

# MSC Chain of Custody Program: Supplementary Standard and Certification Requirements for the MSC Improvement Program



**Version 1.0, 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 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	29 October 2024	N/A – new document

## 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. The ultimate intention was to prepare them to be assessed 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 are given the option for their products to enter chains of custody (CoC) and to carry a back-of-pack statement, subject to fulfilling specific eligibility criteria. This initiative enables these fisheries to demonstrate their commitment to improvement whilst assuring buyers that their seafood comes from a verified MSC Improvement Program source.

N.B. Fisheries in the MSC Improvement Program are not automatically eligible to carry the MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement; only those verified to have met and that continue to meet the additional MSC Improvement Program CoC eligibility criteria are eligible to make an MSC Improvement Program back-of-pack statement.

### About this document

The MSC Chain of Custody Program—Supplementary Standard and Certification Requirements for the MSC Improvement Program is normative for all Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) carrying out Chain of Custody audits with the MSC Improvement Program in scope. Auditors shall use this document in addition to the MSC Chain of Custody Standard, Chain of Custody Certification Requirements, and General Certification Requirements. This document provides supplementary requirements, additions, and modifications to the latest versions of the Chain of Custody Program scheme documents.

### Scope for MSC Improvement Program Chain of Custody certification

Chain of Custody (CoC) certification provides credible assurance that products sold with the MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement originated from an MSC Improvement Program eligible fishery and can be traced throughout the supply chain to an MSC Improvement Program fishery source. Any organisation trading or handling products from an MSC Improvement Program fishery is eligible to have CoC certification. CoC certification is a requirement for each organisation in the supply chain taking legal ownership of MSC Improvement Program products that wishes to make a MSC Improvement Program (back-of-pack) product statement, up until the point where products are packed into consumer ready tamper proof packaging.

The MSC CoC Standard is used for supply chain organisations to handle MSC Improvement Program (non-certified), MSC and ASC certified seafood with a single CoC audit, although separate CoC certificates and codes are issued.

## Implementation timeframes

Publication date: 29 October 2024

Effective date: 31 January 2024

CABs shall apply MSC Chain of Custody Program: Supplementary Standard and Certification Requirements for the MSC Improvement Program v1.0 on the effective date and achieve accreditation for the MSC Improvement Program Chain of Custody.

## 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 the 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 become part of this standard through reference in this text. The latest published edition of the document applies.

- a. MSC Chain of Custody Certification Requirements.
- b. MSC-MSCI Vocabulary.
- c. MSC Labour Eligibility Requirements.
- d. ASC Chain of Custody Module.
- e. MSC Ecolabel User Guide.
- f. ASC Logo User Guide.
- i. MSC General Certification Requirements

## Terms and definitions

Concepts, terms and phrases are defined in the MSC-MSCI Vocabulary.

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# MSC Chain of Custody Program: Supplementary Standard and Certification Requirements for the MSC Improvement Program

## Part A. General

- A.1. The CAB shall apply these supplementary requirements in all Chain of Custody (CoC) audits with the MSC Improvement Program in scope.
- A.2. Unless specifically noted, the CAB shall apply all other requirements in the latest versions of the MSC Chain of Custody Standard: Default version, the MSC Chain of Custody Standard: Group version, the MSC Chain of Custody Standard: Consumer-Facing Organisation version, the MSC Chain of Custody Certification Requirements, and the MSC General Certification Requirements.
- A.2.1 The CAB shall use the terms 'MSC Improvement Program' and/or 'MSC Improvement Program product' where "fish", "certified", "fish product" and/or "certified product" appear in any of the program documents referenced in A.2.

## Part B. Chain of Custody Default Standard v5.1; Chain of Custody Group Standard v2.1; and Chain of Custody Consumer-Facing Organisation Standard v2.1

### 1 MSC Improvement Products are purchased from MSC Improvement Program eligible suppliers

- 1.1 The organisation shall have a process in place to ensure that all MSC Improvement Products are purchased from MSC Improvement Program eligible suppliers or MSC Improvement Program fisheries.
- 1.1.1 If receiving or buying directly from a MSC Improvement Program fishery, the organisation shall have a process that includes:
- Verifying that the products come from a MSC Improvement Program Unit of Assessment (UoA) on the MSC website (fisheries.msc.org).
  - Verifying that the product being sold as MSC Improvement Product is included in a valid MSC Improvement Program Product Eligibility Statement.
  - Verifying the point at which CoC certification starts (as stated in the MSC Improvement Program Fishery CoC Eligibility Statement) to confirm there is no gap in CoC certification coverage.

