on track within 12 months.
    - ii. If the team determines that progress against a condition is not back “on target” within 12 months of falling “behind target”, the team shall apply the requirements related to suspension and withdrawal in [Section 7.2](#).
- 17.23.9 If the requirements of any condition are changed, and/or a score changed, the team shall provide written justification for this in the Surveillance Report.

### Surveillance Audit Report

- 17.23.10 Within 60 days of the completing of the site visit the CAB shall submit to the ASC-MSC a Surveillance Report for posting on the website using the ASC-MSC Seaweed Surveillance Reporting Template.
- 17.23.11 The report shall be in English and the national or most common language spoken in the area where the operation is located.
- 17.23.12 The CAB shall send the surveillance report to the client along with any requests or conditions that may arise from surveillance activities.

### Expedited audits

#### Guidance

Additional “expedited” audits may be held in the special situations outlined in this section. They can take the form of a desk review or include a site visit and can be either announced or unannounced depending on the situation.

- 17.23.13 The CAB shall conduct an expedited audit during an initial assessment or when certified for one or more of the following reasons:
- a. The CAB becomes aware of changes in the production unit that may cause a change in the certification status, and/or
  - b. Significant new information becomes available in relation to the circumstances of the fishery, including during the period between the initial site visit and the issue of a certificate, which is likely to be material to the certification status.
- 17.23.14 CABs shall ensure that an onsite audit is only triggered when the information available supports the conclusion that an actual material change has taken place in the status or management of the production unit.
- 17.23.15 The CAB may notify the ASC-MSC by submitting the Announcement Template prior to the audit for posting on the ASC-MSC website.
- 17.23.15.1 For expedited audits that are to be announced, the CAB may submit the Announcement Template to the ASC-MSC fewer than 30 days prior to the audit.
  - 17.23.15.2 No announcement shall be published prior to an unannounced audit.

- 17.23.16 The CAB may choose to notify none, some, or all potential stakeholders and interested parties prior to an unannounced audit.

## **17.24 Re-certification audit**

- 17.24.1 The CAB shall start the re-certification audit of a certified production unit before the expiry of the existing certificate.
- 17.24.2 The exact timing and planning of the re-certification audit shall remain the responsibility of the CAB, in consultation with the client.
- 17.24.3 When conducting a re-certification audit of a certified production unit, the CAB shall:
- a. Apply all the steps specified for an initial audit in the Seaweed Certification and Accreditation Requirements that is in force at the time of the start of the re-certification audit process.
  - b. Apply interpretations of the relevant Standard that are current at the time of the audit.
  - c. Consider all Surveillance Reports, outcomes, progress against conditions, and inputs from stakeholders and interested parties.
  - d. Verify that corrective actions taken allows for the closure of open conditions.

## **17.25 Extension of certificate validity**

- 17.25.1 The CAB may extend the validity of a certificate, by up to three months in cases where:
- a. The certificate holder has applied to the CAB for recertification and the application has been accepted by the CAB not later than five days before the end of the period of validity of the certificate,
  - b. There would be no product present at the time when the recertification site visit would otherwise be due, and
  - c. The CAB issued the previous certificate.
- 17.25.2 The CAB shall update the ASC-MSC seaweed database not later than five days before the expiry of the existing certificate, if certificate validity will be extended.

## Annex A – Auditor qualifications and competencies

**Table A.1 – Team qualifications and competencies**

A.1 The team shall between them possess the following qualifications and competencies to perform the audit being undertaken:

