

# **Iceland Responsible Fisheries Foundation**



## **Responsible Fisheries Management**

### **Chain of Custody Standard**

**A Tool for Voluntary Use in Markets for  
Certified Products of Marine Capture Fisheries**

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## A. Foreword

The development of this Chain of Custody Specification has been facilitated by the ***Fisheries Association of Iceland, supported by a grant from the AVS R&D Fund of the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture in Iceland.***

The Fisheries Association of Iceland (FAI) was founded in 1911. The FAI is an association of fishing industry organisations. The role of the FAI is to be a common focus for organizations within the fisheries and seafood sector in Iceland for the benefit of the fishing industry.

The FAI main objectives are to promote progress in the Icelandic fishing industry, and to offer services requested to governmental bodies and other stakeholders as appropriate. The objectives are pursued by carrying out tasks that involve the fishing industry as a whole based on general agreement among its members.

The following non-governmental organizations are members of The Fisheries Association of Iceland:

The Federation of Icelandic Fishing Vessel Owners (LÍÚ),  
Federation of Icelandic Fish Processing Plants (SF),  
National Association of Small Boat Owners, Iceland (NASBO),  
The Icelandic Seamen's Federation (SSI),  
The Federation of General and Special Workers in Iceland (SGS),  
The Icelandic Union of Marine Engineers and Metal Technicians (VM),  
The Icelandic Ships Officers Association (FFSÍ).

This Specification forms part of the Responsible Fisheries Management Programme which is based on the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and on the FAO Guidelines for the Eco-labelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries adopted in 2005 and amended/extended in 2009. These in turn are based on the current suite of agreed international instruments addressing fisheries, in particular the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement, as well as related documentation including the 2001 Reykjavik Declaration on Responsible Fisheries in the Marine Ecosystem, as well as various other relevant documents from ISO and other sources.

The Programme has **two complementary elements**:

- Responsible Fisheries Management Specification.
- Chain of Custody Specification.

The Chain of Custody Specification is the direct result of pro-active discussions and interaction with packers, processors, markets, regulators, specification and certification experts. The specification has been published for a 30 day period for public and stakeholder review and comment. It reflects the awareness of an ever-perceptive public and provides a platform from which the practices of the industry can be measured.

The FAI created a technical committee made up of representatives from key stakeholders which oversaw the development of the chain of custody specification. This committee has endorsed the requirements required for certification to this specification.

The certification programme is based on internationally accredited, ISO/IEC 17065:2012. Specifications, which assure consistent, competent and independent certification practices.

ISO/IEC 17065:2012 accreditation of the certification body by a member of the International Accreditation Forum gives the programme recognition and a credibility position in the International marketplace and ensures that products certified under the programme are identified at a recognized level of assurance. Demonstration of compliance will be through a rigorous verification and assessment by a competent, third party certification body.

The purpose of the specification is to provide the fishing industry with a clear statement of the requirements which require to be achieved by applicants in order to gain certification of chain of custody. Certification to the requirements under the specification will demonstrate a commitment that through licensed use of the certified label will communicate to customers and consumers the provenance of Icelandic fish.

A unique certification mark has been developed which can be used to signify compliance of a certified product to the chain of custody specification as part of the responsible fisheries management programme.

Through the programme framework, the requirements for chain of custody certification will be subject to continual review and improvement to ensure that it continues to serve stakeholder and consumer needs.

## B. Principles of the Process

To become certified as meeting the chain of custody specification, applicants must be able to demonstrate compliance with this specification, through an independent assessment by an approved certification body.

The certification body must be approved and be accredited to ISO/IEC 17065:2012) by an accreditation body who is a member of the international accreditation forum.

The chosen certification body will formulate a contract between the applicant and the certification body detailing the requirements and commitments needed from the applicant.

The objective of chain of custody certification is to provide an assurance to a labeled certified claim on a seafood product that the product originate from a certified 'Responsibly Managed Fishery'.

*Where required within the supply chain there will be specific interpretations of the requirements in the chain of custody specification to relate them to specific industry sectors, for example packing, processing, distribution and selling of seafood products and materials.*

### Definitions

#### Chain of Custody (FAO Definition):

*The set of measures which is designed to guarantee that the seafood product put on the market and bearing the ecolabel logo is really a product of designated origin and coming from the certified fishery concerned. These measures thus cover both the tracking/traceability of the product all along the processing, distribution and marketing chain, as well as the proper tracking of the documentation and control of the quantity concerned.<sup>1</sup>*

**Applicant:** A company or group of companies in the supply chain that has **formally** applied to meet the chain of Custody Specification through the formal Application Form.

**Certified Applicant:** An Applicant company or group of companies in the supply chain that have been formally certified by the certification body as meeting the chain of custody specification.

