



The MarinTrust Improver Programme: Application Mechanism and Progress Monitoring

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1.0 Overview

This document sets out the process by which the fishery and factory components of the MarinTrust Improver Programme (IP) are operated. The IP provides a mechanism for fisheries that do not currently meet the MarinTrust requirements to work towards approval for certification, along a structured pathway and in alignment with the MarinTrust Quality Control System (QMS, providing guidance on good practices).

There are two components to the IP:

1. The fishery sourcing into the marine ingredient production supply chain which requires improvements and,
2. The facility sourcing raw material from an improving fishery to produce marine ingredients.

The programme also enables such fisheries to obtain recognition for consistent progress made towards achieving MarinTrust approval. Fisheries approval in MarinTrust is based on meeting the requirements laid out in the FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF, <http://www.fao.org/3/a-v9878e.pdf>). The full MarinTrust fishery assessment can be found on the MarinTrust website [here](#).

[The IP](#) also provides recognition to marine ingredient facilities sourcing from an improving fishery. This is done by the facility complying with the MarinTrust Standard via an audit carried out by a third-party Certification Body. The full standard can be found [here](#).

Those accepted onto the IP and committed to improvement requirements may use approved statements to demonstrate the nature of the production and the link to the MarinTrust brand, however they may **NOT** use the MarinTrust logo (see QMS doc. C4 MarinTrust Logo Management and the MarinTrust Improver Programme Accepted Sites Claims Agreement [here](#)). More information about claims can be found in Section 7 of this document.

What is a Fishery Improvement Project (FIP)?:

A FIP is a demonstrable multi-stakeholder effort to improve the sustainability of a fishery and can vary in scope and nature. To be a credible FIP it must meet a number of requirements pertaining to participation, funding, transparency, and scientific rigor which are outlined in this document.

Aim of the Improver Programme:

To encourage and facilitate local stakeholders, lead by industry, to improve the fishery they are sourcing from for the benefit of everyone. FIPs that are accepted onto the IP have up to 5 years to complete their Fishery Action Plan (FAP). After this time it is expected that they will apply for full approval of the fishery (via the full certification process for the facility/ies).

Process

The following MarinTrust IP stages make up the core of the process by which a FIP may obtain and maintain acceptance on the MarinTrust IP:

1. MarinTrust Fishery assessment and GAP analysis
2. Development of a stakeholder led Fishery Action Plan (FAP)
3. Signed agreement between stakeholders
4. Peer Review and application committee
5. Fishery Action Plan progress reporting
6. Progress towards fishery approval

The main body of this document details the procedures associated with each of these key steps. The diagrams below illustrate an overview of the MarinTrust IP application process in summary (Fig 1) and in detail (Fig 2):