## 2 MSC Improvement Products are identifiable

2.1 The organisation shall identify MSC Improvement Products as MSC Improvement Product at all stages of purchasing, receiving, storing, processing, packing, labelling, selling and delivering, except for sales invoices to final consumers.

2.1.1 The organisation shall not use the acronym MSC for the identification of 'MSC Improvement Product'

### Guidance 2.1

The organisation should identify MSC Improvement Products on the physical product as well as on the accompanying traceability records. The organisation may achieve this by placing a sign or label on the package, container, or pallet.

Organisations may use a variety of methods to identify MSC Improvement Products, including acronyms, the MSC Improvement Program code, or another internal system of identification. Non-consumer facing, business to business use of the MSC Improvement Program code for traceability purposes would not require a separate license agreement or MSCI approval (see 2.4).

MSC Improvement Program back-of-pack product statement may only be made on fish and fish products that are eligible to be sold as MSC Improvement Product, as determined by a CAB and supported by an MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Statement.

2.2 If products are sold as MSC Improvement Product, the organisation shall identify the product as MSC Improvement Product on the line item of the related invoice unless all products on the invoice are certified, except for sales invoices to final consumers.

### Guidance 2.2

The organisation may identify MSC Improvement Products on the invoice line item in various ways, such as using the MSC Improvement Program code or a unique product code that corresponds to an MSC Improvement Product and has been communicated to customers.

If all items on an invoice are MSC Improvement Product, without other scheme categories (e.g. MSC or ASC certified, non-certified), the organisation may use MSC Improvement Product identification at the top of the invoice only.

- 2.3 The organisation shall clearly identify MSC Improvement Product from other certified/ non-certified products if relevant, except for sales invoices to final consumers.
- 2.4 The organisation shall only promote products as MSC Improvement Product or use the MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement if it has been granted approval to do so under the terms of the license agreement (ecolabel@msc.org).

#### **Guidance 2.4**

The organisation may use a specific MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement. The organisation should show evidence of approval emails received from MSC I during an audit.

- 2.5 The organisation shall not use the MSC label or trademark on MSC Improvement Products.

### **3 MSC Improvement Products are segregated**

- 3.1 The organisation shall not substitute MSC Improvement Products with certified and/or non-certified products.

#### **Guidance 3.1**

Substitution includes selling products as MSC Improvement Product that are not eligible to be sold as MSC Improvement Product. Products from MSC Improvement Program fisheries are not automatically eligible to be sold as MSC Improvement Product. Only products determined by a CAB as eligible to be sold as MSC Improvement Product and included in an MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Statement are eligible.

- 3.2 If the organisation wishes to sell MSC Improvement Product, the organisation shall not mix MSC Improvement Product and MSC certified products.

#### **Guidance 3.2**

MSC Improvement Product and MSC certified products cannot be mixed, even if they are of the same species or from the same supplier, if intended to be sold/ claimed as MSC Improvement Product.

- 3.2.1 If MSC Improvement Product (non-certified) seafood is used as an ingredient in certified products, the organisation shall follow the non-MSC/ ASC certified seafood ingredient rules.



- 3.3 If the organisation wishes to sell product as MSC Improvement Product, the organisation shall not mix products from different recognised schemes that share the MSC CoC Standard.

#### **Guidance 3.3**

Recognised schemes that use the MSC CoC Standard for supply chain assurance are the MSC Improvement Program, MSC and Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC).

## **4 MSC Improvement Products are traceable and volumes are recorded**

No additions to or modifications of the MSC CoC Standard.

## **5 The organisation's management system addresses the requirements of this Standard.**

- 5.1 Management and training
- 5.1.1 The organisation shall operate a management system that is effective in addressing all requirements in the Supplementary Standard and Certification Requirements for the MSC Improvement Program.

#### **Guidance 5.1.1**

The management system includes the systems, policies and procedures used to ensure that the organisation complies with the Supplementary Standard and Certification Requirements for the MSC Improvement Program. The extent of documentation required for the management system may vary, depending on the size of the organisation, the type of activities, the complexity of processes, and the competency of personnel.

