



Rules for the certification of Products from Sustainable Fishing and Aquaculture activities against Friend of The Sea standards

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CHAPTER 1 – GENERAL / DEFINITIONS

1.1

These rules describe the procedures applied by FRIEND OF THE SEA for the certification of products from sustainable fishing and aquaculture activities against Friend of The Sea standards and how organisations can obtain, retain and use certification necessary to obtain and use of Friend of The Sea mark, as well as its possible suspension and withdrawal.

Certification is an integral and indispensable part of an ecolabelling scheme of products from sustainable marine fisheries. It provides assurance to buyers and consumers that a certain fish or fishery product comes from a fishery that conforms with the established standard for a sustainable fishery. Impartial certification based on an objective assessment of all relevant factors ensures that ecolabels convey truthful information. This is a necessary condition for the ecolabelling scheme to attain its objectives.

1.2

DEFINITIONS

ASSESSMENTS REQUIRED FOR CERTIFICATION:

- a) **conformity assessment** of whether a fishery/aquaculture conforms with the standard and related certification criteria;
- b) **chain of custody assessment** of whether adequate measures are in place to identify fish from a certified fishery/ aquaculture at subsequent stages of fish processing, distribution and marketing.

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STANDARD:

set of policies, procedures and requirements defined by Friend of The Sea (see chapter 2) used as reference by the certification body for assessment.

ORGANIZATION:

A single company that has applied for certification of its product/s according to Friend of the Sea criteria.

MAJOR NONCONFORMITY:

A systematic failure or deficiency about an essential requirement of the standard or about a legal requirement. A Major Nonconformity could be generate also by a number of minor nonconformities against important requirement of the same area of the standard or by one or more minor non conformities which have not been cleared through effective corrective actions within the agreed period.

MINOR NONCONFORMITY:

A failure or deficiency about an important requirement of the standard.

RECOMMENDATION:

A failure or deficiency about a recommended requirement of the standard. An area of concern, a process, document, or activity that is currently conforming but that may, if not improved, result in a nonconformity against a requirement of the standard.

1.3

The Certification Body performs the audit activities on behalf of Friend of The Sea and issues certification to organisations that fully satisfy the applicable requirements of the standards published by Friend of The Sea. Thereof this procedure is applicable only to the organisations submitted by Friend of The Sea for Certification Body audit.

1.4

The certificate issued by the Certification Body pertains exclusively to a single organisation. The licence for use of Friend of The Sea Mark is exclusively given by Friend of The Sea to company owners of the certified products.

1.5

Friend of The Sea may require its observers to take part in the audits performed by the Certification Body in order to check whether the auditing methods applied by THE CERTIFICATION BODY comply with the relative standards. The participation of these observers is agreed in advance between The Certification Body and the organisation. If the organisation does not allow these observers to take part, the certification procedure may be stopped or, if already issued to the organisation, the certificate may be suspended.

1.6

The terminology used in the present rules complies with the ISO 9000:2005 and ISO17000 standards.

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CHAPTER 2 - REFERENCE STANDARD / CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

2.1

To obtain The Certification Body certification, necessary to obtain the use of Friend of The Sea Mark, the organisation must satisfy, both initially and in the long run, the applicable requirements following stated.

2.2

Reference standards published by Friend of The Sea:

- Friend of The Sea Approval Criteria for Products from Sustainable Fisheries
- Friend of The Sea Approval Criteria for Products from Sustainable Aquaculture
- Friend of the Sea Approval Criteria for Fishfeed, Fish Oil and other Supplements from Sustainable Fisheries

CHAPTER 3 - ISSUE OF THE CERTIFICATE

3.1

Organisations wishing to obtain the licence for using Friend of The Sea Mark have to sign a specific contract with Friend of The Sea – the Audit and Licensing Agreement.

3.2

Friend of the Sea will ask the organisations to complete an application form with the information needed to start the certification process – the Preliminary Information Form. This information will allow Friend of the Sea to identify, according to geographical location and technical requirements the Certification Body which will run the audit.

The Preliminary Information Form also allows the Certification Body to check in advance that some essential requirements of the standard are satisfied. The application form will also be evaluated by the Certification Body in order to check the availability of all information to allow a correct audit planning.

