

MSC Improvement Program Requirements and Guidance



Version 3.0, 29 October 2024

Marine Stewardship Council

Vision

Our vision is of the world's oceans teeming with life, and seafood supplies safeguarded for this and future generations.

Mission

Our mission is to use our ecolabel and fishery certification program to contribute to the health of the world's oceans by recognising and rewarding sustainable fishing practices, influencing the choices people make when buying seafood, and working with our partners to transform the seafood market to a sustainable basis.

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The official language of these requirements is English. The definitive version is maintained on the MSC website ([msc.org](https://www.msc.org)). Any discrepancy between copies, versions or translations shall be resolved by reference to the definitive English version.

The MSC prohibits any modification of part or all of the contents in any form.

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Responsibility for these requirements

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is responsible for these requirements.

Readers should verify that they are using the latest copy of this and other documents. Updated documents, together with a master list of all available MSC documents, can be found on the MSC website ([msc.org](https://www.msc.org)).

Versions published

Version no.	Date	Description of amendment
1.0	30 September 2019	N/A – new document
1.1	15 December 2020	<p>Annexes containing eligibility and progress verification templates removed and reference added to new standalone templates.</p> <p>References updated to reflect new Improvement Action plan template and new version of Benchmarking and Tracking Tool (BMT)</p> <p>In Terms and Definitions, the description of Fishery updated to reflect relationship between Unit of Assessment (UoA) and Unit of Certification (UoC) entry on Ecert.</p> <p>Guidance added with regards to naming a fishery in Ecert and how to record offsite verifications.</p>
2.0	1 May 2023	<p>Requirements have been streamlined and updated to align with the MSC Fisheries Standard v.3.0.</p> <p>Entry documents have been updated to include 'Full Assessment Reports' as well as Pre-Assessment Reports.</p> <p>Frequency of Progress Verification required has been updated.</p> <p>Unnecessary timelines have been removed to enable more flexibility for the CAB and fisheries to determine timelines appropriate to their context.</p> <p>Reports required for completion have been updated to include either a draft ACDR or a Surveillance Report.</p> <p>Fisheries applying requirements v2.0 onwards will now be listed on the MSC website: https://fisheries.msc.org</p>
3.0	29 October 2024	<p>The Program name has changed and the pilot phase has ended.</p> <p>Requirements and Guidance for fisheries wishing to apply for MSC Improvement Product Eligibility have been added.</p> <p>Requirements have been clarified with regards to Progress Verification activities.</p>

Version no.	Date	Description of amendment
		<p>The process for fisheries that have withdrawn from the Improvement Program that wish to re-enter the Improvement Program have been added.</p> <p>Requirements have been streamlined.</p>

General introduction

Background

The creation of an MSC Improvement Program was motivated by the MSC's commitment to improving access for fisheries in the pre-certification space, with the ultimate intention of preparing them to enter assessment against the MSC Fisheries Standard at the end of the Improvement Program process.

As an incentive to keep improving towards an MSC full assessment, fisheries in the MSC Improvement Program have the option for their products to enter MSC certified chains of custody (CoC) and to carry a back-of-pack claim, subject to meeting specific MSC Improvement Product eligibility criteria. This initiative enables fisheries to demonstrate their commitment to improvement whilst providing assurance to buyers that their seafood comes from a verified MSC Improvement Program Fishery.

Please note that fisheries in the MSC Improvement Program cannot automatically use an "MSC Improvement Product" back-of-pack claim; only those verified to meet the additional MSC Improvement Product eligibility criteria are eligible to make an "MSC Improvement Product" back-of-pack-claim.

Purpose

The MSC Improvement Program offers fisheries a structured and independently verified approach to improving their performance towards MSC certification. The MSC Improvement Program is intended to act as an entry point for fisheries wishing to become MSC certified, or to reinstate an existing MSC certificate that has been suspended, within 5 years of entering the MSC Improvement Program. To mark the completion of the MSC Improvement Program, either an Announcement Comment Draft Report or a Surveillance Report is developed by a CAB to commence the MSC full assessment process or to commence the process to reinstate a suspended certificate, respectively. Fisheries that have already achieved a draft pass score against the MSC Fisheries Standard are not eligible to enter the MSC Improvement Program, and should proceed to enter an MSC full assessment.

This document details the procedure for CABs to verify and report conformance with the MSC Improvement Program entry requirements, progress requirements and, where relevant, the MSC Improvement Product eligibility requirements. "Applicant Fisheries" and MSC Improvement Program Fisheries may also use this document to prepare for MSC Improvement Program verification activities.

The MSC Improvement Product eligibility requirements are optional, and verification of these by the CAB to determine MSC Improvement Product eligibility may take place at any point during the fishery's participation in the MSC Improvement Program. The MSC Improvement Product eligibility requirements, along with the verification and reporting process, are set out in Section 4.

Implementation timeframes

Effective Date of the MSC Improvement Program Requirements and Guidance

Publication date: 29 October 2024

Effective date: 31 January 2025

All new “Applicant Fisheries” to the MSC Improvement Program shall use the MSC Improvement Program Requirements and Guidance v3.0, and associated templates, for any application to enter the MSC Improvement Program on or after 31 January 2025.

CABs shall apply the MSC Improvement Program Requirements and Guidance v3.0 for any MSC Improvement Program application received on or after 31 January 2025.

For existing fisheries in the MSC Improvement Program using v1.1 of the ITM Requirements and Guidance, wishing to be visible on the MSC Track a Fishery website, CABs shall apply the MSC Improvement Program Requirements and Guidance v3.0, and associated templates. CABs may complete this as part of a regular Progress Verification.

Existing fisheries in the MSC Improvement Program that transition to MSC Improvement Program Requirements and Guidance v3.0 will be visible on the MSC ‘Track a Fishery’ website (www.fisheries.msc.org), and their existing MSC Improvement Program Eligibility Reports, and Benchmarking and Tracking Tools from previous progress verifications will be published on the website. Project Managers for existing MSC Improvement Program Fisheries that transition to MSC Improvement Program Requirements and Guidance v3.0, shall use v3.0 associated templates to complete revised or new MSC Improvement Program documents.

MSC Fisheries Standard versions

All fisheries in the MSC Improvement Program shall transition to v3.1 of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) by 1st November 2030 such that pre-assessment or “Full Assessment Reports”, Improvement Action Plans (IAPs) and Benchmarking and Tracking Tools (BMTs) are updated accordingly.

Existing fisheries in the MSC Improvement Program may remain in the Improvement Program with entry documents, IAPs and BMTs aligned with the [MSC Fisheries Standard v2.01](#), and may start initial MSC full assessments using the MSC Fisheries Standard v2.01 after 1 July 2026, noting that all fisheries shall apply the [MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1](#) by 1 November 2030 as per [Fisheries Certification Process v3.1](#) Section 7.32. Fisheries may also continue to enter the Improvement Program with entry documents, IAPs and BMTs aligned with v2.01 of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#), and start initial MSC full assessments using the [MSC Fisheries Standard v2.01](#) after 1 February 2026, again noting the 1 November 2030 deadline.

Fisheries that join the MSC Improvement Program using the [MSC Fisheries Standard v2.01](#) may transition to the [MSC Fisheries Standard v3.1](#) at any time during their participation in the MSC Improvement Program prior to 1 November 2030 and may apply MSC Improvement Program ‘Exceptional Circumstances’ as per Section 3.5 in order to extend the “MSC Improvement Program Completion Date”.