For very small or straightforward operations, written documentation may not be necessary as long as the responsible staff understand and can implement procedures related to this Standard.

- 5.2 Reporting changes
- 5.2.1 The organisation shall inform their CAB in writing or by email within 10 days of the following changes:
- MSC Improvement Products are received from a new MSC Improvement Program supplier or fishery.
  - A new MSC Improvement Program species is received.

### **Guidance 5.2.1**

This includes receiving product from an existing MSC/ASC supplier that has extended their scope to offer MSC Improvement Products. This allows the CAB to verify that the MSC Improvement Products received come from a valid MSC Improvement Program supplier.

- 5.2.2 The organisation shall receive written approval from their CAB before extending the scope of CoC to sell or handle MSC Improvement Products.

### **Guidance 5.2.2**

This requirement applies to all existing CoC certificate holders selling or handling MSC Improvement Products for the first time.

- 5.4 Non-conforming product

### **Guidance 5.4**

Non-conforming product relates to any product that is identified as MSC Improvement Product or labelled with an MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement that cannot be proven to be eligible.

Non-conforming product also includes products from a MSC Improvement Program Unit of Assessment (UoA) but with no MSC Improvement Product eligibility to confirm that product from that UoA is eligible to be sold as MSC Improvement Product. The MSC Improvement Product eligibility requirements are set out in the MSC Improvement Program Requirements and Guidance.

Non-conforming product could be discovered internally by staff or the supplier, or in some cases could be detected based on information received from the CAB, the MSC, or other parties.

Where an MSC Improvement Product is ordered but the supplier delivers non- MSC Improvement Product, and this is discovered on receipt, the product is rejected and returned to the supplier, the non-conforming product process does not apply.

- 5.4.1 The organisation shall have a process for managing non-conforming product that includes the following requirements:
- a. Immediately cease to sell any non-conforming product as MSC Improvement Product, until the MSC Product eligibility status has been verified in writing by the CAB.
  - b. Notify the CAB within 2 days of detecting the non-conforming product and provide the CAB with all necessary information to verify the origin of the non-conforming product.

- c. Identify the reason the product is non-conforming and implement measures to prevent re-occurrence where necessary.
- d. For any non-conforming product that cannot be verified as eligible to be sold as MSC Improvement Product, re-label or repack the product to ensure it is not sold as MSC Improvement Product.

#### **Guidance 5.4.1.d**

If the product cannot be verified as being eligible to be sold as MSC Improvement Product, it cannot be sold as MSC Improvement Product or use MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement .

- e. If non-conforming product has already been sold or shipped as MSC Improvement Product, notify all affected customers (excluding final consumers), within 4 days of detecting the issue.
  - i. This notification shall include the circumstances of the non-conforming product and all details of the affected products or batch(es).
  - ii. Records of notifications as per 5.4.1.e.i shall be maintained.

#### 5.5 Requests for traceability and supply chain assurance

- 5.5.1 The organisation shall cooperate with all requests from the MSC or its designated agents, or the CAB, for traceability documents or sales and purchase records of certified products and MSC Improvement Products.
- 5.5.2 The organisation shall allow the MSC, its designated agents, or the CAB, to collect samples of certified and MSC Improvement Products from their site for the purposes of DNA and/or other product authentication or conformity testing.

## **Part C. Chain of Custody Certification Requirements v3.2**

### **6 Process Requirements**

- 6.1 Need for CoC Certification
  - 6.1.1 The CAB shall evaluate each applicant to determine the need for CoC certification using the criteria below:
    - a. CoC certification is a requirement for all organisations that take legal ownership of MSC Improvement Product and intend to sell products as MSC Improvement Product, except in the following circumstances:
      - iii. Entities that are identified by reference to or on an MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Statement.

#### **Guidance 6.1.1.a.iii**

Entities identified by reference to or on an MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Statement could consist of agents, auctions, unloaders or others that handle MSC Improvement

Product in the proximity of the point of landing or first sale. The MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Statement for the fishery will clearly state the MSC Improvement Program Unit(s) of Assessment (UoA) from which fish and fish products are eligible to be sold as MSC Improvement Product and the entities included to share the MSC Improvement Product eligibility. The MSC Improvement Product Eligibility Statement also lists the specific entities, the MSC Improvement Product eligibility criteria, and a statement on the point in the supply chain from which CoC is required (see MSC Improvement Program Requirements and Guidance Section 4).

