



# Reviewing Principle 1 with a focus on harvest strategies

Consultation Summary Report

June 2021



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## Glossary of abbreviations and technical terms

FAO – The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

*This is a working paper, and hence it represents work in progress. This report is part of ongoing policy development.*

*The views and opinions expressed in parts of this report are those of stakeholders and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Marine Stewardship Council.*

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# Purpose and scope of this report

Every five years, the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) initiates a [Fisheries Standard Review](#) to help ensure our assessment and certification system remains the leading measure of fisheries sustainability. The current review began in 2018 and will conclude in 2022.

Stakeholders from all sectors are at the heart of our review, helping identify issues, develop solutions and test proposed changes. We have completed research into the topics identified in the Terms of Reference, and will next develop potential options for revisions. One of the topics identified is *Reviewing Principle 1 with a focus on harvest strategies*. We are holding a series of consultations throughout 2021 and early 2022 for stakeholders to take part in the development of the Fisheries Standard.

This report details the following for the 2021 consultation survey and supplementary targeted survey on the topic of Reviewing Principle 1 with a focus on harvest strategies:

- Background to topics discussed
- Participation data
- Next steps in the review process
- Feedback tables

It is the goal of MSC consultations to value authenticity, fairness and inclusiveness, secure strategic insight and build consensus and credibility. To achieve this, the MSC's processes for consultation follow the [ISEAL Standard Setting Code of Good Practice](#) and the [FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries](#).

ISEAL requires that participation is open to all stakeholders, and that the standard setter proactively seeks contributions from disadvantaged stakeholder groups. This is to ensure that contributors represent a balance of interests in the subject matter and in the geographical scope to which the standard applies. Publishing raw consultation feedback is considered 'aspirational good practice' by ISEAL. We publish this feedback as part of our commitment to transparency in our consultation process.

# Background

Sustainable fish stocks are at the heart of the MSC program. Ensuring that the world's fish stocks remain healthy is vital for marine ecosystems and global food security.

To meet the requirements of Principle 1 of the MSC Fisheries Standard, sustainable fisheries should have a robust and precautionary harvest strategy in place. A harvest strategy is the combination of monitoring, stock assessment, harvest control rules (HCRs) and management actions that are required to bring about the sustainable management of the fishery.

The MSC are currently reviewing Principle 1 requirements as part of the Fisheries Standard Review (FSR). One aspect relates to addressing issues that fisheries may face in resolving conditions of certification set on harvest strategies, when the MSC Unit of Assessment represents only part of the fishing activity taking place on a stock. This is a challenge faced primarily by fisheries targeting shared<sup>1</sup> or highly migratory stocks<sup>2</sup> (HMS).

## Relevance and challenges of implementing harvest strategies

Robust harvest strategies are an integral part of managing fish stocks to a sustainable level. All MSC certified fisheries are required to implement harvest strategies that include well-defined HCRs that are informed by stock assessment and monitoring. However, for certain stocks, such as shared or HMS that are managed in a multi-jurisdictional context, the development and implementation of harvest strategies is particularly challenging.

Fisheries management authorities responsible for multi-jurisdictional fisheries have started developing and implementing effective harvest strategies to manage the resources under their mandate. However, there is a lack of urgency and in many cases political influence results in decisions that benefit short term economic gains and favour historic catch levels. Not addressing long term objectives in an appropriate time frame, may have negative impacts on the sustainable use of the stocks. There is a need for those responsible to focus more on long-term sustainability, to follow best practices and guarantee stocks are managed at an appropriate productivity level with robust management measures.

Specific to MSC certified fisheries, fisheries management authorities responsible for managing multi-jurisdictional fisheries are not developing and implementing effective harvest strategies for all stocks they are responsible for within one certification cycle. Such a situation limits and/or prevents fishery clients from closing conditions related to harvest strategies and/or HCRs. The imposition and closure of conditions is a central component of the MSC's Theory of Change.

## Online survey

The MSC consulted stakeholders through an online survey on [reviewing Principle 1 with a focus on harvest strategies](#) that was open to everyone and available on the MSC website between 18<sup>th</sup> May to 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> Shared stocks are defined in the MSC Fisheries Standard as: stocks where the fishery management framework may exist at a local, regional or national scale within the jurisdiction of a single State (see Table GSA10 of the [MSC Fisheries Standard v2.01](#)).

<sup>2</sup> Shared/HMS are defined in the MSC Fisheries Standard as: stocks that are exploited by two or more States, with international law possibly becoming relevant (see Table GSA10 of the [MSC Fisheries Standard v2.01](#)).

## Targeted survey

The MSC also contacted 54 experts in harvest strategy design and management strategy evaluation (MSE). The targeted survey was sent by email and contained the same background information and two additional survey questions that related to factors needing to be developed and key milestones for developing harvest strategies. These additional questions supplement the online survey, seeking specific feedback from subject-area experts.

