



Recognition determination report GSSI Benchmark Tool Version 2.0

Completed
November-December 2024

Introduction

To help the efficiency of audits and assessments, and reduce duplication, MarinTrust has implemented a procedure for the 'recognition of equivalence.' This enables MarinTrust to recognise other Standards or Benchmark Tool requirements as fully or partially equivalent against specific sections or requirements of a MarinTrust Standard.

To undertake the assessment of equivalence, it must be determined that the Standard or Benchmark Tool Owner is credible, robust, and relevant. This is an important step to safeguard the integrity and assurance of the MarinTrust Programme.

Key stages include:

Stage 1: Initiation of recognition of equivalence process

Stage 2: Self-assessment

Stage 3: Third-party equivalency assessment

Stage 4: Recognition decision and update of documentation

This recognition determination report is produced for Stages 2 and 3. It provides a summary of key information, and findings of the third party equivalence assessment.

Upon receipt of the recognition determination report, MarinTrust will share the report with the relevant governance committee for discussion and recommendation of approval to the Governing Body Committee (GBC).

This report is used as the basis for recommending if the equivalency should be considered by the relevant committee, GBC, and MarinTrust.

Where the recognition is partial or full, MarinTrust shall publish the report on the MarinTrust website.

Section 1: Company and third-party information

Company details	
Name of Organisation:	Global Seafood Sustainability Initiative (GSSI)
Type of recognition:	Benchmark Tool
Third party Information	
<p>I hereby undertake to maintain in confidence all information and data related to MarinTrust activities obtained during the course of my involvement as a third party, other than that which I am authorised by the MarinTrust to disclose or that which I am required to disclose by law.</p> <p>I further undertake to immediately inform MarinTrust of any conflict of interest that may arise between my responsibilities as a third party and any other activity with which I may be involved.</p>	
Organisation:	RS Standard Ltd.
Date:	19 th November 2024

Section 2: General overview

One-way or mutual recognition

- ☒ One-way
☐ Mutual

Standard / Benchmark information	
Title	GSSI Global Benchmark Framework
Version	Version 2.0
Website link (if applicable)	https://ourgssi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Benchmark-Framework-version-2.0.xlsx

Section 3: Self-assessment outcome summary

A previous evaluation of GSSI was made as part of a series of pilot tests for the development of the equivalency procedure. This was considered a type of 'self-assessment' whereby information from that was used to support the third party assessment.

A third party contractor (RS Standards) has undertaken this third party equivalency assessment, during November 2024. This compared V3.0 of the MarinTrust whole fish fishery assessment

criteria, Issued April 2024- Effective 1 May 2024 with the [GSSI Global Benchmark Framework Version 2.0](#) which was published and online at the time of the assessment.

The equivalency evaluation used supporting documentation from both organisations:

MarinTrust

- Whole fish fishery assessment criteria guidance Version 3.0 Issued April 2024 – Effective 1 May 2024

GSSI

Documents used for assessing assurance / governance requirements	Documents used for assessing fishery requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deed of incorporation • Independent experts • Benchmark Integrity Committee - • Benchmark Integrity Committee - mandate • GSSI Charter • 2023 Annual report • Benchmark Procedures • List of benchmarked schemes • Benchmark process • Quality Management System (QMS), V2 Sept 2023 • Documentary and Records Control Procedure V1, Sept 2023 • Global Benchmark Tool – ISO 17065 gap analysis • Benchmark Agreement - version shared in November 2024 • Annex 3: Transition Procedure V1.0 • Template GSSI IE Service Agreement 1-2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark Framework Version 2.0 • Benchmark Framework Glossary

Section 4: Equivalency assessment overview

The outcome of the equivalency assessment is summarised in the tables below.

- **Table 1** includes an overview of the outcome of the baseline requirements.

- **Table 2** provides an overview of outcome of the baseline requirements for assessment against ISO/IEC 17065 requirements.
- **Table 3** indicates the number of clauses for which the relevant party is considered to be equivalent, partially equivalent, not equivalent, or not applicable to the MarinTrust criteria.

For full details for each rating, please refer to Recognition of Equivalence Procedure, Appendix 1 – equivalency assessment methodology (see MarinTrust [website](#)).

4.1 Baseline requirements

Table 1: Outcome overview of baseline requirements

Requirement	Description	Comments	Outcome
Operations	Fully operational	GSSI is in operation and active	Baseline met
	Third-party assessment or audits included	An independent expert (IE) is used to undertake the assessment	Baseline met
Scope of requirements	Fishery	GSSI can benchmark schemes covering fisheries, aquaculture	Baseline met
Geographical scope	Global		Baseline met
If the scope is fisheries - are the requirements aligned with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries?	Yes	<p>GSSI state:</p> <p>The FAO Guidelines upon which the Tool is based:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) •The FAO Technical Guidelines for Aquaculture Certification •The FAO Guidelines for Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine/Inland Capture Fisheries. <p>Ref: https://ourgssi.org/benchmarking/ </p>	Baseline met

Table 2: Outcome overview of ISO/IEC 17065 requirements

Requirement	Outcome
Standard Owner	Not applicable
Benchmark Tool Owner	Full equivalence.

GSSI has many requirements in place that align with the requirements for 17065. This applies to their own operating procedures and those for schemes they benchmark.

As a benchmark scheme

GSSI has undertaken an internal assessment of this as well which shows full alignment. This has been fully checked and verified as part of this current benchmark assessment and found to meet / provide an equivalent level of management.

