

Information Sheet 5 – Roles and responsibilities explained

There are five major groups with roles and responsibilities in the fishery assessment and certification process. They are: 1) the client; 2) the accredited certification body who has been contracted by a client; 3) the assessment team contracted to the certification body; 4) the stakeholders and their representatives; and 5) the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC).

The client

The client must be a legally constituted body able to enter into binding contracts. The client's main role in the certification process is to ensure that the assessment team has unrestricted access to data and information about the fishery. This can include providing additional timely information and data upon request from the assessment team. The client is also responsible for disclosing any information of relevance about the fishery to the assessment team even if the information is not 'favourable'.

The client needs to ensure that the certification body is properly informed about relevant stakeholders and any issues of their interest. This ensures all relevant stakeholders are informed of the assessment and given an opportunity to contribute their views. It also means the stakeholder engagement process is properly designed, appropriately costed and proceeds in a timely manner.

The client must be capable of implementing any conditions or recommendations of the certification and is responsible for remaining in compliance with any conditions throughout the life of the certificate. In addition, the responsibility for ensuring full compliance of the fishery with the MSC standard rests with the certificate holder, i.e., the client.

There is much a client can do to ensure a smooth assessment process. We recommend you read "*Guidance to Potential or Actual Clients: The MSC Fishery Assessment Process*" for more information. See MSC's website (www.msc.org) or email MSC at fisheries@msc.org to obtain a copy.

Certification body

The certification body is the legally constituted body that is accredited by the MSC to conduct fishery assessments. The certification body is responsible for performing fishery assessments that are consistent with the terms of the MSC Accreditation Manual and the requirements of the MSC Fisheries Certification Methodology.

An accredited certification body is responsible for all the activities of the assessment team it contracts to conduct each fishery assessment against the MSC standard. This includes all aspects of the assessment process, including client and stakeholder interactions, report preparation and review, and reporting to the MSC.

The assessment team leader will normally be a member of permanent staff of the certification body, although this may vary between certification bodies. Assessment team members will normally be experts bound by short-term contract to the certification body.

Assessment team

The role of the assessment team is to assess your fishery against the MSC's *Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Fishing* (the MSC standard).

Using the MSC Fisheries Certification Methodology to guide them, the team considers data and information provided to them, and adjudicates on the basis of expert knowledge and capacity. The assessment team is not obliged (and will not normally be financed) to seek out original data, or to conduct original documentary research, in order to reach a judgement about the performance of a fishery. Where data and information exists that is not provided to the

assessment team, such data or knowledge will not usually be taken into account in reaching the certification conclusions. The assessment team will use its best endeavours to solicit the relevant type of data and knowledge from the client and stakeholders, but is not responsible for any failure to use relevant data or knowledge that could influence the certification outcome that are not provided to the assessment team for assessment.

The onus is on the client and participating stakeholders in the assessment, but not the assessment team, to provide relevant data that can be used as the basis for a judgement about the performance of the fishery. In carrying out the assessment, the assessment team may consult with a selection of stakeholders to seek their input on the fishery or its management, and may seek the further input from any relevant stakeholder, consistent with the practices recommended in the MSC's *"Guidance for Certification Bodies on Stakeholder Consultation in Fishery Assessments"*.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders play a crucial role in the fisheries management system. Government agencies have statutory responsibility for managing fisheries and for marine conservation, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) often represent the public interest in such matters as conservation of biodiversity or indigenous fishing rights.

The role of stakeholders in the MSC fishery assessment process is to bring to the attention of the certification body and the assessment team any issues and concerns they have regarding the fishery in question that they believe relate to the performance or conduct of the fishery relevant to the MSC standard. Stakeholders should provide well-formed and substantive arguments for their positions, including reference to objective evidence that can assist the assessment team in evaluating the merit of the issues raised. Wherever possible, commensurate with their technical capacities, stakeholders should submit their input in writing to ensure full consideration by the assessment team and create a record of their input.

Stakeholders are advised that there is no advantage to be gained by withholding concerns, data or knowledge from the assessment team, because concerns, data or knowledge not presented for inclusion in the assessment have no standing in determining the certification outcome, and cannot be used as a reason to lodge an objection to a certification outcome.

Stakeholders may be individuals or groups, and stakeholder groups may be organised and cohesive, or they may be informally organised and diverse in their opinions. The stakeholder representative may act on behalf of his or her constituents, representing their interests and positions.

The MSC

The role of the MSC is, broadly, to maintain the relevance and consistency of the MSC standard (the Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Fishing) and to supervise the operational implementation of the Fisheries Certification Methodology, ensuring that the certification body is correctly interpreting and applying the various provisions in a manner consistent with the MSC Accreditation Manual. This includes providing explanatory material about the MSC programme, reviewing and auditing the performance of the certification body at appropriate times, commenting on the assessment at relevant points in the process, and supervising any relevant objections. If a fishery is certified, the MSC also licences the use of the eco-label through its trading arm Marine Stewardship Council International (MSCI) and the use of the MSC claim.

The MSC is also able to provide advice on process or other issues when required by stakeholders.