- 6.3.2 The CAB shall define the proposed scope of the certification with the applicant by identifying:
- a. The MSC Improvement Product species that are to be purchased or handled.
  - b. The activities to be undertaken with respect to MSC Improvement Product, as per the definition in Table 4.
  - c. The main activity undertaken by the client with regard to the MSC Improvement Product.
  - d. Whether the applicant intends to handle products from other recognised schemes that share the MSC CoC Standard.

#### **Guidance 6.3.2.d**

Except for CoC certificate holders buying directly from MSC Improvement Program fisheries, the CAB is not required to include the specific MSC Improvement Program fishery source information in the scope of CoC certification or pass down this information to further supply chain links. The CAB should still include all direct suppliers of MSC Improvement Product in the certificate holder's profile in the scheme database.

The CAB may record scope activities without separation in the scheme database.

- 6.3.2.1 If the applicant is handling products of the same species but from different schemes (e.g. MSC Improvement Program, MSC or ASC), the CAB shall define and manage the scope separately and by scheme.

#### **Guidance 6.3.2.1**

If existing MSC or ASC CoC certificate holders wish to handle MSC Improvement Product, the CAB should treat this as a scope extension. For example, if the applicant wants to handle MSC Improvement Product, the CAB should issue a separate MSC Improvement Program CoC certificate and code for the client but the CAB should complete a single CoC audit.

The CAB should include the organisation's non-certified subcontractors' activities, where they relate to certified and/or MSC Improvement Products, in the organisation's scope.

**Table 4: Activity scope definitions**

	Activity	Definition
17	MSC Improvement Program Harvest	This shall only be used for vessels operating in an MSC Improvement Program fishery that is applying for and being certified to the MSC CoC Standard.  This scope shall include vessels as named sites on the CoC certificate. If they are processing on-board, “processing” shall also be selected.
18	Handling MSC Improvement Program Products	This refers to a certificate holder that handles or subcontracts the handling of MSC Improvement Program product.

6.3.3 The CAB shall identify whether the applicant’s proposed suppliers are MSC Improvement Program eligible.

- e. If the applicant has listed MSC Improvement Program fisheries or suppliers that are not MSC Improvement Program eligible, the CAB shall inform the client that products from those suppliers are not eligible to be sold as MSC Improvement Product or with MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement.

6.5 Use of trademarks

6.5.1 Once entered as an applicant on the database, the CAB shall inform the client that it can sign a licence agreement to use the MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement :

- a. After an MSC Improvement Program CoC certificate has been issued.
- b. As long as the client complies with the license agreement.

**Guidance 6.5.1**

The MSC label and trademark can only be used on MSC-certified products. A product that is eligible to be sold as an MSC Improvement Product cannot use the MSC label or trademark, and can only use the MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement once approved to do so under the terms of the MSC I license agreement.

6.5.2 The CAB shall direct the client to MSC I ([ecolabel@msc.org](mailto:ecolabel@msc.org)) for all enquiries regarding the use of the MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement.

**Guidance 6.5.2**

The CAB may inform the client that packaging can be printed ahead of CoC certification with the MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement, but that packaging must be approved by MSC I and product cannot be sold as MSC Improvement Product and/or with MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement until their MSC Improvement Program CoC certification is complete and their MSC Improvement Program CoC status is shown as valid on the MSC website.

## 7 Audit planning

- 7.1.8 The CAB shall verify the MSC Improvement Program licence status of the client or, where the client is not the licence holder, shall seek written confirmation from MSC I that a third party is the licence holder.

### Guidance 7.1.8

If the client uses the MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement on its own products or for a customer, the auditor will need to know the current status of the client's or customer's licence agreement. Organisations that do not use any MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement will not require a licence agreement. The auditor may contact MSC I via [ecolabel@msc.org](mailto:ecolabel@msc.org) to confirm the MSC Improvement Program licence status.

## 8 Evaluation

### 8.2 Evaluation for single, multi-site, and group CoC audits

### 8.3 Evaluation for CoC CFO audits

#### Segregation

- 8.2.7 (Also 8.3.7) Auditors shall establish that appropriate measures are taken by the client to segregate, identify and prevent mixing between:
- Certified, MSC Improvement Product and non-certified seafood.
  - Where relevant, between seafood certified to other recognised schemes sharing the CoC Standard.