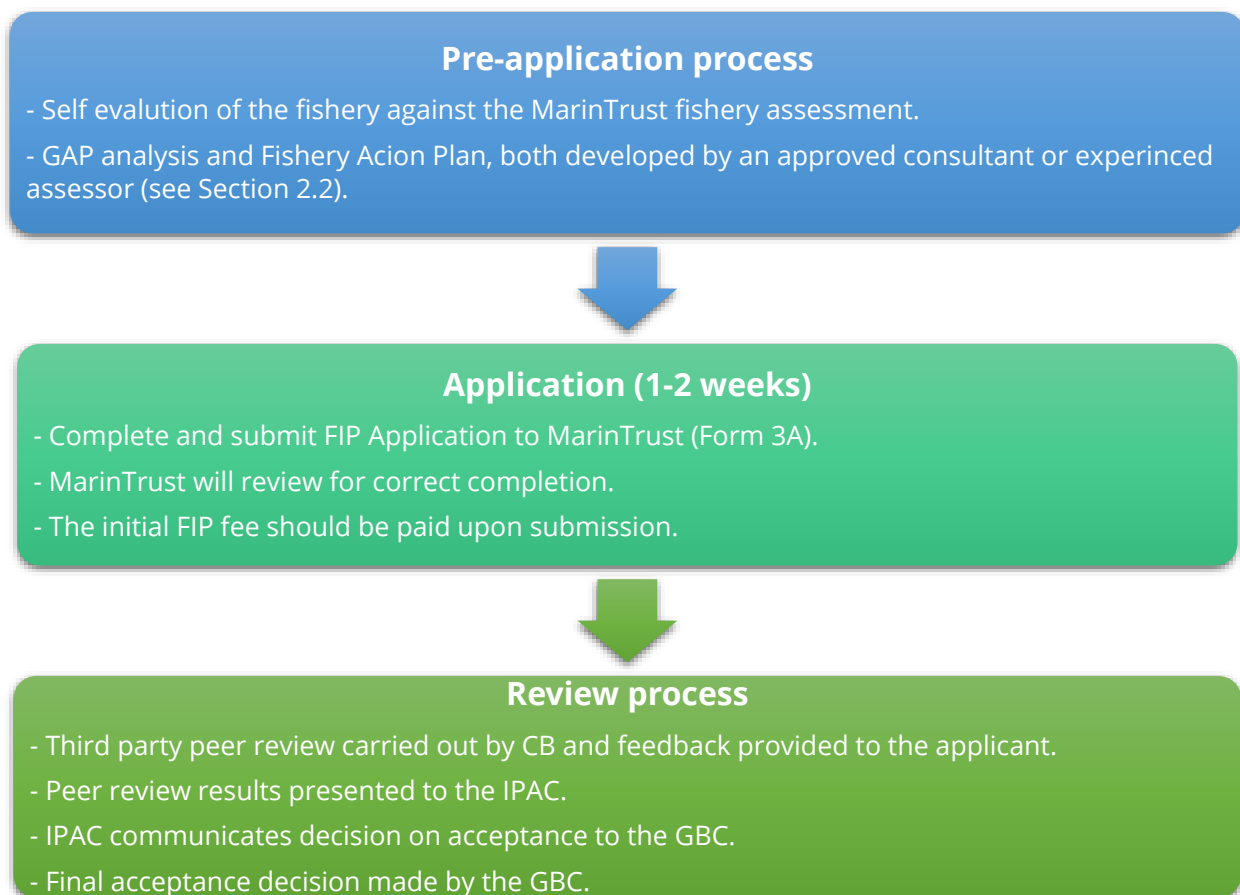


Figure 1 Overview of IP FIP application process

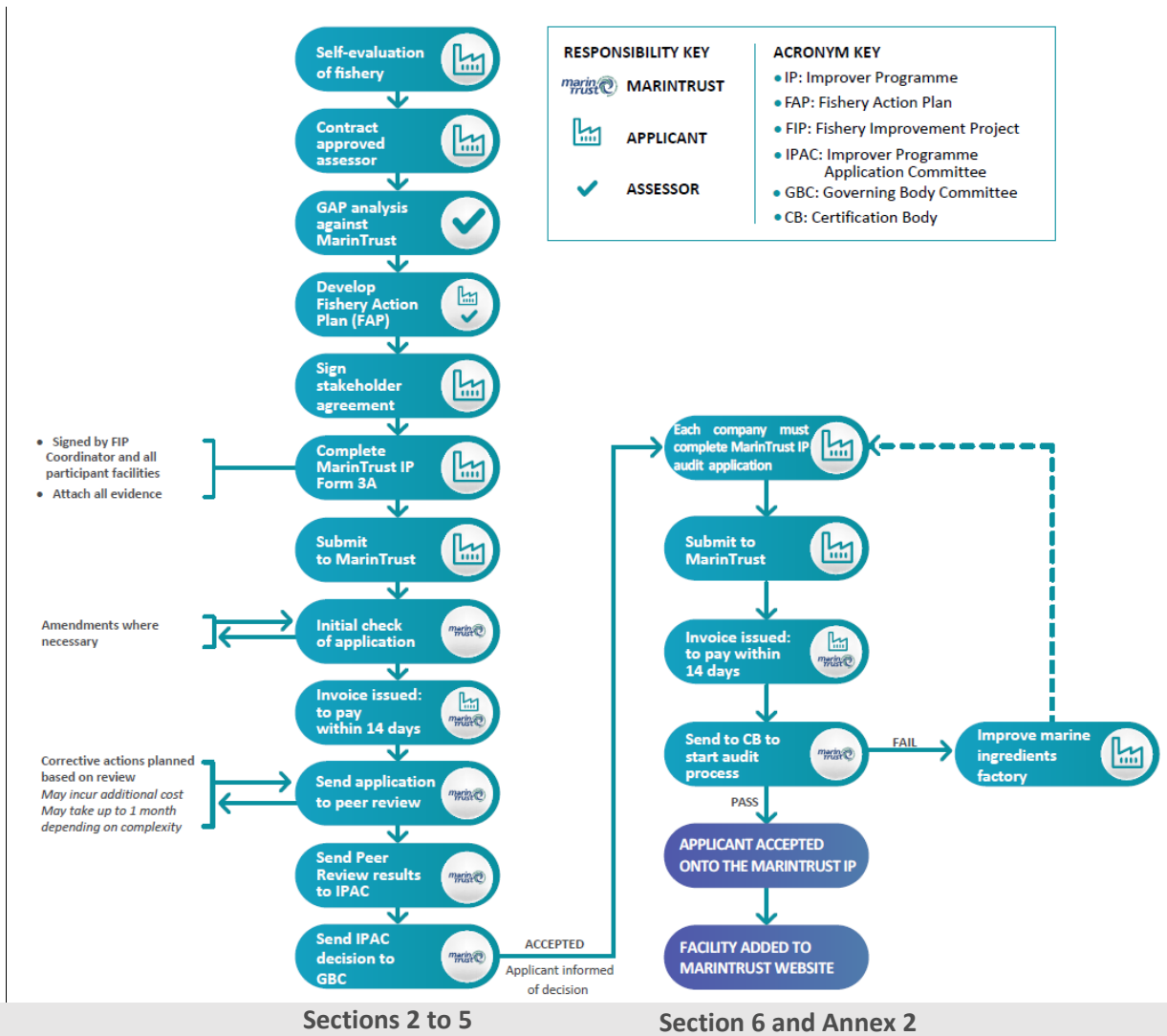


Figure 2 IP application process in detail

2.0 MarinTrust fishery assessment and GAP analysis

The objective of the IP assessment and GAP analysis of an applicant fishery is to determine the areas in which the fishery does not currently align with the FAO's CCRF objectives and principles and hence does not meet the MarinTrust fishery assessment requirements. The results of the assessment are designed to highlight information, management and status gaps and are summarised via the GAP analysis. The IP assessment report also contains additional information on the background of the fishery (as described below).

2.1 MarinTrust IP fishery assessment

The MarinTrust IP fishery assessment should be carried out by either: a) an independent party with expertise in benchmarking seafood certification schemes, and who are deemed trained, competent and relevant to the MarinTrust standards by the MarinTrust Secretariat in line with document B2 (Training and Appointments Procedures) in the QMS.; or b) A qualified fishery expert nominated by the applicant who has relevant local knowledge of the fishery. For those without the relevant experience in the MarinTrust fishery assessment or Improver Programme process, training may be provided by MarinTrust. The purpose of the assessment is to establish the nature of the gaps and deviation from full MarinTrust approval, as well as the feasibility of the unit of assessment being requested to close those gaps within a specified time period (up to 5 years).

The primary objective of the MarinTrust IP fishery assessment is to gather information to support the production of the GAP analysis and, in Stage 2, the Fishery Action Plan.

2.2 IP assessor requirements and qualifications

The proposed assessor(s) must either be approved by MarinTrust (as listed on the MarinTrust [website](#)) or they must meet the required levels of competency outlined below. Prior to approval, an Assessor must submit a detailed CV to MarinTrust covering professional qualifications, training and experience in the area of expertise required for fishery related assessments for the MarinTrust Standard and the MarinTrust IP. A copy of each document will be obtained from each potential assessor to verify and confirm their qualifications and experience.

The proposed assessor(s) must meet the following criteria:

1. Have verifiable experience in one or more areas of fisheries science and/or management, as listed below:
 - Local expertise (thorough knowledge of the fishery management organisations, fishery activities and other appropriate expertise); or
 - Specific expertise, either in fishery stock assessment, fishery ecosystem interactions, socio-economic interactions, or fishery resource management practices, depending on the fishery.
2. (Optional) In order to be a MarinTrust approved assessor, they must be able to demonstrate appropriate knowledge of the MarinTrust IP application process by meeting the following requirements:

- Completion of a full MarinTrust (valid version of assessment at the time) fishery assessment training session,
- Completion of a full MarinTrust Improver Programme training session, successfully passing the fishery assessment and IP training assessment exam.

For a new assessor to be approved, the MarinTrust Secretariat, or suitable individual nominated by the GBC, will review the applicant assessor CV against the relevant assessor criteria stated in the appendix. This may be followed by an interview, if deemed necessary, to verify all the statements made on their CV. If the criteria are satisfied, the applicant assessor will proceed to stage two of the approval process.

The applicant assessor will be required to:

- Attend an approved MarinTrust and MarinTrust IP training course. The applicant Assessor shall be required to successfully complete the course and pass the written exam.
- To establish fisheries assessor competence, MarinTrust shall determine this through a professional experience review, with all reviews documented and approved.

The MarinTrust Secretariat will maintain a master list of approved IP fishery assessors. Information on all new approved Assessors will be listed in the MarinTrust website [here](#).

Assessment performance will be determined through review by the MarinTrust Secretariat and applicants' feedback. If an assessor does not complete the assessment with the due diligence and required expertise, their approval status may be revoked.

Assessors should declare any potential conflict of interest, and any undeclared conflict may be used as grounds for rejection of the application by the MarinTrust IP Application Committee.

2.3 MarinTrust IP fishery assessment method

The MarinTrust IP fishery assessment is led and arranged by a MarinTrust approved assessor or relevantly experienced consultant as explained above. An assessor will possess relevant knowledge and expertise for the fishery assessment scope.

The assessor shall inform the applicant of the purpose and objectives of the MarinTrust IP assessment process. The objectives of this process are as follows:

1. To understand the status of the fishery in the context of the MarinTrust Standard;
2. To inform the applicant of any areas of fisheries management that need to be addressed by the applicant in order to achieve approval of their fishery;
3. To act as a foundation for the formulation and execution of a Fishery Action Plan.

The MarinTrust IP assessment also identifies the fishery stakeholders (those involved in the management of the fishery in particular). The applicant shall facilitate the IP assessment by providing access to supporting information and evidence as required. The MarinTrust IP assessment shall be based on, but not restricted to, reviewing fishery documentation and direct communications with fishery stakeholders.

In addition to completing a full fishery assessment using the MarinTrust fishery assessment template (found on the [website here](#)), the assessor shall ensure the following issues are documented:

1. General background information on the history of the fishery, especially including data on landings, vessel numbers and type, gear and any details on harvest controls;
2. General information on the species in the fishery, and where possible their life history strategies within the geographical location of the fishery, and any history of stock population structures in those locations;
3. Current principal management authority governance, including policy objectives and/or relevant regulations;
4. Recent (less than 10 years) fishery landings and the general economic situation of the fishery;
5. Overview of the fishery including an organisation identified with responsibility for the fishery, detail on fishery management practices, scientific assessment of the stocks, and a clear definition of the unit of assessment being proposed;
6. Other relevant fisheries in the vicinity not subject to assessment but that may interact with the fishery being assessed;
7. External factors (any social, economic or environmental issues) that may affect the fishery and its management;
8. A list of key stakeholders in the fishery and their special interests, where relevant; and
9. If relevant, information for any subsequent product Chain of Custody recognition.

The assessment report shall be completed using the MarinTrust fishery assessment template and shall include the following:

1. An overview of the fishery management framework with an organisational plan of the principal management organisations, their roles and responsibilities;
2. A review of the availability of data in the various categories to be included;
3. A determination of the overall scope of the full assessment (i.e. Unit of Assessment);
4. A description of potential obstacles or problems that may be barriers to approval within an agreed reasonable period of time;
5. Identification of organisations and entities that will be important for engagement in the event of a full assessment.

2.4 Desktop review and analysis of information

Desktop review and analysis of fishery and fishery-related information form a major component of the assessment.

Fishery information:

- Information types and sources can range from legal instruments such as acts, regulations, and laws; official documentation published or required for collection by the management authorities or official organisations (permits, landing declarations, official catch records).

- Review activities may include scientific and statistical information concerning the status of the fishery resource, such as agency reports, stock assessments, and supporting research from state or official scientific sources organisations, including published science or objective information from independent research produced by recognised institutions or otherwise credible sources.

Where possible, independent information should be peer-reviewed and published, although the assessor must review the validity and importance of information on the outcome of the assessment. ‘Softer’ unofficial information, either in printed format or contributed verbally at meetings, may also be used in supporting the general body of documented information. The assessor should be sure to make clear the source of all evidence and remain aware of the source when considering its relevance and reliability. Any concerns, including if information contains conflicting facts with other sources, shall be highlighted to the peer reviewer and IP Application Committee.

Fishery-based information can come from a number of areas, both directly and indirectly from the client fishery, management organisations, fishery participants and associated entities, and (if required) through on-site interviews and witnessing of management processes.

The assessment should proceed according to the procedures set out for the full MarinTrust fishery assessment. This includes the use of the fishery assessment, guidance, and associated documentation as outlined in the MarinTrust Quality Control System and on the MarinTrust [website](#).