Introduction to this document

The MSC Improvement Program Requirements and Guidance v3.0 defines the process for CABs to verify eligibility and continued conformity of fisheries with the MSC Improvement Program and MSC Improvement Product eligibility requirements. The MSC Improvement Program Requirements and Guidance is intended to be used alongside the following MSC Scheme Documents:

- MSC Fisheries Standard
- MSC Fisheries Certification Process
- MSC Fisheries Standard Toolbox

Table 1 outlines which versions of each relevant scheme document are applicable for use with each version of the MSC Improvement Program requirements.

Table 1: Summary of the MSC Fisheries Standard, Fisheries Certification Process and Fisheries Standard Toolbox versions which may be used in conjunction with the MSC Improvement Program requirements v1.1 and v2.0 (previously known as In-Transition to MSC) and v3.0.

MSC Improvement Program Requirements Version	Fisheries Standard Version	Fisheries Certification Process Version	Fisheries Standard Toolbox Version
v1.1	v2.01	v2.1	N/A
v2.0	v2.01	v2.3	N/A
v2.0	v3.0	v3.0	v1.1
v3.0	v2.01	v2.3	N/A
v3.0	v3.1 or most recent effective version	v3.1 or most recent effective version	v1.2 or most recent effective version

Guidance

Guidance is provided throughout this document to help CABs interpret the MSC Improvement Program Requirements. The headings and numbering of the MSC Improvement Program Guidance matches the associated MSC Improvement Program Requirements exactly. The MSC recommends that CABs read the requirements in conjunction with the guidance. Text in the MSC Improvement Program Requirements is not repeated in the MSC Improvement Program Guidance.

Derogations

Derogations are temporary normative measures that allow for an MSC requirement to be applied differently or disregarded. These are provided in response to editorial errors, force majeure, where intent is no longer fit for purpose and threatens MSC credibility, or as a provision to test a policy change or modify the implementation timeframe when publishing a revised version of the normative document. Derogations are posted on a public log. The MSC requires CABs to follow relevant derogations.

Normative Documents

The documents listed below contain provisions that, through reference in this text, become part of the MSC Improvement Program Requirements. For documents listed, the latest effective version of the document applies:

- a. MSC Pre-Assessment Reporting Template
- b. MSC Fishery Improvement Action Plan (IAP) Template

- c. MSC Benchmarking and Tracking Tool (BMT) Template
- d. MSC Improvement Program Eligibility Reporting Template
- e. MSC Improvement Program Progress Reporting Template
- f. MSC Improvement Program Progress Verification Reporting Template
- g. MSC Improvement Program Notice of Withdrawal Template
- h. MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Verification Reporting Template
- i. MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Statement
- j. MSC Database User Manual for CABs: Fisheries
- k. MSC-MSCI Vocabulary.

Reference Documents

The documents listed below are referenced in this text and only specific sections apply in the MSC Improvement Program Requirements.

- a. MSC Fisheries Standard.
- b. MSC Fisheries Certification Process.
- c. MSC Fisheries Standard Toolbox.
- d. MSC General Certification Requirements.
- e. MSC Labour Eligibility Requirements.
- f. MSC Rules on Unacceptable Conduct.
- g. MSC Chain of Custody Program – Supplementary Standard and Certification Requirements for the MSC Improvement Program.

The CAB, MSC Improvement Program (Applicant) Fishery and Improvement Program Project Manager shall use the latest effective versions of the reference documents listed above in conjunction with the MSC Improvement Program Requirements and Guidance v3.0, as relevant. Where reference to specific clause numbers or sections of a specific version of these documents is made in the MSC Improvement Program Requirements, but a new effective version of that document has been published, the CAB shall apply the corresponding clause in the latest version of the document. Please note that the clause number itself may have changed between versions.

Terms and Definitions

All definitions in the most recent version of the MSC-MSCI Vocabulary apply in addition to the ones below:

Benchmarking and Tracking Tool (BMT): The BMT is the MSC's Excel-based tool that allows a "Fishery Improvement Project" to track progress against Performance Indicators (PIs) to the ≥ 80 draft scoring range level.

Draft scoring ranges: < 60 , $60-79$, ≥ 80 for each PI, referenced in the MSC Fisheries Certification Process (FCP).

Fishery: The term 'fishery' used throughout this document refers only to the Unit(s) of Assessment (UoA(s)) as identified in either the Pre-Assessment, or "Full Assessment Report", for the MSC Improvement Program Applicant Fishery.

Full Assessment Report: Any report produced during an MSC assessment or audit against the MSC Fisheries Standard including Announcement Comment Draft Report (ACDR), Client and Peer Review Draft Report (CPRDR), Public Comment Draft Report (PCDR), Final Draft Report (FDR), Public Certification Report (PCR) and Surveillance Report or Expedited Audit Report.

Fishery Improvement Project (FIP): FIPs are multi-stakeholder initiatives that aim to improve a fishery towards sustainability.

Improvement Action Plan (IAP): A detailed schedule of improvement actions linked to MSC Performance Indicators (PIs) and designed to address gaps in the performance of the fishery, including the resources required, the parties responsible, the timescale in which the changes are expected, and how progress is monitored.

MSC Improvement Product: Fish and fish products that are eligible to enter MSC certified chains of custody and be sold with an MSC Improvement Program back of pack claim.

MSC Improvement Program Application Date (Application Date): The date that the MSC Improvement Program Applicant Fishery submits documents to the CAB.

MSC Improvement Program Applicant Fishery (Applicant Fishery): Any fishery that has applied to enter the MSC Improvement Program, referred to as an "Applicant Fishery" prior to the "Start Date" of the MSC Improvement Program.

MSC Improvement Program Completion Date (Completion Date): The expected date on which an Improvement Action Plan is completed, whereby the UoA(s) has/have achieved a draft scoring range equivalent to an MSC pass and a CAB has uploaded either an ACDR or a Surveillance Report to the MSC database as a means to 'complete' the MSC Improvement Program process.

MSC Improvement Product Eligibility End Date: The date at which product is no longer eligible to be sold as MSC Improvement Product, either because the fishery has withdrawn from the program or where the fishery has entered assessment for certification to the MSC Fisheries Standard and the CAB has nominated in the PCDR an "eligibility date" to replace the MSC Improvement Program Completion date".

MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Start Date: The date from which the MSC Improvement Program (Applicant) Fishery is eligible to sell product as MSC Improvement Product.

MSC Improvement Program Fishery: A fishery which has successfully completed the eligibility verification process and is listed on the MSC database as an active MSC Improvement Program Fishery.

MSC Improvement Program Start Date (Start Date): The date that the MSC Improvement Program Applicant Fishery is determined to have entered the MSC Improvement Program with all relevant documents accepted on the MSC database.

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MSC Improvement Program Requirements & Guidance

1 Preparation to enter the MSC Improvement Program

1.1 Application

- 1.1.1 Upon receipt of an application to enter the MSC Improvement Program, the Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) shall:
- a. Notify the MSC via email to fisheries@msc.org of the intention of the “Applicant Fishery” to enter the MSC Improvement Program.
 - b. Appoint an individual or team to conduct the MSC Improvement Program entry verification who has/have met the competencies as per the [MSC Fisheries Certification Process](#) (FCP v3.1, 7.1.3)
 - c. Request the “Applicant Fishery” to submit the following documents and information:
 - i. The Unit(s) of Assessment (UoA).
 - ii. The ‘[MSC Scope Declaration Template](#)’.
 - iii. The ‘[MSC At Sea Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template](#)’.
 - iv. A copy of either:
 - A. The Pre-Assessment Report, or
 - B. The most recent “Full Assessment Report”, and the MSC Notice of Suspension and Corrective Action Plan, or Announcement of Withdrawal for the “Applicant Fishery”, if relevant.
 - v. The Improvement Action Plan (IAP).
 - vi. The Benchmarking and Tracking Tool (BMT).
 - vii. Annual catch data.