Requirements for standards / schemes that GSSI benchmarks

Section B of the GSSI Benchmark Framework include numerous essential requirements for standard owners. This includes:

- B.1.01 The Scheme Owner has a contractual, enforceable arrangement or formal understanding that requires accreditation bodies to be compliant with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011 in its applicable version.
- B.1.03 The Scheme Owner specifies the requirements for certification bodies that the accreditation body is required to verify, including the respect of the scope of the scheme.
- B.2.01 The Scheme Owner requires that certification bodies operating in the scheme are accredited to conduct certifications for the scope of their respective standards in conformance with ISO/IEC 17065 in its applicable version.

As these are essential components any standard that is benchmarked must align with these requirements. This is assessed as part of the review process.

4.2 Equivalency assessment against MarinTrust criteria

There are 35 clauses in the MarinTrust whole fish fishery assessment, but two clauses require only one to be fulfilled (meaning a total of 34 that must be fulfilled). All 35 clauses were assessed but the numbers below are based on having 34 that must be fulfilled.

Table 3: Summary of level of equivalency

Equivalency rating	Number of MarinTrust clauses	% of total
Equivalent	34	100%
Partially equivalent	0	0%
Not equivalent	0	0%

Scope	Total Number of criteria	Equivalent	Partially equivalent	Not equivalent	Not applicable
Whole fish fishery approval	34	34	0	0	0

4.3 Extent of Equivalence

The GSSI Global Benchmark Framework includes both essential and supplementary components:

- Essential components must be fully met by all successfully benchmarked schemes.
- Supplementary components may be met by benchmarked schemes but are not deemed essential.

Benchmarked schemes must fulfil all essential components but do not have to fulfil any supplementary components.

GSSI achieved total equivalency (100%) using only essential components.

Table 4: Equivalency assessment outcome

Overview	
Scope	Outcome
Whole fish fishery approval	Full recognition recommended.

4.4 Main Findings and Comments

Equivalency Approach

To reduce the potential for GSSI benchmarked schemes not meeting all the requirements of the MarinTrust whole fish fishery assessment, equivalency had to be established using essential components. All the MarinTrust clauses were evaluated against all GSSI components, which included determining whether those components were 'essential' or 'supplementary.'

Summary of equivalent clauses

MT Fishery Approval Criteria (main clause)	GSSI Equivalency Outcome
M1.1 There is an organisation responsible for managing the fishery	<p>Essential components of the GSSI Global Benchmark are equivalent to all sub-clauses.</p> <p>For M1.2.1 and M1.5.3 there are supplementary components which are also relevant.</p>
M1.2 Fishery management organisations are legally empowered to take management actions	
M1.3 There is an organisation responsible for collecting data and (scientifically) assessing the fishery.	
M1.4 The fishery management system is based on the principles of sustainable fishing and a precautionary approach	
M1.5 There is a clearly defined decision-making process which is transparent, with processes and results made publicly available	
M2.1 There is an organisation responsible for monitoring compliance with fishery laws and regulations	
M2.2 There is a framework of sanctions which are applied when infringements against laws and regulations are discovered	
M2.3 There is substantial evidence of widespread compliance in the fishery, and no substantial evidence of IUU fishing.	
Cat A species	
A1 Data Collection	Essential components of the GSSI Global Benchmark are equivalent to all sub-clauses.
A2 Stock Assessment Criteria	
A3 Harvest Strategy Requirements	
A4 Stock Status	
Cat B species	
B1	Essential components of the GSSI Global Benchmark are equivalent to all sub-clauses.

Cat C species	
C1 Stock Status	Essential components of the GSSI Global Benchmark are equivalent to all sub-clauses.
Cat D species	
D1, 2,3 PSA	Essential components of the GSSI Global Benchmark are equivalent to all sub-clauses. There are supplementary components which are also relevant.
D4 Impacts on vulnerable species	
E1 - Impacts on ETP species - Minimum Requirements	
E1.1. Information on interactions between the fishery and ETP species is collected	Essential components of the GSSI Global Benchmark are equivalent to all sub-clauses.
E1.2. The fishery has no significant negative impact on ETP species.	
E1.3. There is an ETP management strategy in place for the fishery.	
E2 - Impacts on Habitats - Minimum Requirements	
E2.1. Information on interactions between the fishery and marine habitats is collected.	Essential components of the GSSI Global Benchmark are equivalent to all sub-clauses.
E2.2. The fishery has no significant impact on marine habitats.	
E2.3. There is a habitat management strategy in place for the fishery.	
E3 - Ecosystem Impacts Minimum Requirements	
E3.1. Information on the potential impacts of the fishery on marine ecosystems is collected.	Essential components of the GSSI Global Benchmark are equivalent to all sub-clauses.
E3.2. There is no substantial evidence that the fishery has a significant negative impact on the marine ecosystem.	
E3.3. There is an ecosystems management strategy in place for the fishery.	

GSSI achieved total equivalency (100%) using only essential components. For some MarinTrust clauses, the GSSI supplementary components provide closer alignment. However, where this is the case, the essential components provide the same intent as that of the MarinTrust clause. To determine this, it was useful to consider the guidance and information regarding alignment to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries which is provided in the GSSI Benchmark Framework.

Section 5: Response from benchmark scheme owner

The results of this assessment were shared with GSSI to enable review and feedback. GSSI confirmed they were satisfied with the assessment and provided no comments or feedback.

Section 6: Equivalency recommendation

- ☐ No recognition recommended
- ☐ Partial recognition recommended
- ☒ Full recognition recommended.

There are no additional requirements or recommendations.