GAP Analysis

There are two main components to the GAP Analysis: information gaps, and status gaps. Information gaps are those areas in which there is currently insufficient information to enable scoring of the relevant section of the MarinTrust fishery assessment. Status gaps are those where there is sufficient evidence to enable the assessment team to reliably determine that the fishery does not currently meet the requirements of the relevant section.

The assessment team will utilise the results of the IP assessment to assign a Gap Rating (Pass, Status Gap or Information Gap) to each section of the MarinTrust fishery assessment. The Gap Rating signifies the confidence of the assessment team in the quality of information that demonstrates conformity of the fishery at meeting a particular clause.

The definition of Gap Ratings assigned by the assessor shall be as follows:

Information GAP rating: Information/evidence is inadequate or contradictory to determining whether an element of the fishery complies with the requirements of this section of the MarinTrust fishery assessment. In these cases an Information Gap rating is assigned. These are areas in which additional information is needed before the assessor can reliably determine whether the fishery meets the MarinTrust requirements. These gaps may be solved via discussion with the fishery stakeholders to obtain further information. Alternatively, the generation of additional data (via, for example, a new fishery data collection regime) may form part of the Fishery Action Plan. In either case, the determination in this section will need to be reviewed once sufficient information is available to determine whether the fishery is awarded a Status Gap or a Pass rating.

Status GAP rating: Information/evidence is sufficient to reliably demonstrate that the fishery is not in compliance with the requirements of this section of the MarinTrust fishery assessment. In these cases a Status Gap rating is assigned. These are areas in which the status of the fishery is well understood, but does not meet the MarinTrust requirement(s). These gaps will generally be solved via the development and application of the Fishery Action Plan.

Pass rating: Pass ratings represent sections of the MarinTrust fishery assessment which have been passed by the fishery during the assessment. There is adequate information to reliably determine that the requirements have been met. These sections will generally not appear in the Fishery Action Plan but an applicant may include them if further relevant work is planned.

3.0 Development of a stakeholder-led Fishery Action Plan

The Applicant must develop and implement a Fishery Action Plan (FAP), with an associated and appropriate budget and deadlines, designed to address the deficiencies in the fishery necessary to achieve the project's objectives. An assessor and/or consultant, who has expertise in both the fishery and the MarinTrust IP, may be used to assist in the development of the FAP. The applicant may use an approved MarinTrust assessor (as listed on the MarinTrust website [here](#)) or utilise in-house expertise if available and suitably experienced. The applicant may also choose to have their application checked or peer reviewed prior to submission at their own cost. The assessor and/or consultant will have no say regarding the acceptance, or not, of the fishery onto the MarinTrust IP. After peer review by an approved and independent accredited Certification Body, the acceptance decision will be made by the Improver Programme Application Committee (IPAC), who will make this recommendation to the MarinTrust Governing Body Committee (GBC) for the final confirmation.

Once accepted onto the IP programme, the FAP, its associated deadlines and all other pertinent information must be made publicly available via the MarinTrust website and, if relevant, other FIP repositories (this could be a specific website developed by the FIP stakeholders). Details of where this information can be found should be made available to MarinTrust so they may provide a link on the website.

The budget information does not need to be made publicly available, but evidence of an adequate budget for the project must be made available to the peer reviewer. A confidentiality agreement can be put in place if needed.

The Fishery Action Plan must include (at a minimum):

- A set of improvement objectives, based on the gaps identified during the GAP analysis.
- Actions aligned with achieving the improvement objectives.
- Specific tasks under each action (if appropriate).
- Organisations or people responsible for completing each action/task.
- A month/year deadline for completing each action as relevant.
- Relevant budget information.

The fishery assessment team should assist the applicant with the confirmation of the following for the peer reviewer:

- Actions/tasks align with improvement objectives.
- Timeframes are plausible.
- There are no major red flags or risks to achieving the Fishery Action Plan given the information provided, or any other information that may be available to the team.

4.0 Signed agreement between stakeholders

Participants must commit to financially and/or operationally invest in, and make improvements to, the fishery. Commitments should be formalised and may take the form of a signed Memorandum of

Understanding (MOU) or other relevant document detailing those commitments made by each participant (fishery stakeholders) involved in the FAP.

The agreement should include active participation by at least one company from each section of the supply chain. Active participation means contributing financial or in-kind support to the project and/or a commitment to working on activities in the Fishery Action Plan.

At this point, the improvement effort involving multi-stakeholders and a credible FAP with a plan for regular reporting on improvements within a specified time frame will be termed a Fishery Improvement Project (FIP).

Considered as a whole, the participant organisation(s) are referred to as the Applicant. The Applicant is responsible for submitting the IP application to MarinTrust. In addition to the IP assessment, the GAP analysis, and the Fishery Action Plan, the application must include the following details:

FIP t Name	Accurately reflects the scope of the applicant fishery, being as specific as possible about location, species, and gear. • If the applicant does not represent the whole fishery, the name should specify what portion is covered. • If multiple improvement projects exist in the fishery, names should distinguish between them.
Applicant Name	Details of the FIP Coordinator representing the FIP applicant stakeholder group.
MarinTrust Stage	IP • An indication of whether a Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) is already underway, and if so for how long it has been active, and how much progress has been made.
Objective(s)	• One or more objectives that define the scope of the FAP. • Objectives must be time bound (include end date), and measurable (e.g., by X date, the FAP will accomplish Y). • Scope of objectives is appropriate for the fishery type.
Description	• 3 to 4 sentences providing additional detail on the FAP's scope and objectives entered.
Primary Applicant Contact	• Contact information for at least one public applicant contact entered (this will usually be the FIP Coordinator).
Project Dates	• Expected start date is based on whether there is an existing FIP in place; end date is based on the Fishery Action Plan. • Month/year entered for both.

Species	At least one primary species selected.
Gear Type(s)	At least one gear type selected.
Location(s)	- FAO Major Fishing Area completed. - Information on EEZ and RFMOs entered if relevant. - Information on the regulator of the fishery.

MarinTrust has produced an Improver Programme application form for the FIP (Form 3A) which can be filled out to provide all of the required information.

4.1 Stakeholder roles as part of the Improver Programme

FIP Coordinator: The FIP Coordinator is in charge of communicating with MarinTrust on behalf of all of the FIP stakeholders and providing any information or updates. The coordinator is also in charge of submitting FIP application forms, FIP documentation and all FIP progress reports.

Marine ingredient production facilities: The production facilities should be active participants in the FIP stakeholder group during the development and progress of the FIP initiative in an appropriate way. The facilities should also be part of the decision making processes as part of the FIP and are responsible for submitting company applications related to factory audits as part of the MarinTrust IP.

Feed producers: Feed producers should be active participants of the FIP stakeholder group and contribute to the FIP initiative in an appropriate way (financial or otherwise). They should also be part of decision making processes as part of the FIP and can help provide industry leverage on behalf of the FIP initiative.

Government: Governments play an important role in FIPs and should be consulted throughout the development, implementation and monitoring of a FIP.

Other (NGOs etc.): Other actors should participate in the FIP as stakeholders and provide relevant resources, coordination and/or expertise as necessary.

4.2 Collaboration within a Fishery Improvement Project

In some circumstances it may be appropriate for competing applicant organisations to cooperate to form a single robust and stakeholder-led FIP. If multiple industry organisations wish to develop a single FIP within the same fish stock and/or geographical region, the following principles must be adhered to:

- Mutual cooperation to promote FIP development.
- An MOU or similar agreement between all participants/ stakeholders in the FIP to allow collaboration and sharing of pertinent information should be produced.
- A lead Coordinator should be nominated and agreed to by all participants to facilitate collaboration and communicate application and amendments to MarinTrust.
- New participants to the FIP should be determined by the current participants. MarinTrust will not impose requirements on how these decisions are made or the requirements imposed on them,

these should be determined by the FIP stakeholder group. These requirements should not be used as a barrier for others to access an ongoing FIP.

- Duties relating to the FIP, including financial obligations, should be distributed fairly and agreed to by all parties.

If necessary, the removal of FIP stakeholders from the applicant group should be considered in a fair way and should be agreed to by the FIP participants.

MarinTrust does not have any say, nor will they comment on, financial or participation decisions related to the FIP¹.

Should an additional facility join after the FIP has been accepted onto the MarinTrust Improver Programme, the nominated FIP Coordinator should submit the MarinTrust IP Application Form 3C to include the details of the new participants.

Should the stakeholder group wish to remove stakeholders or change the nominated FIP Coordinator, this should be communicated to MarinTrust via email and include contacts from all other stakeholder companies copied into the email.