Guidance 1.1.1.c

Where “Applicant Fisheries” want to transition between the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) versions (e.g. from v2.01 to v3.1), this can happen at any time during the Improvement Program period.

The CAB should inform any prospective “Applicant Fishery” considering self-suspension or self-withdrawal of their existing MSC certificate that a surveillance report and corrective action plan are required for MSC Improvement Program eligibility.

The CAB should inform the “Applicant Fishery” that catch data should be the most recent publicly available annual catch data.

1.2 Conflict of interest and safeguarding of impartiality

- 1.2.1 The CAB shall conform to all requirements of ISO17065 for mechanisms to safeguard impartiality as per the [GCR](#).
- 1.2.2 If the CAB, or a team member contracted by the CAB, produces or provides consultation for the Fishery Improvement Action Plan submitted by the “Applicant Fishery”, that same CAB, or team member, shall not conduct any verification activities relating to that fishery or overlapping fisheries, as defined in Annex PB in the [FCP](#).
- 1.2.3 The CAB shall respect the right of the “MSC Improvement Program (Applicant) Fishery” to change CAB at any time.
- 1.2.3.1 Both CABs shall follow the ‘Transfer of a certificate between CABs’ section in the [GCR](#).

Guidance 1.2.3

For “MSC Improvement Program (Applicant) Fisheries” that do not have suspended MSC certificates, the CAB should conduct checks in line with requirements in the ‘Transfer of a certificate between CABs’ section in the [GCR](#). Where reference is made to ‘certificates’ in the requirements, the CAB should consider the MSC Improvement Program status rather than the certificate.

2 Verification of eligibility

2.1 Entry requirements

2.1.1 The CAB shall confirm that the “Applicant Fishery” meets the scope requirements of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) as per the relevant version of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) or the [FCP](#).

2.1.1.1 The CAB shall confirm that the “Applicant Fishery” has completed and submitted the following documents:

- a. The ‘[MSC Scope Declaration Template](#)’.
- b. The ‘[MSC At Sea Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template](#)’.

2.1.2 The CAB shall verify that:

- a. The Pre-Assessment Report or “Full Assessment Report” submitted by the “Applicant Fishery” is no older than 3 years.
- b. The Pre-Assessment Report or “Full Assessment Report” has been submitted in English.
- c. The “Applicant Fishery” has the explicit aim to either:
 - i. Enter an MSC full assessment against the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#), or
 - ii. Start the process to reinstate its suspended certificate as per the ‘Fishery certificate suspension’ section of the [GCR](#).
- d. The “Applicant Fishery” has stated a date for 2.1.2.c.i or ii that is within 3 months of the “MSC Improvement Program Completion Date”.
- e. The “Applicant Fishery” is likely to achieve an MSC pass score with successful implementation of the IAP by the specified “Completion Date”.
- f. The UoA does not already meet an MSC draft pass score.

Guidance 2.1.2.b

If the Pre-Assessment or “Full Assessment Report” of an “Applicant Fishery” has been written in any of the United Nations official languages other than English, the MSC may support its translation to English, subject to availability of resources at the time the application is processed.

Guidance 2.1.2.c and d

The CAB should find the information to verify c and d in the Improvement Action Plan submitted by the “Applicant Fishery”. The CAB should verify that dates are stated as the month and year (MM/YYYY).

For “Applicant Fisheries” whose MSC certificates have been suspended, the MSC Improvement Program Completion Date and the date to start the process to reinstate a certificate is restricted by the certificate expiry date.

Guidance 2.1.2.e and f

The CAB should interpret the term ‘pass score’ to mean both a conditional pass and an unconditional pass.

2.2 Pre-Assessment Report or “Full Assessment Report” verification

- 2.2.1 The CAB shall only apply 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 if the CAB did not complete the Pre-Assessment Report
- 2.2.2 The CAB shall verify that:
- a. The Pre-Assessment Report has been completed using the relevant ‘[MSC Pre-Assessment Reporting Template](#)’
 - b. The Pre-Assessment Report includes full scoring tables for Performance Indicators.
 - c. The Pre-Assessment Report includes scoring at the Scoring Issue (SI) level.
 - d. The Pre-Assessment has the following outcomes:
 - i. Informs the “Applicant Fishery” of the likelihood of achieving MSC certification.
 - ii. Identifies performance gaps against the requirements of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#).
 - e. The Pre-Assessment includes:
 - i. A review of the availability of data.
 - ii. A description of the potential obstacles or problems that may be a barrier to MSC certification.
 - f. The UoA(s) is/are correctly defined as per the [FCP](#).
 - g. The “draft scoring ranges” in the Pre-Assessment Report are justified for each SI.

Guidance 2.2.2

2.2.2 is applicable if the Pre-Assessment Report was completed by another CAB or by another entity, for example, an NGO or consultant not working for a CAB.

When verifying that “draft scoring ranges” in the Pre-Assessment Report are justified as per 2.2.2.g, the CAB should check that the scoring rationales provided support the “draft scoring range” and that all relevant Fisheries Standard clauses have been considered in the scoring rationale. The CAB should check all scores at draft scoring range ≥ 80 , not only those scores that require improvement actions.

- 2.2.3 The CAB shall not accept an application for the MSC Improvement Program if 2.2.2 is not met.
- 2.2.4 If the “Applicant Fishery” submits a “Full Assessment Report” that was not completed by the same CAB conducting the Improvement Program verification activities and does not have a suspended MSC certificate, the CAB shall verify the report(s) in line with [GCR](#) v2.6 clauses 4.11.3.e and 4.11.4, as relevant depending on the assessment status of the fishery.

Guidance 2.2.4

If the “Applicant Fishery” has suspended MSC certification, all [GCR](#) requirements for certificate transfer apply.

2.3 Improvement Action Plan (IAP) verification

2.3.1 The CAB shall verify that the Improvement Action Plan (IAP):

- a. Was prepared after:
 - i. The completion of a Pre-Assessment Report that meets the criteria set out under 2.2.2, or:
 - ii. The completion of a “Full Assessment Report” of a failed, withdrawn or suspended fishery that meets the criteria set out under 2.2.4.
- b. Has been completed using the relevant ‘[MSC Fishery Improvement Action Plan Template](#)’.
- c. Includes a “Completion Date” that does not extend beyond 5 years of the “Start Date”.
- d. Covers every PI that scores <60 and 60-79.
- e. Addresses the performance gaps identified in the Pre-Assessment Report or “Full Assessment Report”.
- f. Includes improvement actions and tasks that:
 - i. Are achievable within the timelines specified.
 - ii. Are likely to deliver a “draft scoring range” that would result in a pass score for the UoA against the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#), by the “Completion Date”.
- g. Includes appropriate and quantitative metrics by which progress of improvement actions and tasks will be demonstrated.
- h. Stipulates an appropriate and feasible deadline by which each improvement action and task should be implemented.
- i. Includes the expected “draft scoring range” and expected BMT index calculated using the ‘[MSC Benchmarking and Tracking Tool \(BMT\) Template](#)’.
- j. Provides information on funding and/or resources that are, or will be, in place to implement actions.
- k. Identifies action leads and action partners who are responsible for implementing actions.
- l. Identifies a Project Manager who will be in place for the duration of the MSC Improvement Program.
- m. Includes a progress verification schedule that meets the following requirements:
 - i. Covers an appropriate timeline aligned with expected draft score changes for the duration of the IAP.
 - ii. The first progress verification shall be completed before the 2-year anniversary of the “Start Date”.
 - iii. Subsequent progress verifications shall be completed before the 2-year anniversary of the previous progress verification.
 - iv. If the duration of the IAP is more than 2 years, at least one progress verification shall be conducted onsite.