The Certification Body may request additional documents directly to the organisation. These documents will be evaluated by the Certification Body in order to check the compliance with the reference standard and with the requirements of these rules. The outcome of this review will be notified to the organisation; any non-conformity found in the documentation has to be eliminated by the organisation to the satisfaction of the Certification Body required actions, before the certification procedure can continue.

3.3

The Certification Body will send to the organization information and a planning document that resume the purpose of the forthcoming audit and the documents which should be prepared in advance, in order to optimize the time of the audit and allow a comprehensive assessment of the requirements. Possible objections from the organization with reference to the composition of the verification group, must immediately have communicated to the Certification Body, together with the relevant motivations

3.4

Following the satisfactory outcome of the examination of the documentation, an assessment visit will be made at the organisation's premises to verify that the applicable requirements stated in chapter 2 are satisfied.

This visit will be made by qualified auditors of the Certification Body.
The visit will basically comprise:

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- an initial meeting with the organisation to agree on the aims and methods of the visit;
- an inspection of the workshops, warehouses, fishing boats and laboratories of the organisation to verify conformity with the reference documents;
- a final meeting to explain the outcome of the visit.

Time to be allocated for every site is summarised in the following table

Activity Certification Body	Food chain step	Minimum time requested ¹
Documental review	-	0,5 day
Audit on field	Fishing Vessels	0,15 per boat to be audited
	Aquaculture Plant	0,5 per plant
	Chain of custody	0,5 per site to be audited

3.5

At the end of the visit, the organisation will be given by the Certification Body an audit report describing the results of the audit as well as any remarks.

If a non conformity is detected during assessment, a Nonconformity Report will be issued and a corrective action process will commence. Non-conformities may be classified as Major or Minor . The auditor will discuss with the client the reason for the NCR in order to enable the organization to identify the corrective action. The auditor will also explain how the Certification Body will follow up and clear the non conformity.

In case of minor non-conformity, the Corrective Actions are identified by the organization and are proposed, within three (3) weeks, to the Certification Body Lead Auditor for their acceptance . The implementation and effectiveness of the proposed corrective actions will be verified, within a year from the audit date, during the next surveillance visit (on site or by the mean of documental evidences that the organization will have to send to the Certification Body).

In case of a major non-conformity the verification of the proposed corrective actions shall be done by a follow-up audit. The relevant Corrective actions must be implemented in a maximum period of 3 months since the date the major non conformity was raised. The company provides the Certification Body with satisfactory evidence of all major non-conformities having been rectified.

In all cases the certificate is not issued until all Non-conformities have been cleared.

In case of observations the organization has to evaluate if corrective actions are needed and, by the next surveillance audit, has to inform the Certification Body about its decision and about any corrective actions applied.

If there is no written communication from the Certification Body, the report is to be considered as confirmed fifteen days after being received by the organisation.

The proposals and the time foreseen for the implementation of corrective actions have to be evaluated and, if suitable, accepted by the Certification Body auditor during the closure meeting.

¹ This time could be increased considering the complexity of the organization involved

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3.6

After the satisfactory completion of the evaluation and validation by the relative Certification Body committee, a Certificate of Conformity to the relevant standard will be issued.

The certificate has a three year validity.

The validity of the certificate is also dependent on the outcome of subsequent yearly surveillance activities.

CHAPTER 4 - MAINTENANCE OF CERTIFICATION

4.1

The organisation must maintain the conditions for the satisfaction of the standard and notify promptly any intended changes to the management of the fishery/aquaculture, or the chain of custody, or other changes which may affect conformity.

4.2

The organisation has to keep all the documents and records necessary to demonstrate that the activities are performed in accordance to the standard requirements.

4.3

The Certification Body also reserves the right to make supplementary audit visits to the organisation in the event of particularly significant complaints or nonconformity of products/methods with the requirements of the reference standard.

If the organisation refuses, for no justified reason, the Certification Body may decide to suspend certification.

If the Certification Body considers the complaints and communications to be justified, the cost of the additional audit will be charged to the organisation.