The MarinTrust IP allows multiple IP projects to be in place on a single biological stock; however, all FIPs will be reviewed by the IP Application Committee to ensure that the stakeholders required to achieve the changes set out in the FAP are engaged and committed to the process and evidence submitted is credible. Any applicant group which has not secured the engagement of all necessary stakeholders (e.g. national or regional governments, scientific organisations, industry groups, etc.) will not be accepted into the Improver Programme. For this reason, during the formulation of the FAP, the applicant should actively seek to include other fishery stakeholders and, where necessary, collaboration between multiple FIPs should take place.

4.3 Professional conduct

The conduct of applicants and other stakeholders as part of the IP process should always be professional and with the aim of maintaining the integrity and credibility of the process as well as the objectives of the IP. Unprofessional conduct will not be tolerated and may result in sanctions against an application.

¹Note: Although MarinTrust does not get involved in the financial decisions for FIPs, any costs levied to additional entrants to any recognised FIP would be expected, under normal conditions, to be applied on a pro rata basis taking account of the number of members, the total cost and duration of the project, and the remaining time with which any new member may be involved in the FIP.

5.0 Peer review and application committee

5.1 Peer review

The IP assessment, GAP analysis outcome, FAP, and other application documentation shall form the application pack, which will be provided for peer review by an approved Certification Body representative.

The MarinTrust Secretariat will arrange for the IP application pack to be reviewed by a peer reviewer from a Certification Body. The peer review team must be considered to be competent in all relevant aspects of fishery resource research and management, to the extent of being able to technically evaluate with confidence the content of the application pack.

Peer reviewers shall be briefed on the review process and be provided with a peer review guidance document ([Annex 1](#)) and Template ([Annex 2](#)), where they will formally report their work. The decision made by the peer reviewer will then be recommended to the Improver Programme Application Committee (IPAC) for a determination for acceptance of the FIP. Final acceptance will be confirmed by the MarinTrust GBC.

The following elements shall form the basis of the peer review and confirmation evaluation:

- A Review of the full GAP analysis study conducted on the fishery to confirm the gaps and challenges against the MarinTrust fishery approval criteria (as outlined in the peer review guidance attached as [Annex 1](#) in this document).
- B Review of the applicant stakeholder committee, to ensure that it covers a balanced range of stakeholders including the industry value chain, fishery management and NGOs, in accordance with MarinTrust IP criteria. The peer reviewer shall also ensure that any organisation listed as being responsible for an action in the Fishery Action Plan (FAP) is part of the stakeholder committee.
- C Review of the FAP, to ensure it has been approved by the stakeholder committee and includes identification of key issues and stakeholders, prioritisation of actions and agreement on improvement milestones.
- D Overall review of all application paperwork, including the application form, to ensure consistency and completeness.

Following the initial peer review results, the applicant will be provided with the findings and be allowed an opportunity to respond and provide additional information should they feel it appropriate. At this stage if there are very different interpretations of the application pack the applicant and reviewer may communicate with the applicant, facilitated by MarinTrust, to ensure an appropriate course of action is agreed. If there are any disputes regarding interpretation of the application documents, the IPAC have the authority to make a final determination.

The peer review may be carried out by the same reviewer two years in a row, however, for the third year the review should be carried out by a different reviewer. More guidance on this process can be found in [Annex 1](#) of this document.

5.2 Improver Programme Application Committee (IPAC)

The MarinTrust Secretariat shall convene an IPAC meeting with members of appropriate competence and independence as defined in the Improver Programme Application Committee Terms of References (Doc E5 in the QMS) which can be found [here](#). Such competences shall be recorded in the MarinTrust Secretariat documentation along with statements in respect to potential conflict of interest. The IPAC will provide recommendations regarding approval or rejection of applicants for the MarinTrust Improver Programme to the MarinTrust GBC who will then make the final decision on acceptance.

The IPAC will review applicant FIPs and make their decisions regarding acceptance onto the IP based on whether they determine the application as a whole (and based on the peer review guidance) has demonstrated that:

- A) It is a genuine attempt to improve the fishery and;
- B) the FIP stands a reasonable chance to gain MarinTrust fishery approval within 5 years.

5.3 Acceptance decision

There are 2 possible Acceptance outcomes in the FIP application process:

Full acceptance: The IPAC accepts the application pack, the peer reviewer's comments, and any other evidence submitted by the applicant. At this point the FIP is accepted onto the Improver Programme, where it will remain, subject to continuing to meet the progress and surveillance requirements as detailed below. This decision will be recorded in the IPAC meeting Minutes. The IPAC may impose conditions to this acceptance decision (see Section 5.4 for more details).

Reject: The IP Application Committee or the MarinTrust GBC decides that the FIP initiative cannot be accepted based on the evidence submitted and their concerns cannot be resolved by setting conditions on the fishery. The Applicant will be free to repeat the application process as desired. This will incur the cost of application each time and it will be at the discretion of the IPAC to consider re-applications.

5.4 Acceptance conditions

Acceptance conditions may be imposed to a FIP where the IPAC is unable to reach a quorate decision, where there are concerns relating to the ability of the fishery to meet its commitments as outlined in the FAP, where there is deemed inadequate evidence to support the contents of the application, or where the FAP or any other component of the application is deemed inadequate. The purpose of this is to allow a FIP applicant an opportunity to correct relatively minor issues without having to re-enter the application process from the start or to impose a long delay of the GBC determination on Acceptance to the IP. These conditions will be time-limited, with deadlines which do not exceed 6 months from the time the FIP is accepted on the IP. The conditions will be based on ensuring the FIP corrects whatever issue(s) were identified.

5.5 Notification of acceptance decision

The application will be reviewed by and accepted, in this order, by the peer reviewer, the IP Application Committee and subsequently the MarinTrust GBC.

All decisions on acceptance status will be advised in writing to the respective applicants within 5 working days of the IPAC and then subsequently the GBC meeting by the MarinTrust Secretariat. A copy of this correspondence will be held in the applicant's file. At this time, information about the FIP will be uploaded onto the MarinTrust website. Applicants should not publish any information regarding their acceptance onto to the MarinTrust IP until it has been formally accepted by the MarinTrust GBC. Once formally recognised as part of the IP, applicants may only publish MarinTrust documents as approved by MarinTrust. If an applicant is found to have violated this, it may result in penalties and potentially an application being declined.

6.0 Requirements for production facilities as part of the FIP stakeholder group

The MarinTrust Improver Programme claim is made by marine ingredient production facilities once they have complied with the two programme requirements:

1. Being a signed member of a MarinTrust accepted FIP
2. Pass a MarinTrust audit of the facility²

All facility audit applications and audits shall be carried out according to MarinTrust QMS doc. A2 (Guidelines for CBs managing applications for certification for the MarinTrust Programme) and doc. A4 (Conducting of MarinTrust Factory/facility audits by approved CBs).

If at any time the third-party CB withdraws compliance to the MarinTrust Standard from the production facility, they shall notify the MarinTrust Secretariat who will remove the companies acceptance document from the MarinTrust website and the Improver Programme acceptance will be revoked. This will be done in line with the QMS doc. A5 (The issuing and the withdrawal of certificates to the MarinTrust certification programme).

To ensure applicants aim for full compliance with the IP, the following condition applies: within 12 months of the FIP being accepted by the MarinTrust Governing Body Committee, at least one marine ingredient facilities must pass a MarinTrust audit and satisfy both of the above criteria. If no facility has passed an audit by the 6-month mark, the MarinTrust Secretariat will open a dialogue with the applicant to determine the reasons for the delay. If the situation is not resolved following this communication, the IPAC will be asked to consider the application on a case by case basis to determine if any sanctions should be imposed against the applicant.

The IPAC will have full authority to make any decisions regarding an extension to this requirement and the continuation or not of an applicant on the programme. More information can be found in [Annex 4](#).

² If the country in questions has a lack of access to suitably trained auditors, this will be taken into account during the IPACs determination.

7.0 Expectations and recognition for those on the MarinTrust IP

The MarinTrust Improver Programme claim can only be made by marine ingredient production facilities. In order to use the MarinTrust IP claim, applicants must comply with the following:

- Apply via the MarinTrust IP process and conform to all assurance steps within it. The applicant may be recognised once the FIP is accepted and a MarinTrust audit passed.
- Must meet improvement milestones during the process.
- Must conform to the surveillances and peer reviews throughout the process.

Should the applicant comply with the above expectations and those outlined in this application document, the following recognition will be provided by MarinTrust:

- MarinTrust IP acceptance status (listed on the MarinTrust website on the IP accepted facilities page, [here](#)).
- A document of acceptance will be provided by MarinTrust to the applicant outlining the scope of the acceptance.

7.1 FIP stakeholder recognition

For those stakeholders that are part of a MarinTrust accepted FIP but are not marine ingredient producers, they may not claim Improver Programme acceptance. They may however make the following claim:

- A stakeholder as “part of a MarinTrust accepted FIP”.

More details about FIP stakeholder claims can be found in document A13 in the QMS.