- 2.3.1.1 If the “Applicant Fishery” has a suspended MSC certificate, the CAB shall verify that the IAP:
- a. Addresses the cause of the suspension.
 - b. Includes all open conditions as improvement actions.

Guidance 2.3.1.c

An “Applicant Fishery” can apply to enter the MSC Improvement Program even when the expected duration is less than 5 years.

Guidance 2.3.1.f.ii

The CAB should interpret the term ‘pass score’ to mean both a conditional pass and an unconditional pass.

If the “Applicant Fishery” is part of an existing Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP) and has already started implementing improvement actions before entering the MSC Improvement Program, the Project Manager may include these actions in the IAP so long as any improvement actions and tasks completed prior to the “MSC Improvement Program Start Date” are clearly reported.

Guidance 2.3.1.m

No longer than 2 years should elapse between consecutive public reporting on progress for a fishery in the MSC Improvement Program. The MSC’s intent is that the progress verification schedule should be tailored to the fishery in the MSC Improvement Program and its IAP, recognising that progress verification at fixed-term intervals is not always the most efficient given the different timelines of improvement actions. Within the timeline specified for regular progress verifications, sufficient time should be allocated to enable CABs to complete and upload the relevant reports to the MSC database by the 2-year deadline. Failure to meet this deadline will result in withdrawal of the MSC Improvement Program Fishery. “Applicant Fisheries” may propose to conduct more regular progress verifications as needed.

The CAB should interpret ‘completed’ to mean that the Progress Verification Report, and associated documents, are uploaded to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website.

- 2.3.2 The CAB shall verify that the Project Manager (as identified under 2.3.1.l) confirms their commitment to undertake the following key responsibilities:
- a. Serve as the key contact between the CAB and the “Applicant Fishery”.
 - b. Coordinate the implementation of the Improvement Action Plan.
 - c. Collate all information necessary for Progress Verification, including compiling the Progress Reports and updating the IAP and BMT as relevant.
- 2.3.3 The CAB shall not proceed with an application for the MSC Improvement Program where 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 are not met.

2.4 Benchmarking and Tracking Tool (BMT) verification

- 2.4.1 The CAB shall verify that the “Applicant Fishery” has completed the BMT using the [‘MSC Benchmarking and Tracking Tool \(BMT\) Template’](#).
- 2.4.2 The CAB shall verify that the UoA(s) defined in the BMT match the UoA(s) defined in the Pre-Assessment Report or “Full Assessment Report”.
- 2.4.3 The CAB shall verify that the scores for Year 0 in the BMT match the scores in the Pre-Assessment Report or “Full Assessment Report”.
- 2.4.4 The CAB shall verify that the overall BMT index of the “Applicant Fishery” is correct.
- 2.4.5 The CAB shall verify that the scores for Expected Years 1-5 reflect the Improvement Action Plan.

2.5 MSC Improvement Program eligibility determination and reporting

- 2.5.1 The CAB shall only determine that an “Applicant Fishery” is eligible to enter the MSC Improvement Program if the requirements of 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 are met.
- 2.5.2 The CAB shall complete the MSC Improvement Program Eligibility Report using the ‘[MSC Improvement Program Eligibility Reporting Template](#)’.
- 2.5.2.1 The CAB shall notify the “Applicant Fishery” of the determination.
- 2.5.2.2 If the CAB determines that the “Applicant Fishery” is not eligible to enter the MSC Improvement Program, no further action is required.

Guidance 2.5.1

The CAB should include a clear rationale for the eligibility determination in the MSC Improvement Program Eligibility Report.

- 2.5.3 If the CAB determines that “Applicant Fishery” is eligible to enter the MSC Improvement Program, the CAB shall:
- a. Upload the MSC Improvement Program Eligibility Report and the application documents as per 1.1.1.c to the MSC database.
 - b. Enter the following information into the MSC database:
 - i. CAB contact
 - ii. UoA(s)
 - iii. Client contacts
 - iv. Annual catch data
 - v. Longitude and latitude of the UoA
- 2.5.4 The CAB shall respond to all MSC comments raised during the application process.
- 2.5.5 The CAB shall reject an “Applicant Fishery” if notified by the MSC to do so, following the process and timeline set out in the [MSC Rules on Unacceptable Conduct](#).

3 Verification of progress

3.1 Preparation and planning

- 3.1.1 The CAB shall follow the progress verification schedule in the IAP.
- 3.1.2 The CAB shall report any changes to the progress verification schedule and upload an announcement to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website.
- 3.1.3 The CAB shall determine whether to conduct the progress verification on-site or off-site.
- 3.1.3.1 If the duration of the IAP is more than two years, the CAB shall ensure that at least one on-site progress verification takes place.
 - 3.1.3.2 The CAB shall include a justification for the choice of on-site or off-site progress verification.

Guidance 3.1.3

The CAB should conduct an on-site progress verification around the midway point of the IAP. The CAB may conduct additional on-site progress verifications based on the CAB's judgement. In determining whether to conduct on-site or off-site progress verification, the CAB should consider the ability of the CAB to verify information and progress of improvement actions remotely. Factors such as significant delays or a high proportion of actions behind target could be considered when determining situations that require additional progress verifications.

- 3.1.4 Before each progress verification, the CAB shall request the following documents and information from the Project Manager:
- a. MSC Improvement Program Progress Report and supporting evidence.
 - b. Updated BMT with updated draft scoring across all PIs including those with "draft scoring ranges" ≥ 80 .
 - c. Updated IAP, if relevant, to reflect unexpected changes in draft scoring and timelines.
 - d. Updated annual catch data.
 - e. Updated 'MSC Scope Declaration Template', if relevant.
 - f. Updated 'MSC At Sea Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template', if relevant.
- 3.1.4.1 The CAB shall agree a timeline for the submission of the documents and information listed in 3.1.4 with the Project Manager.
- 3.1.4.2 The CAB shall notify the Project Manager that progress reports shall be submitted to the CAB by the verification dates identified in the progress verification schedule as per 2.3.1.m.

Guidance 3.1.4.a

The CAB should inform the Project Manager that the MSC Improvement Program Progress Report should include:

- Any changes to "draft scoring ranges" and BMT indices and supporting evidence for changes.
- Information on tasks that are due for completion by the progress verification even if those tasks are not linked to PIs that are due a draft score change.

Guidance 3.1.4.c

The CAB should inform the Project Manager that if there are any unexpected changes in draft scoring this would require the Project Manager to submit an updated IAP. Examples of unexpected changes to draft scoring include the following:

- "Draft scoring ranges" have decreased for PIs that previously scored ≥ 80 , whereby relevant improvement actions should be added to a revised IAP and submitted to the CAB for verification.
- New information that results in a need for additional actions, tasks and / or revised timelines for an existing PI with existing Improvement Actions.

The CAB should inform the Project Manager that any additional improvement actions should be completed by the "Completion Date" unless exceptional circumstances apply as per Section 3.5.

The CAB should inform the Project Manager that if the IAP is considered ahead of target, the Project Manager may revise "Completion Date" to reduce the duration of the IAP.