Qualification/competency	Requirement
<p><b>A.1.1</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. For audits involving wild-harvested seaweed only (production category A in Table 2 of the <a href="#">Standard</a>), the audit team shall have:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Five or more years' experience applying relevant stock assessment techniques being used by the seaweed production unit under audit, or</li> <li>ii. Primary authorship of two peer reviewed stock assessments of a type used by the seaweed organisation under audit, and</li> <li>iii. Five or more years' experience working with the biology and population dynamics of the target or species with similar biology, and</li> <li>iv. Five or more years' experience in research into, policy analysis for, or management of seaweed production unit impacts on aquatic ecosystems to show an ability to interpret scientific data relating to wild harvest impacts on the ecosystems, and</li> <li>v. Five or more years' experience as a practicing seaweed wild harvest management and/or seaweed wild harvest/policy analyst which shows an ability to identify likely problems for the seaweed operation under P1 and P2 that would arise from poor management and a good understanding of the types of management system/s and laws applicable to the seaweed under audit.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>A.1.2</b>      <b>Knowledge of national and local laws</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The team shall have relevant knowledge of national and local laws that apply to the organisation being audited that includes but is not limited to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Environmental laws.</li> <li>ii. Workplace safety laws.</li> <li>iii. Labour laws.</li> <li>iv. Health and safety laws.</li> <li>v. Laws governing ownership and use of land and water.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Qualification/competency	Requirement
	vi. Licences and permits.
<b>A.1.3 Environmental management knowledge</b>	a. The team shall have relevant knowledge of environmental science and technology, environmental management methods and aspects of operations that includes but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The seaweed species or other subject of the Standard being audited.</li> <li>ii. Environmental issues in the area of the operation.</li> <li>iii. The management of natural resources.</li> <li>iv. Environmental protection.</li> <li>v. Environmental monitoring tools and technologies.</li> <li>vi. The interaction of the activities, products, services, and operations with the environment.</li> <li>vii. Sector specific terminology.</li> <li>viii. Environmental aspects and impacts.</li> <li>ix. Methods for evaluating the significance of environmental aspects.</li> <li>x. Critical aspects of operational processes, products and services.</li> <li>xi. Monitoring and measurement techniques.</li> <li>xii. Technologies and methods for the prevention of pollution.</li> <li>xiii. Social aspects of applicant operations and their surrounding communities.</li> </ul>
<b>A.1.4 Management systems and reference documents</b>	a. The team shall have a general knowledge of management systems standards (such as ISO 9001), applicable procedures or other management systems documents used as audit criteria.
<b>A.1.5 Language</b>	a. The team shall be able to read and communicate in the language/s used by managers, administrators and workers of the organisation being audited.

Qualification/competency	Requirement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. If an interpreter is needed, she/he shall be independent from (not provided by) the organisation being audited.</li> </ul>
<b>A.1.6</b> <b>Traceability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. At least one team member shall successfully complete the ASC/MSC Traceability training course every three years.</li> </ul>
<b>A.1.7</b> <b>Use of the RBF (for wild only, when applicable)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. One of the team shall pass the MSC's RBF training course every three years, and</li> <li>b. The individual shall be able to demonstrate an understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. When the RBF can be used.</li> <li>ii. How to implement RBF components.</li> <li>iii. How to engage stakeholders effectively when the RBF is used.</li> <li>iv. How Performance Indicators are scored when the RBF is used.</li> <li>v. The reporting of the RBF process and outcomes.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Table A.2 – Individual auditor and technical expert competencies and qualifications**

A.2 All auditors and technical experts shall possess the following competencies and qualifications:

Qualification/competency	Requirement
<p><b>A.2.1 Education and work experience</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. For audits involving farmed seaweed only (production categories Bii and Cii in Table 2 of the <a href="#">Standard</a>), the environmental auditor shall have:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. At least a post-high school diploma or equivalent (minimum course duration of two years) in a discipline related to the scope of certification, or</li> <li>ii. At least two years of experience relevant to the operation.</li> </ul> </li> <li>b. For audits involving wild-harvested seaweed only (production category A in Table 2 of the <a href="#">Standard</a>), the environmental auditor shall have:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. A university degree in fisheries or marine conservation biology, or natural resources or environmental management or relevant field, e.g. economics, mathematics, statistics, or</li> <li>ii. Five years' management or research experience in a marine conservation biology or fisheries, natural resources or environmental management position.</li> </ul> </li> <li>c. For audits involving both farmed and wild-harvested seaweed (production categories Bi and Ci in Table 2 of the <a href="#">Standard</a>) the environmental auditor shall meet all the education and work experience.</li> </ul>
<p><b>A.2.2 Auditor training</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. All team members shall:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Have knowledge of the purpose and procedure of conducting audits.</li> <li>ii. Have knowledge of the Standard and the CAR through passing the ASC-MSC team member training course every three years<sup>3</sup>.</li> <li>iii. Pass training on updates to the Standard and CAR prior to undertaking audits against the new requirements.</li> <li>iv. Be trained and competent in accordance with the CAB procedures as needed for the role that is to be undertaken by the team member.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Derogation: Until the ASC-MSC notifies CABs that the online seaweed auditor training is available, only one environmental auditor and one social auditor are required to pass the ASC-MSC team member training course.