8.0 Fishery Action Plan progress reports

To ensure that an accepted FIP remains in compliance with the requirements of the IP, progress reviews will take place after 6 months, 12 months, and subsequently every 6 months. More frequent progress checks may be conducted if deemed necessary by the peer reviewer or IP Application Committee. The 6-month updates will be carried out by MarinTrust with subsequent progress reviews being carried out by external peer reviewers.

The initial 6-month progress report will be carried out 6 months after the acceptance of the FIP onto the IP. This review will be done by MarinTrust and will check that actions raised during the application process, either by the external peer reviewer or the IPAC, have been completed or initialised (depending on the timeframe imposed). An initial check will also be made on meetings between FIP stakeholder groups and any relevant actions due at the 6-month mark as part of the FAP. It is recommended that a full fishery assessment is carried out on the fishery part way through the FIP timeline to ensure the information used to develop the FAP is still representative.

8.1 Annual progress review

The annual progress review of accepted FIPs may be carried out either by an approved MarinTrust IP assessor or a suitably qualified consultant hired by the applicant as outlined in section 2 of this document.

The assessor should:

1. Familiarise themselves with the FIP by reviewing the application documentation, particularly the Fishery Action Plan, and any previous progress report.
2. Contact the IP fishery a minimum of 1 month before the progress report is due as a reminder to provide the information required to conduct the progress report.
3. Conduct a review of the status of the fishery against the tasks and actions which were identified in the Fishery Action Plan.
4. Complete a MarinTrust IP progress report,.
5. Submit the progress report to MarinTrust who will then arrange for the peer review and review by the IPAC, as described in Section 5.

The progress report should focus on areas where actions have been defined by the Fishery Action Plan as being due, but also consider any other evidence provided by the FIP and revise areas of the progress report accordingly. In areas where there were no defined tasks due and the FIP does not provide any evidence, the progress report should outline a brief review of publicly available information to ensure no inappropriate actions have been taken.

The assessor or consultant should communicate directly with the MarinTrust FIP to offer an opportunity to address any missing or unclear information as needed. Any enquiries and replies between the reviewer and IP fishery should occur within a reasonable timeframe. If a lack of information provision prevents the completion of the progress report, the IP fishery may be suspended from the Improver Programme until such information is provided and the report is completed.

8.2 Evidence

The fishery must submit evidence as part of the progress report that the FIP has completed the tasks which are defined by the Fishery Action Plan as due to be completed by the relevant date. This should include any links to public documents for easy access (as hyperlinks). Where possible, the language of these documents should be in English, however, where documents are in a local language, a summary of the contents of these should be provided in English for the review process and public transparency.

The ultimate decision of whether evidence can be considered reliable will be made by the peer reviewer, who will generally require that evidence which is not publicly available be documented in writing, dated, and have a defined source (whether an organisation or individual). All applicants are encouraged to make documents related to the Accepted FIP public to ensure transparency. For those FIPs which do not have their own online repository for evidence documents, the MarinTrust website may be used to host such documents.

Evidence adequate to demonstrate that a Fishery Action Plan task has been completed will vary depending on the action. The following are potentially valuable sources of evidence:

- Scientific papers or drafts thereof, reports, conference presentations and papers;
- Meeting agendas and minutes;
- Letters sent to or from fishery stakeholders;
- Media articles;
- Fishery legislation or regulation.

8.3 Progress determination

A progress determination is advised by the applicant via the IP milestone report, reviewed by the peer reviewer, and finally confirmed by the IPAC. The determination is based on the extent to which the FIP has achieved the goals and completed the tasks outlined in the FAP. There are 3 potential determination outcomes:

- **Maintain IP status:** Where the FIP is able to demonstrate that it has completed the tasks defined by the FAP, the IP status of the FIP be maintained.
- **Conditionally maintain IP status:** Where the FIP is not able to demonstrate that it has completed the tasks defined by the FAP, one or more conditions will be raised, against which its continuing IP acceptance will be contingent.
- **Suspend IP status:** Where a FIP has failed to provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that it has met the requirements set by a condition placed on it via a previous review, the FIP will be suspended from the MarinTrust Improver Programme.

8.4 Conditionally maintain IP status

A FIP which is found to have fallen behind the timeline defined by the FAP, as described above, will have one or more conditions raised against its acceptance on the Improver Programme. The precise nature

and timeline of these conditions shall be determined through the IP review process (i.e. reviewed by the peer reviewer and finalised by the IPAC), but will adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Where a FIP has failed to meet a defined milestone or complete a specific task, a condition will be raised requiring that milestone to be met or task completed.
2. Any condition raised will be subject to a time constraint in the form of a date by which the condition must be met. The duration of the period given to meet the condition shall take into account the individual fishery circumstances and the reason for the condition being set, but shall not be more than 1 year (or 6 months if arising from the first progress review).
3. Any FIP which has not met a condition by the assigned deadline may be suspended from the MarinTrust Improver Programme and given Suspended IP status, as described below.

8.5 Suspended FIPs

FIPs which fail to demonstrate consistent progress along the FAP timeline will be suspended from the IP as described above, and following the procedures in the MarinTrust Quality Control System (doc. A5 [here](#)). A suspended FIP may be re-instated to the Improver Programme if it meets the requirements of the condition(s) which resulted in its suspension within 6 months of the suspension (dependent upon continuing to meet any other requirements, such as progress reports). Re-instated FIPs must adhere to the original improvement timeline.

Any FIP which is unable to meet the conditions within 6 months of suspension will be fully removed from the Improver Programme. A suspended fishery not able to make the appropriate changes in the 6 month probation period due to extenuating factors (i.e. factors beyond the control of the applicants such as natural phenomenon) may apply to the IPAC for a time extension to make these improvements. The IPAC will have the final say on whether to grant this extension or not. A suspended fishery will be eligible to re-apply via the standard IP application process no less than 1 year after the initial suspension. Such FIPs will be subjected to additional scrutiny by the peer reviewer and IPAC and may be required to demonstrate that they are able to meet the conditions of their previous accepted status before they are re-admitted. Upon re-acceptance, FIPs may not receive additional time on top of the original FAP timeline.

8.6 SFP FIP ratings

SFP's FIP Evaluation Tool serves as a comprehensive framework for defining and evaluating Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) across a six-stage spectrum of accomplishments. These stages encompass the conception and structuring of the FIP (Stages 1 and 2), its execution (Stage 3), the implementation of enhancements (Stages 4 and 5), and eventual Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification (Stage 6).

The FIP Progress Ratings system is an innovative approach that integrates time-based benchmarks, providing swift insights into the pace of a fishery's advancement and assigning a corresponding letter grade. This system ascribes a rating, spanning from the apex of "A" for Exceptional Progress to "E" denoting Negligible Progress. These ratings are maintained and prominently featured in the FIPs section of all FishSource profiles linked to fishery improvement endeavours.

To ensure FIPs on the MarinTrust Improver Programme, we have ensured the reporting process aligns with the information needed by the SFP FIP rating team to streamline the process and reduce additional

burden on the applicants. The FIP rating assessment is carried out independently by the SFP team and follows the established review process set forth by the MarinTrust programme for the Annual progress report. A translation table is used internally to serve as a mechanism to bridge any differences or gaps that might exist between the MSC and MarinTrust assessments, allowing for a coherent and unified approach when applying the FIP ratings methodology within the context of the MarinTrust Improvers Programme including its Multispecies iteration.

Once project progress is published on the MarinTrust website (every 6 months), the FIP Ratings team examines the outcomes and supporting evidence presented by each project. Subsequently, the team communicates its findings to the MarinTrust team for public dissemination.

8.8 FIP scope changes

When an applicant applies to the Improver Programme, they carry out their initial fishery assessment and develop the action plan based on the Unit of Assessment (UoA - species, geographic location, and fishing gear types) that makes up the scope of the fishery. Once accepted, if a FIP would like to expand the scope of their fishery to include additional gear types or locations etc., there is a formal process to follow. This text outlines that process.

If a current FIP would like to request a change or add new gear types to their application, it is their responsibility (working with their fishery assessor) to identify the clauses that may be impacted by changes in the context for that fishery and update the assessment and action plan as appropriate. MarinTrust may support applicants by providing guidance in response to questions related to specific clause requirements.

Scope change request process:

1. The FIP should update the fishery assessment and update/amend the relevant clauses in line with the new UoA scope.
2. The FIP should then update/amend the Fishery Action Plan to account for the changes to the assessment and add any new actions as relevant.
3. The new assessment and action plan should be approved by the FIP stakeholders responsible for actioning the improvement plan.
4. These new documents should be submitted to MarinTrust, clearly outlining where changes have been made to the original application.
5. A third-party peer review (in line with the FIP Peer Review process) will be carried out to review these changes and to provide feedback.
6. The IPAC should then discuss the amended application and review feedback and make a decision regarding acceptance of the proposed changes to the FIP scope.