- 3.1.5 The CAB shall appoint an assessor or assessors who meet the competencies as per FCP, 7.1.3, to conduct the progress verification.

3.2 Progress verification activities

- 3.2.1 At each progress verification, the CAB shall review the documents and information listed in 3.1.4.
- 3.2.2 The CAB shall verify the following:
- a. The Project Manager has completed the Progress Report using the '[MSC Improvement Program Progress Reporting Template](#)'.
 - b. The MSC Improvement Program Fishery continues to meet the scope requirements of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) as per the relevant version of the [MSC Fisheries Standard](#) or the [FCP](#).
 - c. The UoA(s) remains consistent with entry documentation (1.1.1.c) and conforms to 2.2.2.f.
 - d. Expected progress against specified improvement actions and tasks in the IAP.
 - e. Any changes to “draft scoring ranges” for each PI are supported by evidence that the associated improvement action(s) or tasks have been implemented.
 - f. The progress status of improvement actions and tasks associated with PIs that are not due a draft score change is supported by evidence.
 - g. The IAP remains relevant and likely to deliver the objective set out as per 2.3.1.f.ii by the “Completion Date”.
 - h. Changes to the expected and actual BMT Index match the MSC Improvement Program Progress Report.
 - i. Exceptional circumstances, if applicable (see Section 3.5).
 - j. Any changes or updates in the fishery reported by the Project Manager.

Guidance 3.2.2.e

The CAB should not review actual scoring of PIs to verify that draft scores have changed.

Guidance 3.2.2.h

If the progress verification schedule is not annual, the CAB should only verify changes in draft scoring for the relevant ‘expected year’ in the BMT. For example, if a progress verification is scheduled 18 months after MSC Improvement Program entry, the CAB should verify changes in draft scoring against the ‘expected year 2’ draft scores and complete ‘actual year 2’ draft scoring. In this case, the ‘Actual Year 1’ and ‘Expected Year 1’ draft scoring should remain the same as year 0 to reflect that no progress verification took place.

- 3.2.3 If the Project Manager submits an updated IAP, the CAB shall:
- a. Verify the updates as per 2.3.1.
 - b. Verify that any new or revised improvement action timelines do not exceed the “Completion Date” (2.3.1.c), unless exceptional circumstances apply (Section 3.5).
- 3.2.4 If changes to the UoA(s) have been requested by the Project Manager, the CAB shall re-confirm eligibility for the MSC Improvement Program as per Section 2.
- 3.2.5 The CAB may seek the views of key stakeholders (either remotely or in-person) about changes reviewed as per 3.2.2.

Guidance 3.2.5

The CAB is not required to seek feedback from stakeholders, however, they may choose to do so where additional information is required to support the changes reported by the Project Manager during a progress verification.

- 3.2.6 If any of the requirements under 3.2.2 to 3.2.4 are not met, the CAB shall:
- a. Notify the Project Manager and request updated documentation is submitted as relevant to address the gap(s).
 - b. Determine whether the updated documents have addressed the gap(s) so that 3.2.2 to 3.2.4 are met, before making the Progress Determination as per Section 3.3.
 - c. Verify that any revised improvement actions in an updated IAP do not extend beyond the “Completion Date” as per 2.3.1.c, unless exceptional circumstances apply as per Section 3.5.

3.3 Progress determination

- 3.3.1 At each progress verification, the CAB shall determine:
- a. The progress at the PI level relative to the IAP actions, tasks and deadlines, for all PIs with “draft scoring ranges” <60 or 60-79 and
 - b. The overall progress against the expected “draft scoring ranges” and expected BMT index in the IAP for all PIs that are due a draft score change in the year of verification.

Guidance 3.3.1

At each Progress Verification, the CAB should use the IAP that was submitted and verified at the previous Progress Verification. For example, a revised IAP submitted to the CAB during a progress verification should only apply to subsequent progress verifications, not to the progress verification already underway.

Progress at Performance Indicator (PI) Level

- 3.3.2 The CAB shall determine progress at the PI level for all PIs with “draft scoring ranges” <60 or 60-79 using one of the following progress status categories:
- a. ‘On target’:
 - i. Where a draft score change is due, the PI has achieved the target “draft scoring range”.
 - ii. Where a draft score change is not due, all relevant improvement actions and tasks from the IAP have been completed.
 - b. ‘Behind target’:
 - i. Where a draft score change is due, the PI has not achieved the target “draft scoring range”.
 - ii. Where a draft score change is not due, all relevant improvement actions and tasks have not been completed.
 - c. ‘Exceptional circumstances’: the PI is behind target, but the CAB has determined that exceptional circumstances apply as per Section 3.5.

Guidance 3.3.2

The CAB should interpret the term relevant to mean those actions or tasks that were due to be completed by the current progress verification.

- 3.3.3 If the CAB cannot verify evidence to support draft score changes, the CAB shall not verify the draft score change.

- 3.3.4 The CAB shall only consider that a PI has achieved its final target “draft scoring range”, and be listed as ‘completed’, when all improvement actions and tasks associated with that PI have been implemented.

Overall progress

- 3.3.5 To verify overall progress, the CAB shall:
- a. Identify those PIs as per 3.3.2 that are due a draft score change at the current progress verification.

Guidance 3.3.5.a

The CAB should not consider those PIs where the target draft scoring range is the same as the actual scoring range of the year before when determining the overall progress in that year.

- b. Identify the number of PIs ‘on target’.
- c. Identify the number of PIs ‘behind target’.

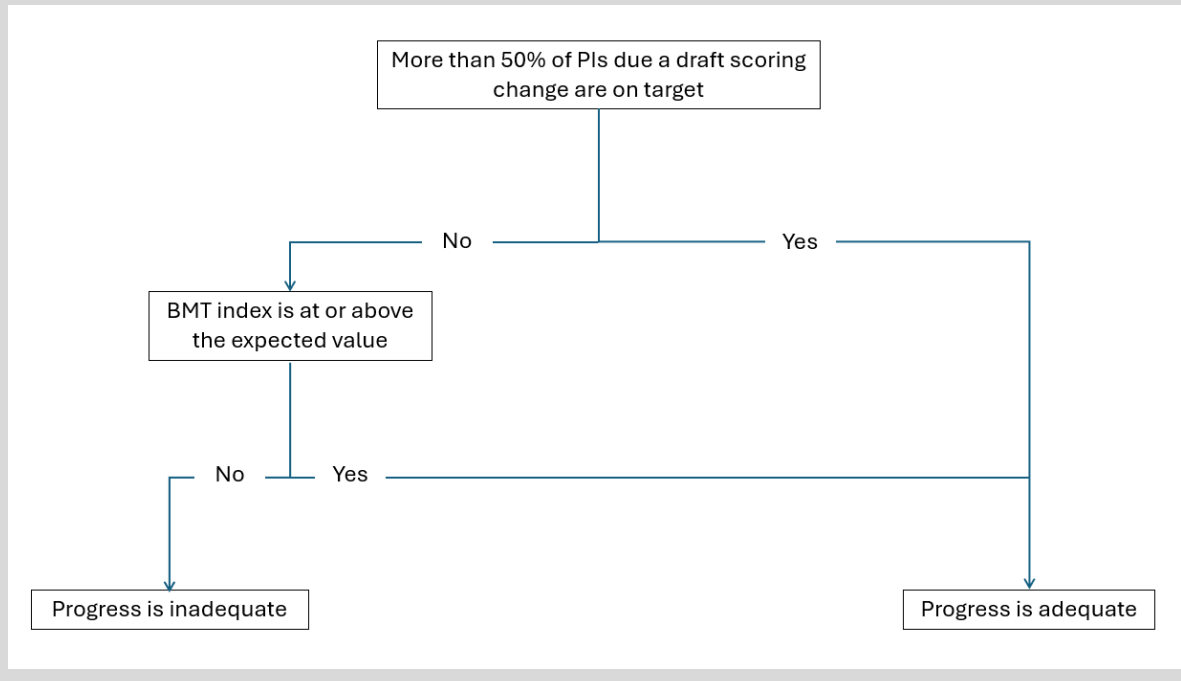
Guidance 3.3.5.c

If PIs are behind target and timelines for improvement actions require revision, the Project Manager may submit a revised IAP to the CAB for verification, however the CAB should only refer to the revised IAP during future progress verifications.

