

How ASC certification contributes to the SDGs

Synopsis



The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) has completed a first-of-its-kind evaluation of its programme’s direct and indirect contributions to each of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and of the 169 SDG targets within them. This project is one of several initiatives undertaken by the ASC to innovate and lead in responsible aquaculture.

The **Blue Food Partnership’s** ‘Road to Sustainable Aquaculture’ report clearly highlights the role of responsible aquaculture in potentially contributing to the SDGs. The ASC’s assessment can provide a proxy for how verifiable and transparent aquaculture certification can contribute to making credible performance-related SDG claims.

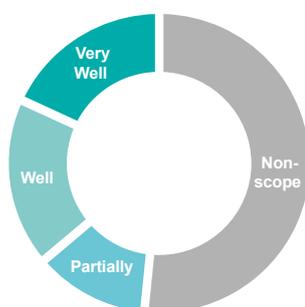
A methodology was developed to analyse how the ASC programme (including its standards and assurances) addresses the SDGs. This determines whether each of the SDG targets falls within the scope of the ASC programme and assesses how well ASC certified farms perform against them. The quantitative findings are reported using a colour-coded rating system.

Key Findings

Half (49%) of the 169 SDG targets can be considered within the scope of the aquaculture industry and thus also the ASC’s work. The ASC programme addresses more than 80% of those targets in scope either ‘well’ or ‘very well’, ‘Very well’ 40.2% ‘Well’ 41.5% and ‘Partially’ 18.3%.

ASC is contributing to the following SDGs in a particular strong and demonstrable way: **SDG 2** (Zero hunger), **SDG 6** (Clean water and sanitation), **SDG 12** (Responsible consumption and production), **SDG 14** (Life below water), **SDG 15** (Life on land), **SDG 16** (Peace, justice and strong institutions), **SDG 17** (Partnerships for the goals).

ASC’s overall contribution to the 169 SDG targets



49% of targets “in-scope”, of which more than 80% are addressed “Very Well” or “Well”

The targets in scope are found across all 17 SDGs; hence all of the 17 UN SDGs are being addressed by the ASC programme, but to different degrees: varying between 16% and 75% of SDG targets within each goal being addressed.

The programme aligns also strongly with targets related to **SDG 1** (End Poverty), **SDG 8** (Decent work and economic growth), **SDG 10** (Reduced inequalities) and **SDG 13** (Climate Action).

ASC’s average contribution per SDG

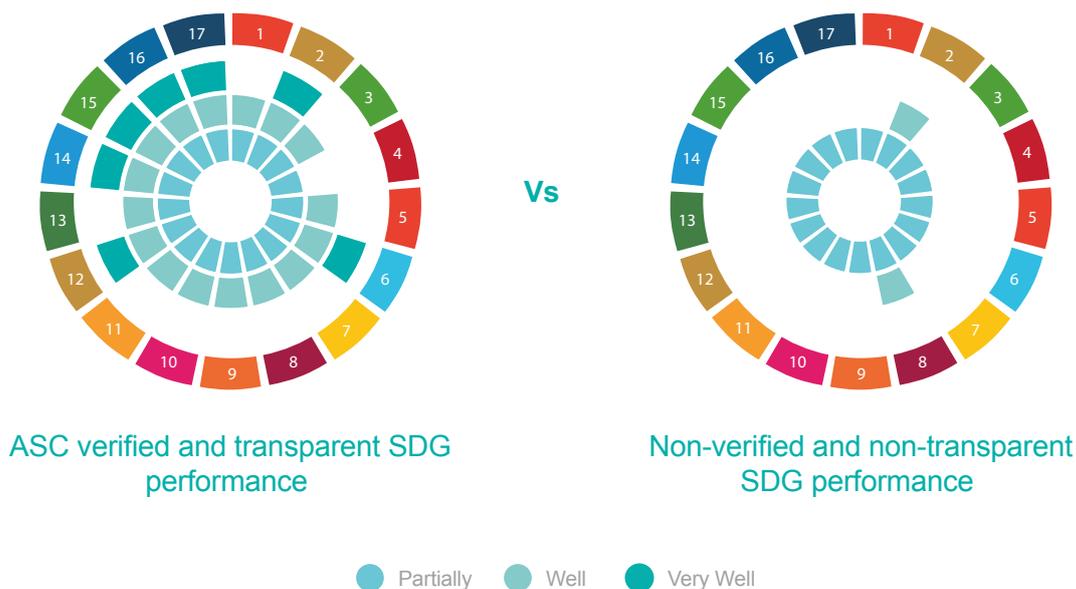


ASC addresses all SDGs, but to varying degrees

● Partially ● Well ● Very Well

ASC extended the holistic analysis to comparing its SDG performance to 'non-verifiable' and 'non-transparent' SDG claims which could be made by 'generic' aquaculture operations. The finding: whereas aquaculture **can** and **could** contribute significantly to the SDGs, without providing independent and transparent assurances, it cannot credibly demonstrate its positive contributions towards specific SDG targets. This is a missed opportunity. The following graph shows these gaps between non-certified aquaculture production that cannot transparently substantiate its contribution to the SDGs, and how the ASC programme demonstrably **does** contribute to SDGs.

Making credible claims:
Differences in demonstrably contributing to SDGs in the realm of aquaculture



The gap analysis (non-transparently certified vs. ASC) reveals areas in which credible voluntary sustainability standards (VSS) - such as full members of ISEAL - can help to demonstrably, transparently and independently assure the delivery of SDGs and their targets. This adds value to certified operations that can be demonstrated to those sourcing aquaculture products from them.

- Rating SDG achievement at the target-level can help institutions, governments, financiers, corporations, industries and other stakeholders embed assurance-based indicators of SDG performances in their policy and assessment work and add to knowledge in the aquaculture field.

- Quantifiable and transparent substantiation by 3rd party assurance will mitigate against claims of SDG greenwashing
- Beyond the aquaculture industry, the proposed SDG-rating methodology provides a pathway towards measuring and comparing holistically any sectors' or industries' contributions towards the SDGs and their targets at Horizon 2030.
- ASC would encourage aquaculture organisations and other industries to begin mapping and objectively quantifying their detailed and substantiated progress towards meeting all relevant SDG targets, and that such assessments be published for all stakeholders' benefit.

The full report, including the methodology and assessment on SDG and SDG Targets level will be published in Fall 2022. ASC intends to update/revise this work on a regular basis.