**Table A.3 – Team Leader qualifications and competencies**

A.3 In addition to the requirements for the overall team in [Table A.1](#) and individual auditor and technical expert in [Table A.2](#), team leaders shall possess the following qualifications and competencies:

Qualification/competency	Requirement
<p><b>A.3.1 Education and work experience</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. For audits involving farmed seaweed only (production categories Bii and Cii in Table 2 of the <a href="#">Standard</a>), the team leader shall have the same education and work experience as the individual auditor and technical experts (see <a href="#">A2.1i and ii</a>).</li> <li>b. For audits involving wild-harvested seaweed only (production category A in Table 2 of the <a href="#">Standard</a>), the team leader shall have:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. A degree or equivalent in business economics, science or technical subject, e.g. supply chain and logistics management, food/seafood science and fisheries science, or</li> <li>ii. Five years' experience in the wild harvest seaweed sector related to the tasks under the responsibility of the team leader.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>A.3.2 Audit experience</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The individual shall initially have completed a minimum of 25 days of site visit experience in conducting audits (either for social or environmental compliance).</li> <li>b. For audits involving farmed seaweed only (production categories Bii and Cii in Table 2 of the <a href="#">Standard</a>), the individual shall have:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Undertaken at least two satisfactory audits as an acting audit team leader, shadowed by and under the supervision of a competent team leader.</li> <li>ii. Conducted at least five ASC audits or have been a member of an audit team for 10 audit days, for equivalent aquaculture audits at more than one production facility.</li> </ul> </li> <li>c. For audits involving wild-harvested seaweed only (production category A in Table 2 of the <a href="#">Standard</a>), the individual shall have undertaken at least two wild seaweed harvest audit or surveillance site visits as a team member in the last five years.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Such site visits may have been conducted for assessments against the <a href="#">MSC Fisheries Standard</a> or the <a href="#">ASC-MSC Seaweed (Algae) Standard</a>.</li> </ul> </li> <li>d. For audits involving both farmed and wild seaweed (production categories Bi and Ci in Table 2 of the <a href="#">Standard</a>):</li> </ul>

Qualification/competency	Requirement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The Lead Auditor shall meet the ASC audit experience requirements, and the other team members the MSC audit experience requirements detailed in <a href="#">A.2.1</a> (Education and work experience), or</li> <li>ii. The Lead Auditor shall meet the MSC audit experience requirements, and the other team members the ASC audit experience requirements detailed in <a href="#">A.2.1</a> (Education and work experience).</li> </ul>
<p><b>A.3.3      Lead auditor training</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The individual shall have successfully completed a Lead Assessor training course based on ISO 19011 principles that has a minimum duration of 37 hours. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The certificate must specify the course content and duration.</li> <li>ii. Successful completion must be indicated on the certificate.</li> <li>iii. The Lead Assessor training course must cover: applicable standards on quality auditing; auditing techniques; focus on the audits (psychological aspects and communication) and reporting; and must also include a practical case study.</li> </ul> </li> <li>b. The individual shall have knowledge of the Standard and the CAR through passing the ASC-MSC lead auditor training course every three years, and</li> <li>c. The individual shall pass lead auditor training on updates to the seaweed requirements within three months of the effective date of new requirements and prior to undertaking audits against new requirements.</li> <li>d. For audits involving farmed seaweed only (production categories Bii and Cii in Table 2 of the <a href="#">Standard</a>), the individual shall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Have an audit peer witnessed by a qualified ASC lead auditor no less than once in each three-year period.</li> <li>ii. Lead no less than two ASC audits per year to maintain lead auditor qualification.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Table A.4 – Social auditor qualifications and competencies**

A.4 Social auditors conducting audits of social requirements in ASC-MSC seaweed production units shall possess the following qualifications and competencies:

Qualification/competency	Requirement
<p><b>A.4.1 Social auditing qualification</b></p>	<p>a. The individual shall have one or more of the following qualifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Has completed an SA8000 four- or five-day auditor course that is formally approved by SAAS plus continuing professional development courses as required by SAAS and has successfully completed a three-day SAAS approved course within two years of having taken the four- or five-day basic course.</li> <li>ii. Has completed the Verité five day “EICC Labor &amp; Ethics Lead Auditor Course” or the “Lead Auditor Accreditation Training: Investigative Skills Workshop” or the five days “Agricultural Labor Practices Social Auditor Training (APL).</li> <li>iii. Is recognised as a lead auditor for FI (Fairtrade International) audits for Trade and Hired Labour Standards by FLOCERT.</li> <li>iv. Has completed the Worldwide Responsible Apparel Producers (WRAP) five-day “Auditor/Lead Auditor Social System Training Course”.</li> <li>v. Has been trained and approved for auditing GSCP-benchmarked schemes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>A.4.2 Social auditing experience</b></p>	<p>a. The individual shall have participated in at least two audits in agriculture or aquaculture.</p> <p>b. The individual has participated in at least two audits for one or more of the following schemes within the past 12 months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI).</li> <li>ii. Electronic Industry Citizenship Coalition (EICC) Electronic Industry Code of Conduct.</li> <li>iii. Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) Base Code.</li> <li>iv. Fair Trade USA.</li> <li>v. Fairtrade International (FI).</li> <li>vi. Goodweave (Rugmark).</li> <li>vii. International Council of Toy Industries (ICTI) – Code of Business Practice.</li> </ul>