- d. Check the actual BMT index against the expected BMT index.
- 3.3.5.1 The CAB shall not include PIs that are behind target due to exceptional circumstances.
- 3.3.5.2 The CAB shall include PIs that were reported ‘behind target’ in a previous progress verification until they are either ‘on target’ or ‘completed’.
- 3.3.5.3 If scores have dropped for PIs that previously scored ≥ 80 , the CAB shall not identify these PIs as ‘behind target’.
- 3.3.6 The CAB shall determine overall progress as either:
- a. ‘Adequate’ if either:
 - i. More than 50% of the PIs due a draft score change are ‘on target’, or
 - ii. Less than or equal to 50% of PIs are ‘on target’ but the ‘actual BMT index’ is at or higher than the ‘expected BMT index’.
 - b. ‘Inadequate’ if less than or equal to 50% of the PIs due for a draft score change are on target and the ‘actual BMT index’ is lower than the ‘expected BMT index’.

Guidance 3.3.6

The intent of including the consideration of the BMT index under 3.3.6.b is to avoid penalising a fishery which may not have made progress on PIs where a score improvement is expected but is ahead on other PIs that were not due for a change in draft score.



3.4 Progress reporting

- 3.4.1 The CAB shall complete a Progress Verification Report using the '[MSC Improvement Program Progress Verification Reporting Template](#)'.
- 3.4.2 The CAB shall include a justification for the determination of progress in the Progress Verification Report, which may be supplemented by supporting evidence as required.
- 3.4.3 The CAB shall upload the following documents to the MSC database within 30 days of receiving the requested documents and all required information from the Project Manager:
- The MSC Improvement Program Progress Report.
 - The MSC Improvement Program Progress Verification Report.
 - The updated BMT.
 - The updated IAP, if relevant.
 - The updated 'MSC Scope Declaration Template', if relevant.
 - The updated 'MSC at Sea Labour Eligibility Requirements Reporting Template', if relevant.
- 3.4.3.1 The CAB shall update the progress status of the MSC Improvement Program Fishery in the MSC database.
- 3.4.3.2 The CAB shall enter the updated annual catch data into the MSC database.

3.5 Exceptional circumstances

- 3.5.1 The CAB shall interpret 'exceptional circumstances' to refer to situations where, even with satisfactory implementation of the IAP, the expected draft score change for a PI cannot be achieved by the "MSC Improvement Program Completion Date" as per 2.3.1.c.

Guidance 3.5.1

Examples of 'exceptional circumstances' are unforeseen situations that could prevent achieving completion of improvement actions. These examples could include: for Outcome PIs, an ecologically harmful incident such as a major oil spill impacting the UoA; and, for Management and Information PIs, factors outside of the control of the fishery such as serious socio-political unrest e.g. a coup d'état.

The CAB may apply exceptional circumstances if the fishery plans to transition between different versions of the MSC Fisheries Standard (e.g., from v2.01 to v3.1), to enable the fishery time to work on additional improvements.

- 3.5.2 In situations where exceptional circumstances apply, the CAB may accept an extension to the "Completion Date" of the IAP of up to a maximum of 8 years from the MSC Improvement Program Start Date.
- 3.5.3 If the CAB accepts an extension due to exceptional circumstances, the CAB shall instruct the Project Manager to submit an updated IAP which states how the IAP will achieve a performance level equal to an MSC pass by the new "Completion Date".
 - a. The CAB shall verify the revised IAP as per 3.2.3.
- 3.5.4 The CAB shall review the continued implications of exceptional circumstances at each progress verification.

3.6 Completion of the MSC Improvement Program

- 3.6.1 The CAB shall upload either an ACDR, or a Surveillance Report, to the MSC database by the "Completion Date" in order to complete the MSC Improvement Program.
- 3.6.2 The CAB shall notify the Project Manager that the fishery will be withdrawn from the MSC Improvement Program if 3.6.1 is not met.
- 3.6.3 The CAB shall coordinate with the MSC to ensure that the status of the relevant UoA(s) in the MSC Improvement Program is updated in the MSC database.
 - 3.6.3.1 The CAB shall list UoAs that have completed the MSC Improvement Program, but have not yet entered MSC full assessment, as 'MSC Improvement Program' on the MSC database for a maximum of 3 months following the "Completion Date".
 - 3.6.3.2 If the UoAs have not entered MSC full assessment after 3 months of the "Completion Date", the CAB shall change the status to 'Withdrawn'.
 - 3.6.3.3 The CAB shall list UoAs that have successfully completed the MSC Improvement Program and have entered full assessment as 'In Assessment' on the MSC database.
 - 3.6.3.4 The CAB shall list UoAs that have not successfully completed the MSC Improvement Program as 'Withdrawn'.

Guidance 3.6

If the fishery in the MSC Improvement Program comprises more than one UoA, individual UoAs may have different "Completion Dates" and may be completed separately without impacting the status of UoAs that remain in the MSC Improvement Program.

Guidance 3.6.3.4

Where a draft pass score against the MSC Fisheries Standard has not been achieved by the deadline of the final Progress Verification, the UoA will be listed as 'Withdrawn' on the MSC website.

3.7 Withdrawing from the MSC Improvement Program

Guidance 3.7

If the MSC Improvement Program Fishery comprises more than one UoA, individual UoAs may be withdrawn separately without impacting the status of the remaining UoAs.

Withdrawing a UoA from the MSC Improvement Program

- 3.7.1 The CAB shall withdraw a UoA from the MSC Improvement Program if any of the following apply:
- Requested to do so by the Project Manager.
 - The UoA no longer conforms to the MSC Improvement Program eligibility requirements in Section 2.
 - The UoA's overall progress status is 'inadequate' as per 3.3.6.b for 2 consecutive progress verifications.
 - The duration between consecutive progress verification reports being uploaded to the MSC database is longer than 2 years as per 2.3.1.m.
 - The Project Manager does not respond to the CAB and/or has not provided relevant documents, information and supporting evidence when requested by the CAB within the timeframes agreed as per 3.1.4.1.
 - The "Completion Date" does not meet 2.3.1.c.
 - The CAB has not uploaded an ACDR or Surveillance Report to the MSC database as per 3.6.1.
 - The CAB has been notified by the MSC to withdraw the UoA(s), following the process and timeline set out in the [MSC Rules on Unacceptable Conduct](#).
- 3.7.2 If a UoA is withdrawn from the MSC Improvement Program, the CAB shall set the effective date for the UoA to be withdrawn as 30 days after the decision to withdraw the UoA.
- 3.7.2.1 The CAB shall:
- Inform the Project Manager and the MSC (fisheries@msc.org) that the UoA is being withdrawn.
 - Upload the '[MSC Improvement Program Notice of Withdrawal Template](#)' to the MSC database to be published on the MSC website.
 - In coordination with the MSC, update the status of the UoA in the MSC database to 'withdrawn' on the effective date.

