

FISHupdate.com

International marine certification programme invites comment on the definition of sustainable fishing

Published: 23 January, 2007

FOR the first time since 1999, public comment is being sought to clarify the 23 criteria that together form the backbone of the world's leading environmental standard for sustainable fishing.

As part of its 'Quality and Consistency' project, the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is publishing 23 'draft intent statements' –short, technical paragraphs that seek to help everyone involved in MSC fishery assessments to have clear expectations and a common understanding of what sustainable fishing looks like in practice.

The draft intent statements were developed in 2006 through consultation workshops around the world and are available online at the MSC's web site on www.msc.org (www.msc.org/html/content_1297.htm).

The deadline for comments on the draft statements is 23 February 2007, after which the final intent statements will be developed and issued in mid-March.

Once finalised, the intent statements are expected to:

- Improve the clarity of the MSC's environmental standard.
- Help fisheries understand what certification bodies will be looking for during the assessment process.
- Facilitate the participation of stakeholders during the assessment process.
- Improve clarity for certification bodies during the preparation phase of assessment.
- Help expert assessment teams score fisheries consistently, whatever the fishery's size, type or location.

"These statements will improve the transparency and consistency of fishery assessments against the MSC's environmental standard," says Rich Lincoln, the MSC's International Policy Director. "These statements will help refine our understanding of what sustainable fishing means in practice, and so improve the value of the MSC programme as one of several ways to encourage sustainable practices in the fishing industry."

Dr Rashid Sumaila of the University of British Columbia, who participated in the consultation workshops, commented: "With the boundaries of scientific understanding being pushed forward every year, this consultation on the intent of the MSC's criteria is timely and welcome. Well-defined benchmarks are necessary so that all can participate on a uniform basis in fishery assessments."

The MSC's environmental standard for sustainable and well managed fisheries was developed between 1997-99 through a series of international workshops and consultations.

The resulting 'Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Fishing' , based on the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and other international conservation agreements, can be summarised as:

Principle 1: Ensures fish stocks are maintained at healthy levels

Principle 2: Ensures the eco-system is fully functional and fishing activity does not threaten biological diversity

Principle 3: Ensures the fishery is managed effectively and following a precautionary approach.

The Principles are supported by 23 criteria which together form the foundation for independent certification bodies to assess fisheries against the MSC's environmental standard.

www.fishupdate.com is published by Special Publications. Special Publications also publish FISHupdate magazine, Fish Farmer, the Fish Industry Yearbook, the Scottish Seafood Processors Federation Diary, the Fish Farmer Handbook and a range of wallplanners.

• [Back](#)



Rich Lincoln, MSC
International Policy
Director

--- --- ---