**Certified Fishery:** A fishery that has been independently certified as meeting the "Iceland Responsible Fisheries Foundation Responsible Fisheries Management Specification".

**Chain of Custody Specification:** The list of requirements that the applicant must meet to claim certification to the chain of custody specification and /or use the certified claim.

**Certified Chain:** An applicant company or group of companies in the supply chain that can demonstrate all certified stages back to the certified fishery.

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<sup>1</sup> FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries, Rome 2005 + 2009

**Certified Claim:** A claim made by a certified applicant approved for use and licensed by the specifications owner.

**Ecolabel Logo:** A distinctive logo or statement which certifies that the fish has been sourced from and traceable back to a certified fishery.

**Potential Applicant:** A company or group of companies in the supply chain that are considering applying for chain of custody specification certification.

**Stage:** A handling / transfer point in the supply chain e.g. vessel, packing, processing, distribution, sales.

### **C. Outline of the Chain of Custody Process – FAO based**

The certification process has a number of distinct stages which are described below.

#### **Stage 1. Information Request**

Information may be requested from a potential applicant within the supply chain. A potential applicant could be a:

- Vessel Group
- Primary Packer
- Secondary Processor
- Distributor
- Market / Retailer / Restaurant

Potential applicants may request information from the specification owner organization or the certification body about the certification process, the specification requirements, the outline costs or timeframes to gain certification.

Applicants are advised to carry out a self-assessment against the specification in order to ascertain their readiness for external assessment.

#### **Further Information**

Further Information regarding application, rules and regulations can be obtained from the specification owner:

**The Fisheries Association of Iceland**  
**P.O.Box 8214,**  
**128 Reykjavik,**  
**Iceland**

## **Stage 2. Completion of Application Form**

If the potential applicant wishes to progress to application they will be requested to formally provide information on their product handling details and the previous product supply chain to the certification body, using the chain of custody application form.

All information provided to the certification body will remain confidential.

Single units or group organizations may apply.

When the formal application form is received by the certification body the potential applicant becomes a formal applicant.

## **Stage 3. Certification Body prepares an Assessment Plan**

Each applicant company and their supply chain is different and therefore the certification body will create a relevant assessment plan to validate the chain of custody for the applicant's relevant product and supply chain which was detailed in their application form.

The applicant will be required to ensure that all relevant stages and companies listed and involved in the handling stages prior to the applicant's stage are encouraged to apply for certification also.

The certification body will provide the applicant with an assessment plan and assessment cost based on the information provided in the application form.

When the applicant formally agrees to the assessment plan, specification conditions and forwards the relevant payments for associated assessments costs the application will then move forward for assessment.

## **Stage 4. The Assessment**

The assessment at the applicant's handling stage is carried out by an independent assessor approved and acting for the certification body. The assessment is against the chain of custody specification and in line with the assessment plan.

It is the applicants responsibility to ensure that the information supplied in the application form is factual and accurate so that the assessment plan remains relevant.

The certification body's assessor will carry out the assessment in an independent, professional and courteous manner.

The key components of the chain of custody specification include the requirements for:

- A Product Identity System
- A Traceability System
- A Segregation System

## **Stage 5. The Assessment Report**

During the assessment the assessor will compile an assessment report of how the applicant does/does not meet the chain of custody specification.

There will be specific interpretations of the requirements in the chain of custody specification to relate them to packing, processing, distribution and selling of seafood products and materials.

The assessment report will identify any non-conformances against the chain of custody specification. Applicants will be required to close out non-conformances through corrective actions.

## **Stage 6. The Certification Decision**

The applicant's assessment report and any necessary corrective actions will be submitted to a certification committee for a Certification Decision.

The certification committee is composed of persons or person with equal competence to the assessor and an expertise in certification.

## **Stage 7. Certification**

Where certification is the outcome, certificates must be issued typically no later than 30 days after the evaluation date. In the event that this cannot be achieved, the certification body must formally write to the applicant stating a prospective date of issue and the reasons for the delay.

The certificate remains the property of the certification body and the control and management of the status of a certificate must be in place.

Certificates are valid for three years with annual re assessment. Initial certification (to a first time applicant) will not be awarded where any nonconformance remains outstanding.

Ongoing certification is maintained where there is substantive and demonstrable evidence that the applicant remains in compliance with the criteria of the specification in question. Any non-conformity raised must be verified as completed, with objective evidence within timescales defined within the relevant specification.

The applicant will be awarded certification for their handling stage in the supply chain if it is clear that it meets the chain of custody specification.

Each of the applicants relevant products at their handling stage and each prior handling stage in the supply chain identified in the applicant's application form will be required to be assessed against the chain of custody specification by the certification body before full chain of custody certification is awarded.