Peer review process for the FIP scope change

Following submission of the updated fishery assessment, FAP and other relevant documents, MarinTrust³ will make a determination regarding whether the changes constitute a significant change to the UoA

³ This determination will be made in coordination with the MarinTrust Fishery Manager.

scope. If they do, then a peer review will be commissioned immediately, at the cost of the applicant, to review the changes. These findings will then be presented to the IPAC for an acceptance decision. If the changes have a minor impact, then the peer review process will be carried out in line with the next annual progress report review to reduce additional work and financial burden on the applicant.

The final decision regarding acceptance of the FIP UoA scope changes will be made by the IPAC, however if there are unusual or controversial circumstances then they may seek advice from the GBC.

Requirements for the production facility following a FIP scope change

The change of a FIP UoA scope will have an impact on the raw materials accepted as part of the Improver Programme production facility scope. To facilitate this change in recognition the process is aligned with document PRO-005 (prev. A5) from the MarinTrust QMS (found here). If this includes a change to the species being used the facility must submit a scope extension request to MarinTrust to update this in their recognition scope and during the next audit an auditor will carry out checks to ensure the appropriate activities related to the change in raw material scope have been carried out. The same will be true if the location and/or gear types have been updated related to the raw material UoA scope, however a scope extension request is not required.

Doc PRO-005 (prev. A5) wording:

‘With regards to the update of certificate scope where an existing certificate holder wishes to add a fishery or by-product specie to their certificate scope between audit cycles the following rules apply. With regards to the update of certificate scope where an existing certificate holder wishes to add a fishery or by-product specie to their certificate scope between audit cycles the following rules apply. Where a facility wishes to add a species to its certification scope and is already sourcing from that species category [1], the new species may be assessed and added to the certificate scope following approval.

[1] Species categories are: whole fish, and by-products (wild caught and aquaculture inclusive).’ The full text can be reviewed in Doc PRO-005.

8.9 FAP changes

Changes to the FAP may be necessary while the FIP is in the MarinTrust Improver Programme. Changes may be required to reflect new information (e.g. an improved understanding of the catch composition, new information on discarding, the results of an ecosystem analysis, or an updated understanding of stock structure); changes may also be needed to reflect components of the FAP progressing faster or more slowly than anticipated. In some cases these changes may form a planned component of the FAP, particularly in fisheries which enter the Improver Programme as data-limited fisheries.

Changes to the FAP should be made through a process of collaboration similar to that described earlier in this document for the initial drafting of the FAP. Any changes must be highlighted in the next scheduled progress report and subsequently approved by both the peer reviewer and the MarinTrust IPAC.

Note: Should there be legislative changes that may impact an accepted FIP (in terms of scope and/or improvement actions), the applicant is responsible for informing MarinTrust as soon as it becomes

aware of such information. The applicant must also adapt their FIP documentation to comply with such legislation changes and submit them to MarinTrust in a timely manner.

8.10 FAP extensions

This section outlines the potential scenarios that may result in a MarinTrust Improver Programme accepted FIP requiring additional time to complete their FAP and provides guidance for the conditions attached to such extensions. All extension requests will be at the discretion of the IPAC and will only be granted if the fishery can demonstrate that continuous improvement and previous commitments have been made over the course of the FAP.

Extension conditions

Due to the nature of fisheries and potential impacts on them, it is understood that there may be times when an extension to the 5 year maximum timeframe is required. These should be extenuating circumstances that significantly impact a fishery and/or the industry that the fishery is sourcing to.

An applicant may request an extension timeframe appropriate for the remaining work needed to complete the FAP. It will be up to the applicant to inform the MarinTrust Secretariat as soon as they become aware of the need for an extension of their intention to extend, so that this may be considered by the peer reviewers and IPAC at the appropriate time. A revised FAP must be provided as part of the extension request outlining how the extra time requested will be allocated.

Extension request process

Should an accepted FIP on the MarinTrust IP decide that they require additional time to complete the actions within their FAP, they must submit their intention to request an extension in writing to MarinTrust. This request should be made as soon as the applicant becomes aware of the need for an extension. The MarinTrust Secretariat will then follow up and request additional information and evidence for the reason behind the extension request via the extension request form. In addition, the applicant will be required to provide an up to date fishery assessment identifying where the remaining compliance gaps are and an outline of how they plan to amend their FAP to account for the additional time, including actions to be extended, timeframes associated with each, and those responsible. Once this information has been provided and reviewed by the Secretariat, it will be sent for peer review by an accredited certification body who will consider this request and the proposed changes to the FAP in their review.

Following the peer review, the IPAC will then review the request and will have the opportunity to ask for additional information and/or evidence for the reasons behind the extension. Once the IPAC have made a determination of whether to approve an extension, the applicant will be informed in writing by the Secretariat.

There are 2 possible outcomes from the extension request:

Approved: If an extension is approved, the applicant is informed of the specific requirements from the IPAC associated with the extension which must be complied with to maintain acceptance on the IP during

the extension. It is important that these conditions are communicated and agreed to by all FIP stakeholders. Should the applicant fail to do so, it will result in them being removed from the programme.

Declined: If an extension is declined, the applicant must comply with their original FAP timeframe and aim to complete all improvement actions with the 5 year limit.

8.11 Completed FIPs

Eventually, Improver Programme FIPs should reach the stage where they believe themselves able to meet the full MarinTrust requirements and achieve MarinTrust approval. FIPs may determine this for themselves, from the outcomes of the progress reports, or obtain expert advice. Production facilities sourcing from the FIPs which believe themselves to meet the MarinTrust requirements should apply to the scheme via the standard application process. It is important to note that completing the FAP and MarinTrust IP process does not lead to automatic MarinTrust approval, as a full fishery assessment must be conducted by an approved Certification Body (CB). A full fishery assessment conducted by the CB is the only route via which fishery material can enter the full scheme. A fishery successfully completing its FAP is unlikely to have been subjected to a full assessment (by any party) for a number of years, and so this final confirmation by the CB that the fishery has met the MarinTrust requirements is essential.

The maximum time that an accepted FIP may remain on the Improver Programme is 5 years. Should a fishery feel that they are unable to make sufficient improvement within the 5 years, they may appeal for an extension when this becomes apparent as outlined earlier in this document. In such cases, a determination will be made by the MarinTrust IPAC regarding a possible extension to the timeframe and will only be granted if the fishery can demonstrate that continuous improvement has been made over the course of the FAP.

If a fishery applies for full MarinTrust approval earlier than planned but is not approved, it may re-enter the Improver Programme, either by continuing with an existing FAP or by creating a new one, but may not exceed the overall timeframe of a FIP (5 years) unless this is approved by the IPAC.

9.0 Overlapping FIP recognition guidelines

This section is designed to provide guidance for Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) interested in applying to the MarinTrust Improver Programme where the Unit of Assessment (UoA) of the FIP overlaps with a FIP currently on the programme. It also outlines the requirements and expectations MarinTrust have for such applications.

Terms

Original or current FIP – This refers to the FIP that is currently accepted on the MarinTrust Improver Programme

New FIP – This refers to the new FIP applying to the IP with a Unit of Assessment that is the same as that of a current FIP.

Unit of Assessment (UoA) – This is the scope of the FIP defined as the species caught, gear type or catching method and the geographic location.

Overlapping FIP/s – When a current FIP and a new FIP have the same Unit of Assessment.

Aim of guidance

This guidance is only relevant in cases where multiple groups of stakeholders working and sourcing from the same fishery are unable to come to an agreement regarding collaboration and sharing of resources in order to improve the fishery. This process should be implemented only in the event that no other options are available and aims to provide an accessibility option for all parties with an interest in improving the fishery they source from in line with our Theory of Change. It is important that all parties are aware that overlapping FIPs can potentially have negative impacts on improvements if they are working towards different objectives.

Important note: Ensuring duplicate FIPs are aligned and that progress is monitored in an appropriate way is the responsibility of the FIPs (both the current and the new) and additional costs will likely be applicable.

MarinTrust will not provide additional support or resources in this regard. It will be up to the FIP stakeholder groups to manage the additional work and costs required in association with this process and to ensure the FIPs remain credible and effective.

Potential drivers (including positive) for overlapping FIPs

In order to understand the motivations for those intending to develop multiple overlapping FIPs, the potential drivers are outlined below to be included in discussions and decisions related to allowing these to apply to the MarinTrust IP:

- The ownership of resources may be a factor and may impact how different stakeholders view the management.
- The costs related to combined efforts may be different than those needed to work independently.
- Challenges with market access and competition may impact working relationships.
- There could be a lack of trust in a working relationship between different groups (based on business practices or personal conflicts etc.).

If the current FIP is progressing well then the impact of an overlapping FIP should be considered in this context and if it will have a negative effect on ongoing progress. If the current FIP is struggling or behind on the planned improvements, then an overlapping FIP may provide additional motivation and/or resources for this to change and to motivate progress.