Re-entry of a withdrawn or completed Fishery into the MSC Improvement Program

- 3.7.3 The CAB shall not accept an application to (re)enter the MSC Improvement Program from a fishery that has previously been withdrawn from or completed the MSC Improvement Program if the total time in the MSC Improvement Program exceeds 5 years from the "MSC Improvement Program Start Date" as per 2.3.1.c, or 8 years as per 3.5.2.
- 3.7.3.1 The CAB may accept an application from a fishery that has previously been withdrawn from the MSC Improvement Program, if the CAB can verify that:
- The MSC Improvement Program Fishery conforms to Section 2.
 - The UoA(s) has/have not changed
 - The UoA(s) has/have made the required progress to address 3.7.1.c, if relevant, such that an 'adequate' determination is made for progress.

- 3.7.4 The CAB shall reinstate a withdrawn or completed MSC Improvement Program Fishery by following the verification of progress process in Section 3.
- 3.7.4.1 The CAB shall use the original “MSC Improvement Program Start Date” to verify that 2.3.1.c is met.

4 Verification of MSC Improvement Product eligibility

4.1 MSC Improvement Product eligibility application

Guidance 4.1

Verification of improvement actions relating to and reporting on the fishery traceability system and MSC Improvement Product eligibility is optional, unless the fishery has applied for MSC Improvement Product eligibility.

During its participation in, or from its application to the MSC Improvement Program, a fishery may apply to their CAB to determine MSC Improvement Product eligibility at any time. This would enable their products to enter MSC certified supply chains and to carry the “MSC Improvement Product” back-of-pack claim. If multiple UoAs apply, individual UoAs may have different MSC Improvement Product eligibility outcomes, as well as different MSC Improvement Product Eligibility start and end dates.

- 4.1.1 Upon receipt of an application by an MSC Improvement Program (Applicant) fishery for MSC Improvement Product eligibility the CAB shall:
- Notify the MSC (fisheries@msc.org) of the intent to apply for MSC Improvement Product eligibility.
 - Appoint an individual or team to conduct the MSC Improvement Product eligibility verification who meet(s) the competencies as per the personnel requirements in the [MSC Chain of Custody Certification Requirements](#) and the [CoC auditor personnel requirements](#) in the [MSC General Certification Requirements](#).

4.2 MSC Improvement Product eligibility criteria and verification activities

- 4.2.1 The CAB shall verify MSC Improvement Product eligibility either:
- As part of the MSC Improvement Program eligibility verification as per Section 2, or
 - As part of a progress verification as per Section 3.
 - As a separate verification activity if an application is received outside of verification activities in 4.2.1.a or b.

Guidance 4.2.1c

The CAB may conduct MSC Improvement Product eligibility verification at any time during the MSC Improvement Program fishery’s participation in the MSC Improvement Program. While the CAB may conduct MSC Improvement Product eligibility verification outside of the regular verification events, for efficiency, the CAB should conduct MSC Improvement Product eligibility verification alongside the initial MSC Improvement Program eligibility verification or progress verification, where possible.

- 4.2.1.1 The CAB shall determine whether to conduct the MSC Improvement Product eligibility verification on-site or off-site.
- 4.2.1.2 The CAB shall include a justification for the choice of on-site or off-site verification.

- 4.2.2 The CAB shall verify the following MSC Improvement Product eligibility criteria for each UoA identified in the application:
- a. The UoA is a verified 'eligible' MSC Improvement Program UoA as per Section 2.
 - b. All Performance Indicators (PIs) have a draft scoring range of at least 60-79 as per the most recent verification (either entry or progress verification).
 - c. The IAP is up-to-date as per 2.3.
- 4.2.3 The CAB shall review the traceability section in the Pre-Assessment Report, "Full Assessment Report", or MSC Improvement Program Progress Report submitted by the Project Manager as per 1.1.1.c.iv, 3.1.4.a, or 4.2.1.c, as relevant.
- 4.2.3.1 The CAB shall request that the Project Manager submits information on any developments or changes within the UoA that may affect traceability and the ability to segregate "MSC Improvement Product" from non-MSC Improvement Product.
- 4.2.3.2 Where the fishery is applying for Improvement Product Eligibility as a separate verification activity as per 4.2.1.c, the CAB shall verify information provided through an MSC Improvement Program Progress Report submitted by the Improvement Program Project Manager.

Guidance 4.2.3.1

Development or changes may relate to the UoA's scope, traceability system or approaches used for achieving "MSC Improvement Product" traceability. The CAB should review and confirm any impact on Improvement Product Eligibility as per 4.2.1.

- 4.2.4 The CAB shall confirm that the fishery client has sufficient systems of tracking and tracing (traceability systems) to ensure all fish and fish products identified and sold as "MSC Improvement Products" by the fishery originate from the individual UoA.
- 4.2.4.1 The CAB shall confirm that the fishery client maintains appropriate records, for a period of 2 years (or for the full duration of the product's shelf-life if longer than 2 years), to demonstrate traceability back to the individual UoA.
- 4.2.4.2 If fish and fish products are transhipped on the high seas, the CAB shall only determine that traceability systems are sufficient if:
- a. The systems are verified independently from the fishery (e.g. independent observer).
 - b. The systems cover fishing and receiving vessels involved in transhipment.
 - c. The systems apply to all the transhipment events.
- 4.2.4.3 The CAB shall confirm that risks to the integrity of "MSC Improvement Products":
- a. Have been identified.
 - b. Are based on the risk factors listed in the '[MSC Pre-Assessment Reporting Template](#)'.
 - c. Are managed and mitigated.

Guidance 4.2.4.1

Traceability records can be maintained by fishers, the fishery client group, auctions, or other entities depending on the management of the UoA and the point at which subsequent CoC begins.

4.3 MSC Improvement Product eligibility determination and reporting

- 4.3.1 The CAB shall complete an Improvement Product Eligibility Verification Report using the [‘MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Verification Reporting Template’](#).
- 4.3.2 The CAB shall determine if fish and fish products from the UoA(s) are eligible to be sold as “MSC Improvement Product” and enter into MSC certified chains of custody.
- 4.3.3 If the CAB determines that fish and fish products from the UoA(s) are not eligible to be sold as “MSC Improvement Product”, the CAB shall exclude the UoA(s) from the Improvement Product Eligibility Verification Report.
- 4.3.4 If the CAB determines that fish and fish products from the UoA are eligible to be sold as “MSC Improvement Product” and enter into MSC certified chains of custody, the CAB shall:
- a. Include the determination in the MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Verification Report.
 - b. Complete the [‘MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Statement Template’](#), to include the following information:
 - i. The unique MSC Improvement Program code generated for each UoA from which fish and fish products are eligible to be sold as “MSC Improvement Product”.
 - ii. The specific UoA(s) from which fish and fish products are eligible to be sold as “MSC Improvement Product”.
 - iii. For Fishery Client Groups, the entities eligible to sell the UoA catch as “MSC Improvement Product” into certified chains of custody.
 - iv. The MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Dates (start and end dates) from which fish and fish products can be sold as MSC Improvement Product and carry the “MSC Improvement Product” back-of-pack claim.
 - A. The CAB shall set the MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Date as the publication date of the MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Statement, or date after this.
 - v. The point of intended change of ownership of product.
 - vi. The points of landing, auctions or other transfer which may be used for the sale of “MSC Improvement Product” into further certified chains of custody.
 - vii. The point at which subsequent CoC certification is required, in accordance with the following:
 - A. CoC certification is always required following first change of ownership to any party not eligible to sell “MSC Improvement Product”.
 - B. CoC certification may be required at an earlier stage than 4.3.4.vii.A, if the CAB determines that the tracking and tracing systems are not sufficient to ensure all fish and fish products identified as “MSC Improvement Product” originate from the individual UoA.
 - viii. The entities, or categories of entities, at the point of landing and/or sale which are required to have separate CoC certification.
 - ix. How fish or fish products can be identified or can be confirmed as “MSC Improvement Product” at the point that it enters certified chains of custody.