### **Stage 8. Access to Certified Label**

Certified applicants can apply to the specification owner for use of the certified label / logo.

Only certified applicants who can demonstrate chain certification back to the fishery can apply to the specification owner to use the certification logo / certified statement.

### **Appeals**

The applicant has the right to appeal the certification decision of the certification body. Appeals should be made in writing within seven days of the certification decision.

A full response will be given by a certification body manager independent of the auditor and certification committee.

## **D. Chain of Custody Specification Requirements**

*This specification details the set of requirements that must be certified as being in place to ensure that the seafood product put on the market and bearing the ecolabel logo is really a product of designated origin and coming from the certified fishery concerned. These measures thus cover both the tracking/traceability of the product all along the processing, distribution and marketing chain, as well as the proper tracking of the documentation and control of the quantity concerned.<sup>2</sup>*

### **1.0 General Principles of Traceability for Chain of Custody**

- 1.1 The facility must have a documented policy to state that they are committed to the chain of custody specification.
- 1.2 Seafood products must not carry the official certified label to indicate that they originate from a responsibly managed fishery unless they have been certified as meeting the chain of custody specification.
- 1.3 All seafood products carrying the official certified label from certified fisheries must be kept readily identifiable and where necessary kept clearly separated from products of non-certified fisheries at all times.
- 1.4 Traceability systems must be in place that are able to identify the certified labeled seafood products and trace those products back to the certified fishery from where they were derived.
- 1.5 Approved and authorized identification coding, where appropriate, must be in place for each link in the supply chain from fishery to consumer.
- 1.6 All stages in the value supply chain, including secondary processors or other buyers must comply with the applicable national/federal and/or regional/state regulations on labeling and traceability.
- 1.7 The Applicant must have a system in place to ensure that purchased seafood carrying the official certified label is not mixed with non-certified seafood during transportation to and from the site and in third party storage if applicable.

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<sup>2</sup> FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries, Rome 2005+ 2009

## **2.0 Traceability within the Supply Chain**

- 2.1 Each seafood consignment must be traceable back to the certified fishery and should have the following minimum information available:
- Species name;
  - Catch area.
- 2.2 Certified seafood inputs must be kept separate from non-certified seafood inputs throughout seafood processing, distribution and marketing if they are to carry the official certified label. This may be achieved by:
- Physical separation;
  - Temporal separation.
- 2.3 Where certified and non-certified seafood inputs are mixed they are not eligible for carrying the official certified label as coming from a responsibly managed fishery under this program.
- 2.4 The applicant must operate a system that allows any product or batch of products sold by the organization as originating from a certified fishery to be verified through documentation.
- 2.5 Procedures must be established by all applicants in the value chain to deal with any nonconformities in the traceability system.
- 2.6 The applicant must operate a product recall system that will be activated if certified seafood is mixed with non-certified seafood. The relevant certification body must be notified in the event of a certified product being recalled.

### **3.0 Traceability and Labelling**

- 3.1 The applicant must test the efficacy of their batch control and traceability system through a thorough documented internal audit conducted no less than once per year.
- 3.2 Documentation must be available that verifies the identity of the certified seafood as originating from a certified fishery.
- 3.3 Certified seafood products must be labeled or otherwise be identified in a manner that ensures traceability is maintained during packaging, storage, handling and delivery.
- 3.4 Each stage in the seafood supply chain must be required to be able to track and trace the certified product one step forward and back to the certified fishery.
- 3.5 Nonconformity issues identified through internal controls or through other means must be dealt with appropriately through a corrective action plan.
- 3.6 Each certified labeled product must be labeled with all necessary information. The information should include the following:
  - Commercial species name;
  - Country of origin;
  - Fishing/catch area;
  - Product description;
  - Product code or production code number.
- 3.7 During storage and transportation of certified seafood product each unit must have its identification number indicated on the attached label or documentation.
- 3.8 The applicant must operate a secure system for the production, storage and application of product labels bearing the certified claim and will ensure that only certified seafood product is labeled as such.
- 3.9 A record of all certified seafood received must be maintained, showing the name of the supplier, their unique chain of custody certificate number, evidence of certificate validity, and sufficient other details to allow the tracing of those inputs back to their suppliers and the certified fishery.
- 3.10 Traceability records must be available any time when required from any related businesses, for any reason, and must be accurate, legible and unadulterated.
- 3.11 All traceability records must be kept for a reasonable period, with a minimum of 3 years.
- 3.12 Nonconformity issues identified through, external audits or through other means must be dealt with appropriately through a corrective action plan.
- 3.13 Nonconformity procedures should include documented corrections and corrective actions within specified time limits.
- 3.14 The applicant should keep a documented record of customer complaints or feedback concerning the labeled certified seafood.