Comments for both surveys were submitted through the online survey or by email during the consultation period. The full feedback from the online survey, with individual names and defamatory comments removed, can be found in [Annex II: Feedback tables](#).

# Participation

This section presents participation data for the consultation survey detailed above.

## Online survey participation

There were 32 respondents to the online survey. Participation across stakeholder groups for the online survey was broad and relatively even, with a slight majority in seafood supply chain and non-governmental organisations. The majority of respondents were based in Europe and North America, however we do see participation across Africa, Asia, and Oceania.

## Targeted survey

Of the 54 contacted to participate in the targeted survey, 24 provided feedback. For the targeted consultation, Academic/Scientific were the most prevalent with Oceania being the most represented region for those who responded.

A breakdown of stakeholder groups ([Table 1](#)) and geographical regions ([Table 2](#)) for both the online survey and targeted survey can be found below. The full list of respondents to the online survey, their stakeholder groups and country of work can be found in [Table 3](#) in [Annex I: Participation](#). For respondents that did not consent to their names being published, only stakeholder group and country is available.

Table 1: Number of individual survey respondents representing each stakeholder group and survey type.

Stakeholder group	Public survey	Targeted survey
Academic/Scientific	5	18
Commercial wild harvest fisheries	3	1
Conformity assessment and/or accreditation	3	2
Governance/management	2	-
Non-governmental organisation	7	3
Other (please specify)	2	-
Seafood supply chain	8	-

Unknown	2	-
Total	32	24

Table 2: Number of individual survey respondents representing each geographical region and survey type.

Geographical region	Public survey	Targeted survey
Africa	1	1
Asia	2	-
Europe	12	6
North America	9	5
Oceania	5	11
South America	-	1
Unknown	3	-
Total	32	24

## Next steps

We are currently reviewing all feedback received from the consultation survey as well as independent research and our own internal data analysis. This will inform our decisions on proposed changes to the MSC Fisheries Standard. We will carry out an impact assessment on the proposed changes. We will also seek the advice of our governance bodies on the proposed changes.

The MSC will use the information and knowledge gained through consultations to refine the options for revisions to the Standard. The proposed revisions will be reviewed by [the MSC governance bodies](#) in late 2021.

Following this consultation, the next opportunity to comment on proposed changes will be during the 60-day public consultation on the draft Standard in early 2022.

The new MSC Fisheries Standard will be released in 2022 subject to approval from the MSC governance bodies.



# Annex I: Participation

Table 3: List of respondents to the online survey. For those respondents who consented to this, their names and organisations are included.

Name	Organisation	Stakeholder group	Country
David James Agnew	University of Tasmania	Academic/Scientific	Australia
Eric Gilman	NA	Academic/Scientific	USA
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Academic/Scientific	Spain
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Academic/Scientific	Germany
Steven X. Cadrin	Univ. Massachusetts School for Marine Science & Technology	Academic/Scientific	USA
Austin Estabrooks	At-sea Processors Association	Commercial wild harvest fisheries	USA
Kristina Guldbæk	Sustainable Fisheries Greenland	Commercial wild harvest fisheries	Greenland
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Commercial wild harvest fisheries	Sweden
Jo Gascoigne	Unknown	Conformity assessment and/or accreditation	UK
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Conformity assessment and/or accreditation	Australia
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Conformity assessment and/or accreditation	UK
Maurice Brownjohn	PNA office	Governance/management	Marshall Islands
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Governance/management	Australia
Karin Bilo	WWF	Non-governmental organisation	Netherlands
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Non-governmental organisation	USA
Rich Lincoln	Ocean Outcomes	Non-governmental organisation	USA
Shana Miller	The Ocean Foundation	Non-governmental organisation	USA
Susan Jackson	International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF)	Non-governmental organisation	USA
Tessa Gonzalez	Aquatic Life Institute	Non-governmental organisation	USA
Modesta Medard	WWF	Non-governmental organisation.	United Republic of Tanzania

Guillermo Gomez	Gomez-Hall Associates, Fisheries, Trade and Environmental Consultants	Other: Consultant to industry, governments, RFMOs and NGOs	USA
Robin Tinley	Tuna Management Association of New Zealand	Other: Consultant to the fishing sector on science & management issues	New Zealand
Adam Townley	New England Seafood International	Seafood supply chain	UK
Amanda Hamilton	Tri Marine	Seafood supply chain	Singapore
Anders Barsøe	LETZ SUSHI	Seafood supply chain	Denmark
Hector Martin Fernandez Alvarez	BOLTON FOOD	Seafood supply chain	Spain
Howard Tsai	FCF CO., LTD.	Seafood supply chain	Taiwan
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Seafood supply chain	Germany
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Seafood supply chain	UK
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Seafood supply chain	Unknown
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Unknown	Unknown
Redacted at request of individual	Redacted at request of individual	Unknown	Unknown

## Annex II: Feedback tables

[The feedback tables](#) provide raw responses to the consultation. Please read the [consultation document](#) to get the full context.