Guidance 4.3.4.b.i

The MSC Improvement Program code is automatically generated on the MSC database.

Guidance 4.3.4.b.iv

The CAB should report the “MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Start Date” as a day, month and year (DD/MM/YYYY). The “MSC Improvement Product Eligibility End Date” should be the same as the specific UoA’s “MSC Improvement Program Completion Date”.

Guidance 4.3.4.b.iii and viii.

Entities or categories of entities include, but are not limited, to vessel owners, trading agents, offloaders, storage facilities, processors, or subcontractors.

- 4.3.5 The CAB shall inform the “MSC Improvement Program (Applicant) Fishery” of the MSC Improvement Product eligibility determination.
- 4.3.6 If the CAB determines that fish and fish products from the UoA are eligible to be sold as “MSC Improvement Product” and enter into MSC certified chains of custody, the CAB shall inform the “MSC Improvement Program (Applicant) Fishery” of the following:
- a. The MSC Improvement Product Eligibility dates
 - b. The specific eligible UoA(s) from which fish and fish products can be sold as “MSC Improvement Product”.
 - c. That the fishery client shall clearly identify and segregate “MSC Improvement Product” from any products that are non-MSC Improvement Product at all times.
 - d. That the fishery client shall maintain full traceability records for all “MSC Improvement Products”, demonstrating traceability back to the individual UoA, including elements detailed in 4.2.4.
 - e. That the fishery client shall only identify, sell and promote products as “MSC Improvement Product” and/or use the “MSC Improvement Product” back-of-pack claim if:
 - i. There is a valid MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Statement,
 - ii. The fishery client has been granted approval to do so under the terms of the MSC license agreement (ecolabel@msc.org).
 - f. That the fishery client shall provide appropriate records to buyers to demonstrate eligibility of the fish or fish products identified as “MSC Improvement Product”.
 - g. That the Project Manager shall inform the CAB, in writing, within 10 days of any changes that affect traceability.
 - h. That if the fishery client sells, or makes a claim about, non-eligible (non-conforming) product as “MSC Improvement Product”, they are required to:
 - i. Inform any affected customers and their CAB of the issue within 4 days of detection.
 - ii. Immediately cease to sell any non-eligible products in stock as “MSC Improvement Product” until the eligibility status has been verified by the CAB.
 - iii. Cooperate with the CAB to determine the cause of the issue and to implement any corrective actions required.
 - i. That “MSC Improvement Product” eligibility is subject to regular review.

Guidance 4.3.6.e

Use of the term “MSC Improvement Products” or the full name of the program (i.e. ‘MSC Improvement Program’) on products or traceability records in a purely business-to-business nature to identify products is permitted without a valid licence agreement.

Any other use of the ‘MSC Improvement Program’ or the “MSC Improvement Product” back-of-pack claim requires a licence agreement from MSCI, the MSC’s licensing function for MSC Improvement Program products. If involved in product packing, during progress verification the MSC Improvement Program fishery client may be asked to show evidence of claims approval emails received from MSCI.

- 4.3.7 If the CAB determines that fish and fish products from the UoA are eligible to be sold as “MSC Improvement Product” and enter into MSC certified chains of custody, the CAB shall upload the completed MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Verification Report and the MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Statement to the MSC database for publication on the MSC website, prior to or on the determined MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Date.
- 4.3.8 If the CAB determines that fish and fish products from the UoA are not eligible to be sold as “MSC Improvement Product” and enter into MSC certified chains of custody, the CAB shall instruct the client not to sell product as “MSC Improvement Product”.

4.4 MSC Improvement Product eligibility review

- 4.4.1 The CAB shall review MSC Improvement Product eligibility at each progress verification (Section 3).
- 4.4.2 If the CAB is notified of any changes that affect MSC Improvement Product eligibility, the CAB shall:
 - a. Review the changes.
 - b. Verify MSC Improvement Product eligibility as per 4.2.
 - a. Update the MSC Improvement Product eligibility determination, as necessary, following 4.3.
- 4.4.2.1 The CAB shall upload a revised MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Statement to the MSC Database for publication on the MSC website within 14 days of being notified of any changes.

4.5 Withdrawing MSC Improvement Product eligibility

- 4.5.1 The CAB shall withdraw MSC Improvement Product eligibility if:
 - a. Requested to do so by the fishery client.
 - b. The UoA no longer meets the MSC Improvement Product eligibility under 4.2.2 and 4.2.4.
- 4.5.2 Upon the decision to withdraw MSC Improvement Product eligibility, the CAB shall:
 - a. Set the effective date for the withdrawal 30 days after the decision to withdraw.
 - b. Determine the fishery client’s ability to segregate fish based on date of capture.
 - c. Inform the Project Manager and the MSC (fisheries@msc.org) of the decision to withdraw MSC Improvement Product eligibility.
 - d. Update and upload the MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Verification Report and the MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Statement to the MSC database to be published on the MSC website.

- e. Announce the withdrawal by completing and uploading the '[MSC Improvement Program Notice of Withdrawal](#)' to the MSC database to be published on the MSC website.
- f. Update the MSC Improvement Product eligibility status in the MSC database on the effective date of withdrawal.
- g. Instruct the fishery client:
 - i. Not to make any "MSC Improvement Product" back-of-pack claims for any fish sold that are caught on and after the date the MSC Improvement product eligibility is withdrawn.
 - ii. Fish caught prior to the withdrawal date may continue to be sold using the "MSC Improvement Product" back-of-pack claim only if the CAB confirms the MSC Improvement Program UoA's ability to segregate fish based on date of capture in conformance to 4.5.2.b.
 - iii. To inform all relevant parties and entities of the date that MSC Improvement Product eligibility is being withdrawn.
 - iv. To inform existing customers, in writing, of the date that MSC Improvement Product eligibility is being withdrawn, within 4 days of the publication of the Notice of MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Withdrawal.
 - v. To keep records of advice as per 4.5.2.g.ii and iii.
- h. Withdraw the MSC Improvement Product eligibility until such time that the cause of the withdrawal has been fully addressed.

Guidance 4.5.2.g.ii

Relevant parties and entities are listed as per 4.3.4.b.iii and viii

- 4.5.3 If a CAB accepts an application from a fishery that that has previously been withdrawn from the MSC Improvement Program (3.7.3.1), the CAB may conduct an Improvement Product eligibility verification, if requested, as per Section 4.2.

5 Confidentiality

- 5.1.1 The CAB shall treat the existence, process, and outcomes of the MSC Improvement Program entry, progress and MSC Improvement Product eligibility verification activities as confidential until they have been published online.
- 5.1.2 The CAB shall treat any Pre-Assessment Report, IAP and Progress Report relating to an MSC Improvement Program (Applicant) fishery as confidential to the fishery client, Project Manager, the CAB and MSC, unless otherwise directed by the MSC Improvement Program (Applicant) Fishery.

End of document