### Guidance 8.2.7.b (also 8.3.7.b)

While MSC Improvement Product is not a certified seafood, it shares the same CoC Standard and would be recognised as a product from a different scheme to MSC. Clients will have to demonstrate segregation between MSC and/or ASC-certified, MSC Improvement Products and non-MSC Improvement Products, and non-certified at all stages of product handling, where handled.

#### Record-verification exercises

- 8.2.9 Auditors shall conduct the following record-verification exercises while on site, relating to certified and/or MSC Improvement Product (or similar non-certified product):
- Traceability tests on a batch or batches of products sold or ready for sale.
    - The test shall link input to output or vice versa through unique lots or delivery numbers, internal traceability records, purchase records (that identify the supplier(s), and the lots or batches of purchase), handling records, and supply records.

- b. Cross-checks of a sample of purchase records with delivery records and, where possible, against the actual product received.
  - i. Include the following records where relevant: bills of landing, invoices, delivery notes, health certificates/ veterinary checks, catch certificates, purchase orders, and packing list/ loading records.
- c. Input/output reconciliation is based on a time period and/or product batch.
  - i. This exercise shall include a calculation of the yield if relevant, and consideration of whether this is justifiable.
- d. For consumer-facing operations, traceability tests on any labelled product sold as certified and/or MSC Improvement Product at the point of sale or serving.
  - i. The test shall link input to output or vice versa at the time of the audit through labelled product on the menu or fish counter, internal traceability records, or a delivery or transfer note that identifies the certified supplier.

#### Verifying use of the MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement

- 8.2.14 (Also 8.3.15) If the client uses the MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement on their own products or for a customer, the auditor shall verify that the client is permitted to use the statement by confirming that:
- a. The products are covered by a licence agreement from MSC I.
  - b. The client can show proof of product approval from MSC I for packaging designs for a sample of products.
- 8.2.15 (also 8.3.16) Where the client includes non-certified seafood ingredients in products sold as certified, the auditor shall verify the client's calculation for all or a sample of products to which this applies, as specified by the non-MSC/ASC certified seafood ingredient rules.

#### **Guidance 8.2.15**

The non-MSC/ASC certified seafood ingredients rules can be found in the MSC ecolabel user guide or the ASC logo user guide respectively. These documents can be found on the MSC website ([msc.org](http://msc.org)) or the ASC website ([asc-aqua.org](http://asc-aqua.org)) and contain information on how to calculate the percentage of non-certified ingredients allowed in a product with the MSC or ASC label.

MSC Improvement Product would be categorised as “non-certified” seafood ingredient, and therefore cannot be mixed into certified seafood product calculation for MSC or ASC labelling, although MSC Improvement Product may form the allowed 5% non-certified ingredient.

## Closing meeting

- 8.2.17 (Also 8.3.17) Auditors shall conduct a closing meeting at the conclusion of each audit with the client's representative(s) to verify that the client understands:
- a. That until its MSC Improvement Program CoC information is displayed on the MSC website, the client is not eligible to make any MSC Improvement Program sales or claims concerning MSC Improvement Program activities.

## 11 Certificate management for all CoC clients

### 11.2 Changes to the certificate

#### Guidance Section 11.2

Changes to a certificate may occur due to:

- New sites being added.
- New subcontractors being used.
- Scope extension for an (new) MSC Improvement Program species, even in cases where the same species for MSC is already in scope.
- Scope extension for a new activity.
- Purchasing MSC Improvement Product from a new supplier, this includes purchasing new MSC Improvement Product from an existing MSC supplier.
- Purchasing from a new MSC Improvement Program fishery.
- Scope extension to handle products certified against recognised certification schemes that share the CoC Standard.

11.2.5 On receiving a request for an extension to scope that includes new activities, or the first scope extension to handle MSC Improvement Product that share the CoC Standard, the CAB shall:

- a. Review available information
- b. Consider if the client's existing management system is suitable for the proposed new scope of operations and product by scheme i.e. MSC Improvement Program, MSC, and/or ASC.
- g. For a client making MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement, obtain confirmation that they have MSC approval to do so.

#### Guidance 11.2.5

Scope extension to include MSC Improvement Program CoC certification would not alter the audit frequency, and CABs should seek to align audits as far as possible.

