As ASC prepares to celebrate the fifth anniversary of its first certified farm in August of 2017, the programme has much to celebrate and look forward to.

The ASC has enjoyed another period of rapid uptake with the number of farms growing from 272 to 469 year over year. At the time of writing, the programme includes 198 salmon farms, 85 shrimp farms, 62 bivalve farms, 41 tilapia farms, 41 trout farms, 38 pangasius farms and 4 abalone farms. As before, salmon farms continue to comprise the majority of the producers in the programme. The influence of the programme is moving the market as never before and, based on an analysis of the most recent FAO numbers and current production volumes, nearly 25 percent of all farmed salmon produced globally are ASC certified.

The strength of the standard was recognised with the recent announcement that Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch recommends ASC Certified Salmon as equal to, or better than, their Good Alternative rating. This deferral to the ASC from one of the most highly regarded conservation organisations in the world is independent confirmation of the rigour and credibility of the salmon standard. It is also an example of the increasing number of collaborations occurring between certifiers and ratings organisations.

More and more, those wanting to improve the performance of the seafood industry are working together to recognise their peers and leverage synergies between programs. This effort is part of a broader strategy of working across the industry to spark change. The ASCs long time collaboration with the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is another example of how the organisation works with others to broaden their reach.

The benefits of the ASC and MSC partnership were enjoyed by both spectators and athletes at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. In a public ceremony in 2013, the Olympic Organising Committee made a commitment to supply ASC and MSC certified seafood at the Games whenever possible. Thanks to their leadership, last summer marked the first time ever that both certified wild
and responsibly farmed seafood were featured at the events. Brazilian tilapia producer Netuno International, a global leader in the production and export of seafood, became the first ASC certified farm in Brazil in the months leading up to the opening ceremonies, and were selected as an official supplier to Rio 2016. Los Fiordos also supplied ASC certified salmon to the Olympic Village, giving those in attendance a variety of certified seafood to choose from.

The partnership with Netuno is enduring, and retailer JBS launched its first consumer campaign featuring the certified product and the ASC logo in the spring of 2017. Netuno plans to certify more farms in the future, and they and other retailers in South America, are an example of what can be achieved through ASC certification.

In addition to establishing the first farm and commercial partnership in Brazil, the ASC formally began to build a programme in Asia with the announcement of their partnership with Qingdao Tao Ran Environmental Science and Technology. The group has been contracted to lead strategy implementation and to expand the adoption of ASC farm standards in China. The firm’s staff also works seamlessly with the ASC team to promote the availability of ASC certified seafood for consumers within China, and in the many countries that buy aquaculture products from China.

As the largest aquaculture producer in the world, China has significant importance for ASC. In the coming years, the programme will focus on increasing the number of certified farms in the country and the number of regionally important species that can be certified by introducing new standards.

Staff have been added in other countries of strategic importance to the ASC, including Australia and the United States and Canada. The latter two countries are being served by Peter Redmond, who joined the organisation in late May to lead commercial engagements and outreach for ASC in North America.

Peter is a seafood industry veteran who has built a strong network amongst seafood buyers and suppliers over the course of a distinguished career in sustainability and procurement, including 17-years at Wal-Mart, the largest retailer in the world, where he was responsible for implementing their seafood sustainability commitments.

Making inroads to new countries

Since June of last year, the ASC has welcomed farms from new countries, including France, Spain, New Zealand, Iceland and, as previously mentioned, Brazil. With each new farm certified, the impacts of the fish farming industry are further reduced and more workers and enjoy benefits provided through the ASC certification including fair wages, safety training and balanced working hours.

In January, Huitres Favier Earl has become the first farm in France to achieve ASC certification in France. The oyster farm is located on the left bank of the Seudre River, in the heart of the Marennes Oleron Basin, in Southern-West France. The company was established in 1966 and has been overseen by five generations of oyster farmers. With production of between 9 and 10 million oysters each year, Huitres Favier Earl supplies to the French retailer Carrefour and exports to many
different countries in Europe, including Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, and Italy.

New Zealand’s first certified farm is also the fourth abalone producer to be ASC certified. Moana New Zealand Blue Abalone is located in Bream Bay. Production is land based, but supported by seawater which the farm accesses via a natural deep-water intake. The water is rich in natural nutrients and gives the abalone a distinctive brilliant blue shell that protects the black outer and clear white inner flesh. The farm spawns, sets, grows and processes as much as 140 tonnes of product per year.