Proposed process for recognition of overlapping FIPs

Step 1 – New FIP must attempt to engage and collaborate with the current FIP – evidence of this process will be required to ensure duplication of work is not the first option.

Step 2 – Formal communication from the new FIP to the current FIP informing them of their intent to apply for an overlapping FIP. This should provide another opportunity for collaboration to be initiated.

Step 3 – New FIP stakeholder group to provide a request to the IPAC outlining the reasoning for developing a duplicate FIP and providing the scope information for the relevant FIP UoA. This should include evidence of communication with the current FIP as outlined in Steps 1 and 2.

Step 4 – If no response or communication is provided from the current FIP in Steps 1 to 3, MarinTrust will reach out to them requiring a response and any comments they think are relevant. They will also be required to explain why they are unwilling to collaborate with the new FIP stakeholders.

Step 5 – The IPAC will be presented with the evidence provided in steps 1 to 4* and should consider the circumstances and determine whether an overlapping FIP is the appropriate course of action. This is not a decision on the acceptance of any FIP and does not guarantee acceptance on the IP will be granted to a new FIP.

Step 6 – Should the IPAC agree to permit the new FIP application, the FIP stakeholders should initiate an application to the IP to include alignment of the fishery assessment, FAP and stakeholder commitments as outlined in this guidance document.

Step 7 – The application to the IP to be submitted to MarinTrust. This process will include additional review time to consider the alignment of documents in Step 6 and will provide feedback on the potential implications of permitting overlapping FIPs for this UoA.

Step 8 – The full IP application will be carried out in line with the IP application mechanism.

*Before any application from an overlapping FIP is received, a statement will be required from both stakeholder groups explaining their reasoning for not collaborating to improve the fishery they source from. This will be included in the application information for the IPAC to consider in their review.

Requirements for new FIP stakeholders

- A pre-requisite for the new FIP stakeholder group is to provide evidence that they have made attempts to engage and collaborate with the current FIP group.
- The new fishery assessment should be aligned against the original fishery assessment carried out for the current FIP or any updated versions of such. This should be done via the fishery assessors either communicating directly through the assessment process, or by the assessor for the new assessment utilising the original assessment which is publicly available on the MarinTrust website. The assessment determinations (including the rationale for these determinations) and the associated are expected to be the same or very closely aligned.⁴
- The Fishery Action Plan for the new FIP should be aligned with the current FIP in relation to the main improvement objectives for the fishery (i.e. Management improvements should align and be owned by the same government agencies). The aim of this is two-fold. It should reduce the duplication of effort for agencies responsible for improvements in the fisheries and also ensure the improvements are working towards the same end-goal. This aims to ensure that collaboration occurs within specific improvements actions and reduce the potential negative impacts of multiple initiatives working on the same challenges.

⁴ If different assessors carry out the assessments and have different clause determinations, a meeting between the assessors may be required to resolve these interpretation differences. MarinTrust can provide interpretation guidance if this is requested.

Requirements for current FIP stakeholders

- The current FIP stakeholder group must provide sufficient reasoning to the IPAC outlining why they are unwilling to collaborate with the new FIP stakeholders.
- If the current FIP is unwilling to accommodate the new stakeholder/s and is unable to provide sufficient reasoning for doing so, they will be required to assist in covering the additional resources needed to facilitate an overlapping FIP application as part of the IP process. These will be related to the alignment and additional review work that will be required to reduce the potential negative impacts on the fishery improvements and not to support the work being by the new stakeholder group.

Requirements for both FIPs

- Both stakeholder groups should work with the same consultants/ assessors or their consultants/ assessors should communicate during the process to align their objectives.
- Reporting on progress of both FIPs should be aligned in time (i.e. the annual progress reports should be submitted at the same time). This is to ensure the review on progress can consider the work from both FIPs in alignment and identify any discrepancies or potential negative impacts on the fishery improvement.
- Any conflict mediation is the responsibility of the applicants, MarinTrust will not mediate external conflicts or disputes.
- It is the responsibility of both FIPs to ensure the relevant agencies and management authorities involved are informed regarding their efforts, particularly where overlap in work from both FIPs occurs.

Note: The timeframes and resources for actions with aligned objectives should be seriously considered while developing any overlapping FIP.

Role of MarinTrust

All decisions will be made by the Improver Programme Application Committee (IPAC), but may be escalated to the Governing Body Committee (GBC) if deemed necessary by the IPAC. All situations will be considered on a case by case basis to prevent the development of overlapping FIPs before efforts to engage and without fully considering the implications to the long-term improvements of a fishery.

10.0 Quality control and appeals process

MarinTrust is committed to consistent, accurate reviews of FIP progress, results, and impact. The peer review and IPAC processes serve as additional mechanisms to ensure the accuracy of FIP acceptance and progress decisions.

If the application/surveillance process described above is completed and the FIP stakeholders wish to appeal against the acceptance or review decision, the stakeholder can enter into a formal appeals process to challenge the decision. This process is carried out in line with the QMS doc. A6 (Appeals and complaints procedure for the MarinTrust standard):

- Appeal filed with MarinTrust Secretariat. The FIP or other stakeholder files a notice of appeal within 30 calendar days of the IP process outcome.
- Initial review: a majority of the MarinTrust IPAC reviews the appeal and makes a recommendation within 30 calendar days of receiving the appeal.
- If the MarinTrust IPAC does not agree with the appeal, the MarinTrust GBC will convene. Both the raiser of the appeal and a representative of the IPAC will attend the GBC meeting to present information. The decision of the MarinTrust GBC will be final.

Decision communicated: the reviewer communicates the final decision back to the party requesting appeal. The communication will not be public, though the outcomes of the appeal decision will be made public if they affect the IP status of the FIP.

11.0 Glossary

Applicant

Marine ingredient producers involved in a FIP with a signed agreement/ MOU.

Participant

Individual companies as part of the applicant.

FIP Stakeholders

Any interested party within the FIP scope but not necessarily a participant.

FIP Coordinator/ Implementer

A single person in charge of coordinating work as part of the FAP and ensuring all FIP stakeholders are kept informed as well as communicating with MarinTrust on all FIP matters.

GAP Analysis

A GAP analysis identifies the differences between the fishery as it is at present and the ideal end point that the fishery wishes to reach (i.e. MarinTrust approval). This then allows a Fishery Action Plan (FAP) to be produced.

Improver Programme Application Committee (IPAC)

The IPAC are a group of experts from across the fishery value chain convened by the MarinTrust Secretariat to make decisions regarding acceptance into, and retention on, the MarinTrust Improver Programme.

Fishery Action Plan (FAP)

A FAP is a schedule of improvements based on individual aspects of the fishery that require improvements and take place within a specified timeframe.

Fishery Improvement Project (FIP)

A FIP is a multi-stakeholder effort to improve the sustainability of a fishery and may vary in scope and nature. To be a credible FIP it must meet a number of requirements pertaining to participation, funding, transparency, and scientific rigor.

Peer Review

The Peer Review is an evaluation of the FIP including all necessary documentation and will be carried out by an approved Certification Body representative in accordance with specified Guidance documents.

Improver Programme (IP) Assessment

An IP assessment is a preliminary evaluation of a fishery against all performance indicators to provide a picture of the fishery's baseline environmental performance and challenges. This allows a fishery to identify any areas that need to be improved to reach a final end goal.

Annex 1: MarinTrust Fishery Improver Programme

Application Committee guidelines

The purpose of the MarinTrust IP Application Committee (IPAC) is to utilise their expertise and knowledge of fisheries management and science to determine whether FIPs applying to the MarinTrust Improver Programme meet the minimum standards demanded by the MarinTrust Improver Programme. The IPAC considers the application after the peer reviewer has confirmed that the contents of all the documents are reliable, accurate and complete.

A fishery may only be accepted into the Improver Programme if the Application Committee determines that the following requirements have been met:

- 1 – Fisheries must be subject to an active Fishery Action Plan (FAP) which meets the other requirements detailed below.
- 2 – The FAP must include measurable objectives and must outline the deadlines by which the objectives will be achieved. These deadlines must be appropriate for the duration required to achieve the objectives, according to the expert opinion of the members of the IPAC.
- 3 – FAP Objectives must be based on a GAP assessment of the performance of the fishery against the MarinTrust V3 fishery assessment.
- 4 – The areas described in (3) must be covered by a full improvement timeline with long-term objectives corresponding to a status which will enable the fishery to meet the full V3 MarinTrust assessment requirements.
- 5 – The GAP assessment, FAP, and other application paperwork should, when taken together, represent evidence that the fishery is highly likely to be able to meet the requirements of a full MarinTrust fishery assessment within the timeline defined.

