Aquaculture Stewardship Council Farm Standard

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Aquaculture Stewardship Council releases its Farm Standard

The ASC Farm Standard

Update

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) launched its new ASC Farm Standard at Seafood Expo Global 2025 in Barcelona, Spain on 7 May 2025.

Background

ASC certification is a global standard for responsible aquaculture. It provides a label and a certification programme for farmed seafood, ensuring it is produced in a way that minimises environmental and social impacts.

The ASC Farm Certification Programme and its Standard for farmed seafood help farms operate more efficiently while ensuring the highest level of responsibility towards fish welfare, workers and communities, and the environment. ASC works internationally with aquaculture producers, seafood processors, feed producers, retail and food service companies, scientists, conservation groups, social NGOs, and the public to promote the best environmental and social practices in aquaculture. The ASC consumer logo provides third-party assurance of conformity with production and chain of custody standards.

The ASC Farm Standard meets best practice requirements set by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling (ISEAL) Alliance, the verification body for sustainability standards. It has been evaluated against, and is the only seafood certification programme to be code compliant with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Sustainability Systems.

Impacted products

Farmed crustaceans, fish, molluscs, seaweed

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What is changing?

This major change brings together the 12 ASC Species Standards into one robust Farm Standard.

Why?

Increasing consumer demand for responsibly farmed seafood offers a competitive advantage for producers who prioritise sustainability. The ASC Farm Standard supports industry-wide adoption, making the standard accessible to a wider range of producers. It is designed to enhance efficiency and ensure greater accountability. It addresses the interconnectedness of fish, farm, people, and planet to ensure:

- an adaptable approach that can be tailored to unique site-specific circumstances, while still meeting market, consumer, and regulatory requirements
- an approach that ensures better health and welfare for the farmed species, with an emphasis on promoting preventative practices and humane stunning/slaughter
- strengthened requirements to protect workers and communities, ensuring fair and ethical practices
- a science-based, impact-driven standard aimed at conserving biodiversityand minimising environmental impacts.

Timeline

ASC is implementing a 2-year transition period for the ASC Farm Standard, which will become mandatory on **1 May 2027**.

The ASC Species Standards will remain operational until **30 April 2027**.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

ASC certified farms meet the world's most recognised benchmark for sustainability. The ASC label provides enhanced reputation, better visibility, and secure markets. It also offers a pathway for improved dialogue with stakeholders, secure livelihoods, and access to new markets.

The ASC label is a certification mark and trademark. Its application is strictly governed, both on- and off-product, or on non-consumer-facing (NCF) packaging in bulk that is sourced from an ASC certified producer. When the logo is used on a product, it must always be accompaniedby the ASC claim. The ASC logo user guide sets out the rules for use of the label. These guidelines

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ensure the ASC label keeps its integrity and value.

Recommended Actions

Producers can choose to adopt the new standard early. For those who need more time, a 2-year transition period began in May 2025.

The Improver Programme by ASC supports farms that are not ready or eligible for ASC certification, but are committed to improving their farming practices through an Aquaculture Improvement Project (AIP). The programme gives a clear framework with timebound targets in key areas to improve farm performance, supported by the expertise of a local Implementer who is ASC trained and has received an ASC qualification. Farms can choose between two routes:

- AIP to ASC certification: a four-phase plan to improve a farm's performance to a level where it is ready to become ASC certified
- AIP to Better Practices: ASC supports a farm to improve its practices in specific environmental or social areas, without ASC certification as the end-goal.

Resources

Online resources from the Aquaculture Stewardship Council:

- ASC logo user guide
- ASC Species Standards
- Introducing the new ASC Farm Standard - Stakeholder Consultation
- Quick Start Guide – IP [Improvement Programmes] by ASC
- The Standard is Changing: Join ASC at Seafood Expo Global 2025 to hear more
- Welcome to the ASC Programme Centre

FAO (2009) Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries

International Trade Centre (ITC) Standards Map: Standard profile for Aquaculture Stewardship Council

ISEAL (2025) ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Sustainability Systems

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Sources

The ASC Farm Standard

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