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### **FAO Ecolabeling Guidelines**

The Marine Stewardship Council participated in the development of the FAO Guidelines for the ecolabeling of fish and fishery products from Marine Capture Fisheries (FAO Guidelines) through the stakeholder consultation process.

In March 2005, shortly after the FAO Guidelines were adopted, the MSC issued a news release on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005, which included this quote from CEO Rupert Howes: "The shape and detail of the FAO's new guidelines recognize the MSC's pioneering work in establishing high quality fishery eco-labeling.

Our standard is already consistent with the core FAO requirements, and our track record of effective systems, commercial success and consumer recognition is strengthened by the setting of this credible international minimum."

The FAO Ecolabeling Guidelines contain 151 specific points for a ecolabel program to address.

The guidelines, which are voluntary, apply to ecolabeling programs focused on certification, and include principles, minimum substantive requirements and criteria, assessment, certification and governance. Within each category are metrics to achieve in order to be in compliance.

The Marine Stewardship Council meets or exceeds all of them, as the following table shows.



**United Nations FAO Guidelines for the EcoLabeling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries**

MSC

Marine Stewardship Council

**UN Guideline Principles**

UN Convention on the Law of the Sea  
 UN Convention relating to Straddling and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks  
 UN Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries  
 World Trade Organization (WTO) rules  
 Recognize sovereign rights and comply with all laws and regulations  
 Voluntary and market driven  
 Transparency in the process; balanced and fair participation  
 Non-discriminatory: No trade barriers; fair trade  
 Provide an opportunity to enter international markets  
 Establish clear accountability for standards' organization and certification bodies  
 Reliable independent auditing and verification procedures  
 Practical, viable, verifiable, clear ecolabelling program  
 Based on the best scientific evidence but consider traditional knowledge  
 Ensure that labels communicate truthful information



**MSC P&C:** *The fishery subject to effective management system that respects local, national and international laws and standards; and incorporates institutional and operational frameworks that require the use of the resource to be responsible & sustainable. Stakeholder involvement per MSC FCM § 1.5*

MSC Theory of Change; MSC FCM p. 6; MSC P&C p. 4  
 MSC SSP v. 2.0, § 1.0; MSC FCM; MSC FAM  
<http://www.msc.org/about-us/credibility/how-we-meet-best-practice>  
 MSC P&C, p. 4  
 MSC SSP v. 2.0  
 MSC FCM; CoCCM; AM  
 MSC P&C, CoC, FCM, CoCCM  
 MSC FCM, p.11; FAM (P1, P2), P&C p. 6  
 MSC CoC p. 4, 5-6; CoCCM p. 5

**UN Guideline General Considerations**

Applicable to Developed, Transitioning and Developing Countries  
 Government involvement should be encouraged  
 Financial and technical assistance afforded to developing and transition countries



MSC P&C, p. 3, 4  
 MSC P&C, p. 2  
 MSC Developing World Program; other partners

**Minimum Substantive Requirements and Criteria for Ecolabels**

Management Systems based on good practices  
 Stocks under consideration are not overfished; optimal levels; management response  
 Sustainable for present and future generations  
 Ecosystem considerations; adverse impacts should be assessed and effectively addressed  
 Methodological aspects; formal assessment methodology  
 Considerations for small scale, data deficient fisheries  
 Objectively, independently verifiable data, regardless of source  
 Compliance, surveillance and monitoring  
 Precautionary approach for data deficient fisheries  
 No overfishing and provisions for restoring stock  
 Marine ecosystem impacts assessed and mitigated where necessary



MSC P&C (P3); FAM (P1, P3), RBF  
 MSC P&C (P1); FAM (P1, P2)  
 MSC P&C, p. 4  
 MSC P&C (P2); FAM (P1, P2)  
 MSC FAM, RBF  
 MSC P&C, p. 3; RBF Section 2; RBF Appendix 1  
 MSC P&C; FAM  
 MSC FCM; CoCCM; FAM; AM  
 MSC RBF Section 2; RBF Appendix 1  
 MSC P&C (P1); FAM (P1, P2)  
 MSC P&C (P2); FAM (P2)