Qualification/competency	Requirement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>viii. Social Accountability International (SAI) SA 8000.</li> <li>ix. Worldwide Responsible Apparel Producers (WRAP) – Code of Conduct.</li> <li>x. Any schemes that are GSCP-benchmarked (publicly available on GSCP website) for reference code, auditing process and methodology and audit competence.</li> <li>xi. The individual shall conduct at least two ASC social audits per year to maintain his/her qualification.</li> </ul>
<b>A.4.3 ASC-MSC auditor training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The individual shall have knowledge of the Standard and CAR through passing the ASC-MSC training course every three years.</li> <li>b. The individual shall undertake additional training on changes to the Standard as appropriate.</li> </ul>
<b>A.4.4 Competencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The individual shall have knowledge of local labour and human rights legislation.</li> <li>b. The individual shall have familiarity with local customs.</li> <li>c. The individual shall speak and read the primary local language.</li> <li>d. The individual shall be able to manage relationships with workers and managers.</li> </ul>

## Annex B – Objection Procedure

### Guidance Annex B – Objection Procedure

The ASC-MSC methodology offers relevant stakeholders the possibility to provide input at various moments in the ASC-MSC certification process. The auditor must take this information into account when assessing the production unit, including when making the certification decision. Although the ASC-MSC's procedures have been developed to be as fair, inclusive and transparent as possible, different views may arise. In these cases, stakeholders that have raised an issue previously during the assessment (announcement, at the site visit or at PCDR) can make use of the objection procedure as set out below.

- B.1 A stakeholder (including the client) (thereinafter “the objector”) shall contact the Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) and cc: ASC-MSC, to file the objection.
- B.2 The Notice of Objection must be submitted no later than 10 working days after the date on which the Final Report and Determination is posted on the ASC-MSC website.
  - B.2.1 The Notice of Objection must be submitted to [seaweedstandard@msc.org](mailto:seaweedstandard@msc.org) using the Seaweed Notice of Objection Template.
- B.3 The objector must set out clearly and precisely the basis of the objection.
  - B.3.1 Only topics that were raised by the stakeholder in the written feedback submitted during the announcement of the audit, at site visit or at PCDR can be the subject of an objection.

### Guidance B.3.1

This is to ensure that stakeholders provide all evidence/information to the team at the outset of the audit or during the subsequent input stages, and not only at the objection stage.

- B.4 The Notice of Objection must:
  - a. Identify the alleged errors in the Final Report and Determination.
  - b. Explain in sufficient detail why it is claimed that the alleged errors were material to the determination or the fairness of the audit.
  - c. Include a summary of the evidence to be relied on in support of the objection.
  - d. Include only information that existed in final (not draft) form in the public domain at the time the PCDR was published on the ASC-MSC website.
    - i. Information that came into existence after that date cannot be used as a basis for objection.
- B.5 The objector and the CAB shall initially strive to settle the objection in an informal manner, e.g. by the CAB considering the additional information provided, etc.
- B.6 If an agreement is reached informally, the CAB, in consultation with the objector, shall make such changes and revisions to the Final Report and determination as agreed and shall proceed to prepare a Public Certification Report (PCR).
  - B.6.1 The PCR shall indicate what has been changed as a result of the informal agreement reached with the objector.
- B.7 If the CAB and objector cannot reach an agreement informally within 10 working days of submitting the objections, the objector may re-submit the Notice of Objection, using this CAB's complaint procedure (which all accredited CABs must have in place as per [7.3.3](#) and [7.3.4](#)).
- B.8 The CAB shall update the Final Report and determination stating the outcome of the complaint procedure in the PCR.
  - B.8.1 The PCR shall indicate what has been changed as a result of the CABs complaint procedure.

### Guidance B.8

This procedure is expected to result in a satisfactory solution in most of the cases.

- B.9 If the objector and the CAB cannot reach an agreement by means of the CAB's complaint procedure, the objector can file a complaint against the CAB with Accreditation Services International (see [www.accreditation-services.com/dispute-management](http://www.accreditation-services.com/dispute-management)).

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End of document

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