Artic Fish captured first in country status when its rainbow trout farms achieved ASC certification in Iceland. The sites at Dyrafjordur and Önundafjordur are both part of Artic Fish’s sea farm operations on the Westfjords, a large peninsula in north western Iceland. The producers harness the naturally occurring warm springs to use in their hatchery and use renewable energy whenever possible. Because Iceland’s ecosystem provides a natural inhibition of viral diseases and most pests, Artic Fish does not use any antibiotics during its production.

Spanish farm Piscifactoría del Alba is located in the north of Spain, in the Principality of Asturias. The company has been dedicated to the production of rainbow trout for more than 50 years. They became the first farm in that country to become ASC certified to show their respect for the environment and those who live near, and work on, the farm. Piscifactoría del Alba supplies trout to Colruyt in Spain and exports to multiple European markets including Belgium, Denmark, and Germany.

Shrimp is amongst the most popular aquaculture species in Thailand. Best Aquaculture Partners distinguished themselves as one of the best producers in the country when they became the first to achieve ASC certification for their shrimp farm in the Suratthanne province. The news was met with appreciation from retailers around the world, including LIDL International. Upon hearing the news, Florian Schütze, Head of Sustainability for Purchasing at LIDL International, noted the importance of Thailand as a source of shrimp and the fact that ASC plays an essential role in helping LIDL to meet their sustainability targets.

Expanding support from hotels and supermarkets

From the very beginning, ASC has enjoyed the support and recognition of retailers from many parts of the world. In the last year commitments to source ASC certified product have increased and buyers - and, of course, consumers - now have access to ASC certified seafood in more locations than ever.

Hilton Worldwide committed to an ambitious new procurement policy featuring multi-year goals to source more certified seafood. Hilton will source at least 25 percent of its total global seafood volume for owned, managed and leased properties by 2022 from either ASC or MSC certified producers. The remaining seafood will be sourced from fisheries and farms working toward ASC and MSC certification, comprehensive fishery and aquaculture improvement projects, or those listed as "green" on WWF regional seafood guides.

Another giant in the hospitality industry, Park Hyatt, has achieved ASC chain of custody certification for its Tokyo location. The hotel is the first in Japan to be certified and celebrated the occasion last summer with a special menu featuring certified seafood.

On the other side of the globe, Norwegian owned Nordic Choice Hotel Group also became ASC certified for all its hotel restaurants in Norway and Sweden. Their guests can now enjoy sustainably fished and responsibly farmed seafood at almost 200 locations.

Responding to demands to bring new species into the programme

The ASC is a market-based programme, and the number of requests received to add new species is an important consideration when determining whether to add a new standard. Since the
programme launched in 2010, farmers and retailers from numerous countries have petitioned for an expansion in the number of species eligible for certification. The ASC has responded to demand by thoroughly researching and considering how best to serve stakeholders, and this year proceed with the introduction and development of a multitude of new standards for farmed fish, aquafeed and seaweed.

The ASC Seriola and Cobia standard launched in November of last year. The standard is the culmination of more than 8 years of development by farmers, scientists, conservationists, and others and was created in an open, inclusive and transparent process.

The standard was developed for both seriola and cobia because production methods for the two species are similar and the knowledge and expertise necessary to create a standard are the same.

Most Seriola is farmed in Japan, but farms can also be found in Australia, South America and the United States among many other regions. Cobia production has increased greatly in recent years and it has become an important aquaculture species in the United States, Puerto Rico, Belize and many parts of Asia.

Additional species will be added when the three new standards for tropical marine finfish, sea bass, sea bream and meagre, and flat fish are completed. All three are currently in public consultation and will significantly expand the amount of aquaculture production eligible for certification worldwide.

Aquaculture gives the world more than just seafood—it is also the primary method of producing seaweed. Seaweeds and other algae are integral to our daily life. They are used widely as food, in cosmetics and fertilizers, and are processed to form components for products we use every day, including toothpaste. They also play a critical role in our aquatic ecosystems, providing food, shelter and habitats for a wide range of organisms including fish, shellfish, marine invertebrates and corals.

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation around 25 million tonnes of seaweeds and other algae are produced each year. A portion of the industry is wild harvested, however most seaweed is either entirely or partially raised on farms. At present, seaweed aquaculture represents nearly 95 percent of production around the world and all manner of production are growing rapidly to meet increasing demand.

The ASC and MSC are working together on a joint global standard for certifying seaweed operations. The standard will contribute to the health of the world’s aquatic ecosystems by promoting environmentally sustainable and socially responsible use of seaweed resources. At the time of writing, the standard is in public consultation and is expected to be completed in late 2017.