**Governance**

Separate, independent certification body conducts an assessment  
 Standards should not distort global markets  
 Transparency  
 Involvement  
 Objections procedure



MSC FCM pp 5-6; CoCCM § 1.0  
 MSC P&C  
 MSC FCM, CoCCM, P&C  
 MSC FCM, CoCCM, P&C  
 MSC TAB Directive 23

**Guidelines for the Setting of Standards of Sustainable Fisheries**

Outcome based using qualitative and quantitative indicators  
 Standards developed based on FAO, WTO, ISO, ISEAL



MSC FAM, § 4.2, 5.0  
 MSC SSP v. 2.0

**Functions and organizational structure in standard setting**

Standard setting body to review, assess, revise, approve standards  
 Technical committee  
 Transparency in standard development  
 Consultation during standard development  
 Standards accessible online  
 Spanish, French translations available upon request  
 Balanced participation in standard setting  
 Extensive consultation period  
 Written procedures and record keeping  
 Proposed revisions from any interested party  
 Validation that any revised standard does not diminish sustainability  
 Review and revision of standards and procedures



MSC SSP v. 2.0  
 MSC FCM; TAB; SSP v. 2.0  
 MSC FCM p. 5; CoCCM § 1.0; SSP  
 MSC FCM p. 4; SSP v. 2.0  
<http://www.msc.org/documents>  
 Micro websites at msc.org  
 MSC P&C p. 2; SSP v. 2.0  
 MSC P&C p. 2; SSP v. 2.0  
 MSC SSP v. 2.0, § 7.0  
 MSC FCM pp. 4,7; SSP v. 2.0  
 MSC SSP v. 2.0  
 MSC FCM pp. 4, 7; SSP v. 2.0

**Guidelines for Accreditation**

Accreditation of certification bodies backed by an accreditation system  
 Accreditation carried out by impartial, independent organization; fully transparent  
 Accountability and reporting requirements  
 Procedure for considering and resolving complaints  
 Confidentiality, maintenance, suspension and withdrawal, and change in status



MSC FCM pp.5, 7; CoCCM § 4.2; AM  
 MSC FCM p.5; CoCCM § 4.2; AM  
 MSC AM  
 MSC AM  
 MSC AM

**Guidelines for Certification**

Certification of a fishery; Certification of chain of custody between harvest and sale  
 Both certifications required for fish products indicating sustainable origin to consumers  
 Certifier independence and impartiality; non discriminatory; adequate resources  
 Certifier accountability and reporting; confidentiality; maintenance of certification  
 Certification of a fishery lasts five years with annual audit  
 Chain of custody certification lasts three years with annual audit  
 Certification can be suspended or withdrawn  
 Integrity of certification claim, symbol or logo  
 Resolution of complaints, appeals; record keeping



MSC FCM, § 5.0; CoCCM § 1.0; CoC p. 4  
 MSC CoCCM, § 1.0; FAM p.7; FCM p. 5  
 MSC AM § 1.7, 1.8, 1.10, 1.14  
 MSC AM § 1.9, 1.12, 1.13  
 MSC FCM, § 5.3  
 MSC CoCCM, § 5.10  
 MSC FCM § 6.9; CoCCM § 5.5; AM § 1.12  
 MSC P&C, FCM, CoCCM; AM § 1.17, 1.18, 2.4, 2.5  
 MSC FCM; AM § 1.14, 1.9, 2.2, 2.5

**Key**

**P1:** MSC Principle 1; Health of the Stock  
**P2:** MSC Principle 2; Marine Ecosystem Impact  
**P3:** MSC Principle 3; Management of the fishery  
**AM:** MSC Accreditation Manual - v. 5.1  
**CoC:** MSC Chain of Custody Standard - Traceability Standard - v. 2.1  
**CoCCM:** MSC Chain of Custody Certification Methodology - v.7

**FAM:** MSC Fishery Assessment Methodology - v.2.1  
**FCM:** MSC Fishery Certification Methodology - v.6.1  
**P&C:** MSC Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Fishing - v. 1.1  
**RBF:** Risk Based Framework  
**SSP:** MSC Standard Setting Procedure - v.2  
**TAB:** MSC Technical Advisory Board