Annex 2: Guidance for marine ingredient production facilities

These guidelines are to facilitate factory improvement and as such are not a definitive guide. Improvements may be achieved by other means that may be more appropriate for certain facilities.

Marine Ingredient manufacturing factories wishing to be formally accepted onto the MarinTrust Improver Programme (MarinTrust IP) will need to be an official stakeholder of a FIP which complies with the MarinTrust Application Mechanism ([link](#)) and this FIP must be accepted onto the MarinTrust Improver Programme. The applicant must also be compliant to the MarinTrust Standard, demonstrated by passing a MarinTrust audit.

Overview

All fishmeal production facilities wishing to join the MarinTrust IP must be able to demonstrate compliance with the MarinTrust Standard through verification by an independent audit conducted by an approved Certification Body (list of approved CBs can be found [here](#)).

The Certification Body must be approved by the MarinTrust Governing Body Committee (GBC) to ensure that it has the correct credentials to undertake audits and to give assurance that all the required elements of the MarinTrust IP have been conducted in an appropriate and professional manner in accordance with documents from the [QMS](#).

The chosen Certification Body will formulate a contract between the applicant in accordance with the QMS detailing the requirements and commitments needed for acceptance onto the MarinTrust IP.

The objective of these guidelines are to provide a detailed guide to marine ingredient producers who want to apply to the MarinTrust Improver Programme, what requirements they must comply with, how they can proceed with application and what recognition they can expect to receive.

Outline of the MarinTrust IP requirements for marine ingredient producers

The MarinTrust IP process is managed by the MarinTrust Secretariat. A Potential Applicant can enter the MarinTrust IP by the following two entry points:

An applicant that has failed to meet the requirements of the MarinTrust Standard following a certification assessment by an approved MarinTrust Certification Body,

or

An applicant that is unsure and thinks it may fail to meet the requirements of the MarinTrust Standard.

Factory requirements

All marine ingredient producers wishing to become Accepted on the MarinTrust IP must comply with the MarinTrust **standard clauses**. However, as they are not sourcing from an approved raw material source yet, they should instead be able to demonstrate that they are sourcing from an accepted FIP as part of the MarinTrust IP (Section 1 in the standard). If the facility is not sourcing directly from the vessel (i.e. through a collector) then they should be able to provide sufficient documentation to demonstrate where the fish was originally sourced.

Guidance has been developed identifying what full compliance to each standard clauses may look like [here](#), however other evidence or methodologies may be used to demonstrate compliance and it is up to the auditor to make a determination regarding this.

For example:

Clause	FULL COMPLIANCE
1.2 - The facility shall source whole fish raw material from a MarinTrust approved fishery, and/or MarinTrust recognised equivalent fishery and/or an accepted MarinTrust Fishery Improvement Project (FIP).	Whole fish from a MarinTrust Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) A facility sourcing only raw materials from a MarinTrust Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) cannot be classed as fully certified. If a facility only sources raw materials from a FIP this clause cannot be rated as 'full conformance.' In this instance the facility can still be audited against the remaining requirements of this Standard BUT can only make claims relating to the Improver Programme.

Application process

Marine ingredient producers should follow a number of distinct stages which are described below.

Stage 1. Information request and self-assessment

Information may be requested by a potential applicant within the marine ingredient manufacturing sector. A potential applicant could be a:

- Single producer
- A group of producers in national marine ingredients associations
- A secondary processor/distributor/feed manufacturer that will use their fishmeal producers as a designated sub-contractor

Potential applicants may request and obtain information from the MarinTrust Secretariat about the MarinTrust IP application process, the MarinTrust Standard, MarinTrust IP registration fees and potential timeframes to gain acceptance.

Applicants are strongly advised to carry out a self-assessment against the MarinTrust standard, in order to ascertain their readiness for an external assessment by an approved Certification Body.

Stage 2. Completion of online application

If the potential applicant wishes to progress to application, they will be requested to formally submit this via the online application portal. Within this form information of the raw material source, in this case a MarinTrust accepted FIP, is required so that this may be verified during the audit. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the information supplied in the application is factual and as accurate as possible.

When the application form and associated MarinTrust IP registration fees are received by the MarinTrust Secretariat and accepted, the application pack will be forwarded to their chosen Certification Body to organise an audit of their facility.

Stage 3. Certification Body carries out a MarinTrust audit on the facility

The Certification Body auditors shall always conduct these initial assessments in an independent, professional and courteous manner.

The Certification Body will compile a report, detailing how the applicant does or does not meet the MarinTrust Standard. The Applicant must meet all criteria including those relating to Product Safety, Integrity and Traceability.

The report will identify any non-conformances against the MarinTrust Standard. Applicants will be required, as defined in approved action plans, to agree a programme for how they will improve their operations and correct any areas of non-conformances, in order to progress their acceptance application. The applicant should close these out within the 28 day period (in line with QMS document A4 [here](#)).

Should the facility fail the MarinTrust audit then corrective actions should be put in place to improve the gaps in compliance.

Stage 4. The acceptance decision

Should the applicant's facility pass the MarinTrust audit they will be issued with an acceptance document by MarinTrust for the duration of an audit cycle, on the condition that they maintain compliance through the surveillances. The facility information will also be added to the MarinTrust website and the facility is eligible to use the MarinTrust IP claim (see IP claims document [here](#)).

Stage 5. Maintaining acceptance

Maintaining acceptance on the MarinTrust IP is based on two main factors:

1. The facility must maintain compliance with the MarinTrust Standard criteria through surveillances after year 1 and 2 and then a new audit cycle after year 3 and,
2. Continued support and recognition as a signed stakeholder of a MarinTrust accepted FIP.

Recognition

The objective of the MarinTrust IP is to provide assurance to the MarinTrust GBC that any claim the applicant fishmeal manufacturer makes in regards to the MarinTrust IP concerning both their fishmeal and fish oil production and on the sourcing of their raw material can be fully supported. The outcome will be that the applicant marine ingredient manufacturer will have a clear improvement plan in place that will be completed in a designated period of time, which will lead to their facility being certified to the MarinTrust Standard with an approved raw material that is considered to be responsibly sourced. For those involved in the Multispecies pilot project, an end-point has yet to be defined, but the applicants are still expected to demonstrate improvements on an annual basis in line with the IP process and requirements.

Amendments Log

DATE	ISSUE	AMENDMENT	AUTHORISED BY
2017/18	V1	Extensive revisions for Version 2, including: Revision of the Pre-Assessment and Gap Analysis procedures (Section 1) Revision of the Fishery Action Plan Development and Stakeholder agreement requirements (Sections 2 and 3) Addition of Peer Review and IP Application Committee Process (Section 4) Revision of surveillance and progress towards fishery approval procedures (Sections 5 and 6)	IPAC
2020	V2	Extensive revisions for Version 2.1, including: Rebranding of IFFO RS to MarinTrust Inclusion of the following: Wording added regarding professional conduct Wording added outlining the timeframe for passing a MarinTrust site audit New section added outlining the expectations and recognition for those on the programme Fishery Action Plan Tracker & Surveillance Assessments section adapted to make it less prescriptive Additional wording included outlining the 6 month check of the FIP by MarinTrust New section to include FAP extension requirements Removal of information for site visits to the fishery	IPAC
2021	V2.1	References to MarinTrust QMS documents added to text	IPAC
April 2022	V2.2	Updated all website links to new website and QMS document references. General text updates.	GBC
April 2022	V2.2	Wording about stakeholder engagement, roles and expectations strengthened. This also includes the role that MarinTrust will play or not.	GBC
April 2022	V2.2	Process flow diagram updated	GBC
August 2022	V2.2	Wording updated in line with IP review recommendations including: -less specific wording around FIP stakeholder changes	GBC

		-Wording related to stakeholder types, contribution to the IP and MarinTrust's role in the process.	
December 2022	V2.2	Additional details added about approval of MarinTrust Improver Programme Assessors.	GBC
December 2022	V2.2	Additional details about IP recognition for different stakeholders	GBC
December 2022	V2.2	Details about FisheryProgress.org removed	GBC
December 2022	V2.2	Peer Review template for FIP progress reporting added to Annex 2.	GBC
April 2023	V2.2	Guidance for marine ingredient production factories added	GBC
June 2025	V3.0	Additional wording added regarding extension requests	Improver Programme Application Committee
June 2025	V3.0	Annex documents updated and templates removed (these are now available as separate template documents)	Improver Programme Application Committee
June 2025	V3.0	Application flow chart updated	Improver Programme Application Committee
June 2025	V3.0	General wording updates in line with MarinTrust recognised terms and V3 Standard updates	Improver Programme Application Committee
June 2025	V3.0	New section added with guidance on overlapping FIPs	Improver Programme Application Committee
June 2025	V3.0	New wording added regarding FIP scope changes procedure	Improver Programme Application Committee