The ASC Feed Standard will define requirements for not only factory practices, but also for the three main ingredient groups used in aqua feed: marine ingredients, terrestrial plant ingredients and terrestrial animal ingredients. The marine ingredient requirements for ASC Feed will require that feed mills secure materials from more sustainable sources over time. This will enable fisheries on various sustainability levels to join the programme and continually improve their performance and buyer requirements. This model ensures that a strong incentive is sent to fisheries that are starting to improve their sustainability performance, and it also provides a marketplace for those that are already further along on this development.

In addition to addressing concerns with marine ingredients, the standard will establish a framework for the use of more sustainable soy and other terrestrial plant ingredients that were previously ignored. The total volume of plant derived ingredients in global aquafeed production accounts for 75-80% of feed components yet no standard has set sustainability goals for these components. The ASC feed standard will take a comprehensive approach to all materials in order to set a more sustainable future for fish feed.
To assure that the approach is realistic, and that the requirements are clearly written, pilots are being conducted. A second draft of the ASC Feed Standard is currently in review and will be available for public comments in the summer of 2017.

**Strengthening existing standards and introducing new processes**

Beyond the creation of new standards, in late 2015 the ASC launched an Operational Review for the salmon, tilapia and pangasius standards. The reviews examined each of the three certification protocols to ensure that they continue to include best practices and the latest science in order that they remain as effective as possible.

The review of the tilapia and salmon standards are complete and updates to the pangasius standard will be published shortly. In the case of the salmon standard, the ASC updated or added 10 indicators to further improve the environmental and social performance of farms in the programme, including a reduction in the amount of wild fish allowed in the aquafeed used for farmed salmon.

As the majority of global aquaculture production is done by small to medium-sized farmers, it is vital to ensure that the ASC programme evolves to accommodate farms of all sizes. In order to meet their needs, the ASC has introduced Group Certification methodology. The methodology is comprised of two parts, the first details requirements for the Group Management Body (Group) and the second applies to the Conformity Assessment Body (CAB).

A Group is formed when a number of producers join together in order to become certified. In order to effectively manage the collection of farms, leadership of the Group is assigned to a select subset of participants known as the Group Management Body. Critical aspects of becoming certified, including education and compliance with ASC Standards, managing relationships with the CAB and recording all sales of certified product falls to the Group Management Body.

The CAB conducts audits of the Group. Areas of responsibility include thorough audits of the management system and activities, and examination of the records kept by the Group Management Body. In addition, the CAB conducts audits of select Group members and their production sites using a risk-based analysis. The goal of the sample site audits is to verify member compliance and ensure reliability and consistency across the Group.

The ASC is also finalising the Multi-Site Certification methodology to enable companies owning five to 50 sites within the same jurisdiction to achieve concurrent certification for all locations. The goal is to achieve the maximum level of assurance in a credible yet efficient method that can be applied consistently across different farms.

To qualify for Multi-Site Certification, the organisation must have a central office managing compliance with the ASC standard through a documented management system. To ensure that all sites adhere to the standard, a number of samples will be selected and audited by CABS using risk-assessment in combination with a random sampling approach.

Multi-site is distinct from Group Certification; each has its own set of requirements which you can learn more about by contacting ASC direct.

*For more information about ASC please contact Sun Brage on sun.brage@asc-aqua.org or +31 (0)30 2305 692.*

Details accurate as of 1 June 2017
Quick facts about the ASC

**Market Update**
- 1228 chain of custody holders
- 568 logo licence holders
- 8,636 approved ASC labelled products
- 64 countries with approved products
- 27 certifiers accredited to conduct chain of custody audits
- 9 certifiers accredited to conduct farm audits
- Volume of certified production volume: 1,182,004 MT
- 8,500+ of approved ASC-labelled products

**Products per species**
- 1% Bivalve
- 20% Pangasius
- 35% Salmon
- 36% Shrimp
- 4% Tilapia
- 4% Trout

**Certified farms**
- 4 abalone farms
- 62 bivalves farms
- 38 pangasius farms
- 198 salmon farms
- 85 shrimp farms
- 41 tilapia farms
- 41 trout farms
- 105 farms in assessment

- 103 Certified salmon farms in Norway
- 49 Certified salmon farms in Chile
- More than 1,200 Chain of Custody certificate holders
- 9 Countries producing ASC certified shrimp

* Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macau, Malaysia, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay and Vietnam.