4.4

The outcome of the audit will be notified as described in point 3.5 above.

The validity of the certificate is confirmed following the successful outcome of the surveillance activity, which is run every 12 months and is based on Friend of the Sea Certification Criteria.

4.5

In the case of serious non-conformities the organisation will be subject to a supplementary audit within the time limits established by the Certification Body in relation to the importance of the non-conformities and, in any case, not more than three months after the end of the surveillance audit.

If the non-conformities are not eliminated within the established times or if they prevent the products from satisfying standard requirements and applicable legal requirements, the Certification Body may suspend certification until these non-conformities have been eliminated (see paragraph 9.1).

All costs related to any additional audits deriving from shortcomings in the Management System will be charged to the organisation.

CHAPTER 5 – RENEWAL OF CERTIFICATION

5.1

Six month before the expiring of certificate, the organisation has to contact Friend of The Sea in order to ask for the renewal of its certification and the use of the mark. The iter for renewal is the same of the one explained for certification audit.

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5.2

The assessment of the Certification Body for recertification gives particular attention to changes that have been made in the conduct of the fishery/aquaculture or in the management practices, and on any new conditions that changes in standards might require. Evaluation is made on the basis of results from recertification audit and from prior regular monitoring and auditing.

CHAPTER 6 - SUSPENSION, REINSTATEMENT AND WITHDRAWAL OF FRIEND OF THE SEA CERTIFICATION

6.1

Friend of the Sea certification must be suspended in the following specific cases:

- serious non-conformities found during audit activities have not been corrected within the time limits established by the Certification Body;
- the organisation has not complied with the time limits established to communicate corrective action following non-conformities indicated in the audit report;
- the organisation has made modifications to its activities which have not been communicated/accepted by the Certification Body;
- the organisation refuses or obstructs the participation in the audits of observers from Friend of The Sea delegates;
- justified and serious complaints received by the Certification Body are confirmed;
- there is evidence which shows that the organisation acts without compliance with the laws and rules applicable to the characteristics of the product supplied.
- inobservance of contractual terms

The organisation may also make a justified request to suspend certification, normally for not more than six months.

The suspension will be notified to the organisation by registered letter, stating the conditions for re-establishing certification and the date by which the new conditions are to be complied with.

6.2

Certification will be restored once it has been found that the shortcomings responsible for suspension have been eliminated. This can be done through a thorough audit to check the compliance with all the requirements of the reference standard.

6.3

Failure to fulfil the conditions as per above by the established date will lead to suspension of certification.

The certification must be suspended in the following specific cases:

- when there are circumstances such as those indicated for suspension, which are held to be particularly serious;
- the organisation stops running activities covered by the standards, for a period in general lasting more than six months;
- for persistent arrears in payments to Friend of The Sea for the activities linked to certification activities and use of the Mark;
- for any other reason that the Certification Body deems to be serious.

Withdrawal of the Certificate of Conformity will be notified in writing by registered letter to the organisation.

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Any organisation which, following withdrawal of its Certificate, wishes to be re-certified, is to submit a new application and follow the entire procedure again.

6.4

An organisation owner of certified product from fishery/aquaculture and/or chain of custody upon suspension or withdrawal of its certification (however determined) must discontinue use of all advertising matter that contains any reference thereto (and returns any certification documents as required). The Certification Body evaluates if inform the public about suspension or withdrawal after the appeals process is exhausted.

CHAPTER 7 - RESOLUTION OF COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Should the client or a Third Party wish to appeal against or dispute the decisions of Certification of a Friend of The Sea licensed Company the complaint must be addressed both to Friend of The Sea and to the involved Certification Body not later than 15 days after the certification as been made public on Friend of the Sea website.

Complaint addressed to Friend of the Sea are examined by an independent and impartial committee – the Objection Committee - established to respond to the objection. The Objection Committee operates according to the Friend of the Sea Objection Procedure.

If possible, the committee should attempt to resolve any complaint through discussion or conciliation. If this is not possible, the committee should provide a written finding to the certification body, accreditation body or owner of the ecolabelling scheme as appropriate, which should transmit the finding to the party or parties involved.

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