11.2.6 Following approval of the first scope extension for the client to handle MSC Improvement Product that share the CoC Standard, the CAB shall issue a certificate against the MSC Improvement Program scheme, and update information in the MSC scheme database.

#### Guidance 11.2.6.1



Where an organisation is CoC certified with MSC certified products in scope, they need to use the same CAB to process a scope extension to handle products certified by ASC, MSC Improvement Product or products from other schemes that also share the MSC CoC Standard. A client cannot have a different CAB for different schemes i.e. MSC, MSC Improvement Program and ASC.

- 11.2.7 The CAB shall update the scheme database within 10 days of a certificate lapse or a reported change to:
- a. Scope (including MSC Improvement Program species).
  - b. Subcontractors.
  - c. MSC Improvement Program suppliers.
  - d. New CoC contact person.
  - e. Sites.

## Part D. General Certification Requirements v2.6

### 7 Process Requirements

#### 7.4 Suspension or withdrawal of certification

##### CoC certificate suspension

- 7.4.10 The CAB shall suspend a CoC certificate if any of the following occur:
- a. There has been a demonstrable breakdown in the Chain of Custody caused by the client's actions or inaction.
  - b. The client has sold products as certified (or under-assessment) **or** MSC Improvement Product which are shown not to be certified (or under-assessment) **or** MSC Improvement Product, except for the following cases:
    - i. The CAB shall not suspend a CoC CFO certificate if the conditions of [CoCCR 9.2.2.a](#) are met
    - ii. The CAB shall not suspend an entire CoC Group certificate if the requirements in [CoCCR 9.4.4.a](#) or [9.4.6.1.a](#) are met

##### Guidance 7.4.10.b

The labelling or identification of fish products as “certified” or MSC Improvement Product and back-of-pack statement of fish as “MSC Improvement Product” which in fact did not originate from a certified fishery, farm or are not eligible to be sold as MSC Improvement Product nor to make a back-of-pack statement is a serious breach of the Chain of Custody. Evidence suggesting mislabelling of certified and/or MSC Improvement Product can come from the CAB, the MSC or the assurance provider but will need to be substantiated by the CAB. The MSC requires positive evidence of conformance in cases

where mislabelling is suspected; the absence of evidence is not sufficient to maintain certification.

The only instances where a certificate would not be automatically suspended due to a case of non-certified product sold as certified or MSC Improvement Product, are specific cases relating to self-reported mislabelling or non-conforming product (GCR 7.4.14.2) and for CFO clients and group clients, as per GCR 7.4.10.b.i-ii.

- c. The client cannot demonstrate that products labelled or sold as certified are in fact certified; and/or products that carry the MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement are not eligible to do so
- d. The client has not satisfactorily addressed any major non-conformity within the specified timeframe
- e. For CoC Group clients:
  - i. The client has had a group critical non-conformity raised, or
  - ii. The number of sites, where 1 or more site major non-conformities raised, meets or exceeds the reject number shown in [CoCCR Table 10](#), or
  - iii. There are more than 4 group major non-conformities raised during any 1 audit.
- f. For CoC CFO clients, the client has exceeded the reject number of major non-conformities as described in [CoCCR 9.3.1](#).
- g. For CoC CFO clients, the client has an additional major non-conformity raised against the same clause in the CoC CFO Standard at a follow-up site visit as described in [CoCCR 9.3.2.3](#).
- h. The client does not agree to allow the CAB to hold an audit within the required timeframe specified in the [CoCCR 11.3.1](#) for surveillance and [CoCCR 11.4.1](#) for recertification.
- i. MSC has withdrawn a certificate holder's license or other agreement to use the MSC/ ASC trademarks and MSC Improvement Product back-of-pack statement; and following that, the certificate holder does not comply with MSC instruction within stated timeframes.
- j. The client does not meet the [MSC's Labour Eligibility Requirements](#).

## 7.5 Information on certificates

- 7.5.1 The CAB shall issue a certificate in English which, in addition to requirements in ISO 17065 7.7, contains:
  - a. The latest published version of the MSC corporate logo
  - c. For CoC certificates, a unique MSC Improvement Program CoC certificate code that is generated by the certification scopes (i.e. MSC Improvement Program, MSC, ASC or Seaweed CoC) on the MSC scheme database.

End of document

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