



MarinTrust

## Fisheries Verification Procedure

Version 2.0

Issued 29<sup>th</sup> May 2026 – Effective 1<sup>st</sup> June 2026

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## Version control and available language(s)

MarinTrust is the owner of this document.

For enquiries, questions or feedback regarding the contents of this document or to request copies of standards or related materials, please contact MarinTrust at [standards@marin-trust.com](mailto:standards@marin-trust.com).

### 1.1. Version control

Date	Issue	Amendment	Authorised by
January 2021	V1.0	<i>New document. MSC Verification Tool.</i>	<i>MarinTrust CEO</i>
April 2026	V2.0	<i>Major revision to the verification process Include all GSSI Benchmarked fisheries standards Clarifies roles and responsibilities</i>	<i>Governing Body Committee (GBC)</i>

### 1.2. Available language(s)

The official version of this document is English. MarinTrust may translate this document into additional languages as necessary. Translations will be available on the MarinTrust website. In case of any inconsistencies or discrepancies between the available translation(s) and the English version, the online English version (in PDF format) will prevail.

# About the verification of equivalence for whole fish fisheries

## 1.3. Scope and applicability

This document outlines the verification of equivalence procedure for responsibly sourcing whole fish raw materials used to produce MarinTrust certified marine ingredients.

The MarinTrust fisheries verification procedure applies to whole fish sourced from wild-capture fisheries certified against Fisheries Standards recognised as equivalent to the MarinTrust Whole Fish Fishery Assessment Criteria Version 3. Recognition of Equivalence is defined by MarinTrust in the document PRO-009 Recognition of equivalence procedure. More information on this procedure and recognised standards can be found on the MarinTrust website<sup>1</sup>.

**Fisheries verified under the MarinTrust fisheries verification procedure are accepted as MarinTrust-approved raw material sources. For MarinTrust Standard compliance, these fisheries are defined as a 'MarinTrust recognised equivalent fishery.'**

The source fishery under verification assessment is defined at a minimum by the wild capture species, fishing area and fishing gear.

Fishery assessments are a prerequisite to an audit. Fishery assessments are conducted by a third-party, qualified Certification Body accredited to ISO/IEC 17065<sup>2</sup>.

**The verified status is dependent on the following conditions:**

- **The continued recognition of the Fisheries Standard by MarinTrust**
- **The ongoing certification status and validity of the whole fish species under the MarinTrust recognised Fisheries Standard**

If a fishery loses its certification status or it becomes invalid under a recognised Fisheries Standard, or if the Standard itself is no longer recognised by MarinTrust, the whole fish species will immediately lose its verified status under MarinTrust and will no longer be accepted as a MarinTrust approved raw material source. Depending on the specific circumstances, the fishery may be required to undergo a full MarinTrust assessment against the MarinTrust Whole Fish Fishery Assessment criteria to be considered a MarinTrust approved raw material source.

Additionally, any other changes to the certification scope of a fishery certified under a recognised Fisheries Standard, such as the suspension of the certificate, or part thereof, changes in gear types, vessel lists, client groups, or fishing areas, may also impact the MarinTrust verified status and result in the fishery no longer being accepted as a source of approved raw material.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.marin-trust.com/factory-standard/recognition-equivalence>

<sup>2</sup> [www.iso.org/standard/46568.html](http://www.iso.org/standard/46568.html)

## 1.4. Definitions

Definitions and terms are published on the MarinTrust website.

## 1.5. Further information

Further information regarding the application, rules and regulations of the programme can be obtained from MarinTrust and/or the approved certification bodies listed on the MarinTrust website.

*Standard Holder*

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# MarinTrust Fisheries Verification Process

## 2. Full verification process

- 2.1. On application<sup>3</sup> The **applicant or certificate holder** shall submit information on the:
  - 2.1.1. Source fishery (including species, geographical area, stock definition, and gear type(s) or harvest method).
    - 2.1.1.1. Unit of certification of the certified fishery for which verification is required, including any unique identifier and/or weblinks to the fishery certificate.
    - 2.1.1.2. If the facility holds a valid Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Chain of Custody (CoC) certification, it may elect to use their MSC CoC certification as the basis for a reduced verification process, as outlined in Section 3.
    - 2.1.1.3. The marine ingredient facility seeking application (or certified) shall be the 'owner' of the MSC CoC certificate. Facility name and address shall match.
  - 2.1.2. The **applicant or certificate holder** shall complete and sign a declaration confirming their responsibilities and the conditions of verification.
- 2.2. The **Fishery Assessor** shall complete the evaluation, comparing the scope of the applicant's source fishery against the unit of certification of the certified fishery.
  - 2.2.1. Use Table 1 to complete section 5 of the reporting template TEM-010.
  - 2.2.2. If the unit of certification of the certified fishery is linked to a specified list of vessels or client groups (e.g. as in the case of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) fishery unit of certification), the most up-to-date publicly available vessel or client group list shall be used.
- 2.3. The **Fishery Assessor** shall confirm whether the fishery under verification is **verified** or **not verified**.
  - 2.3.1. The scopes shall be a 100% match for the source fishery to be verified.
  - 2.3.2. If the fishery is verified, the fishery is accepted as a source of **MarinTrust approved** raw material. For MarinTrust Standard compliance, these fisheries are defined as a 'MarinTrust recognised equivalent fishery.'
  - 2.3.3. If the fishery is not verified, raw material from this fishery is **not approved**.
    - 2.3.3.1. If **not verified**, the facility shall not use this raw material to produce MarinTrust certified product and shall ensure all raw material sourced from this fishery is fully segregated from MarinTrust approved raw material<sup>4</sup>.
- 2.4. The **Fishery Assessor** shall complete a **verification report** using the reporting template TEM-010. The report shall be published on the MarinTrust website.
- 2.5. The **auditor** shall confirm that the facility is sourcing raw material that is traceable to a valid fishery certificate issued by a recognised Fisheries Standard and that the scope of certification

<sup>3</sup> Complete an application to the MarinTrust Factory Standard. <https://www.marin-trust.com/factory-standard/get-certified>

<sup>4</sup> Compliance with the relevant clauses in the MarinTrust Global Standard for Responsible Supply of Marine Ingredients Version 3.

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matches the verified (MarinTrust approved) fishery. *See auditor interpretation guidance for further information on compliance.*

- 2.6. The **applicant or certificate holder** shall immediately inform their Certification Body and MarinTrust of any changes to the certification scope, such as the unit of certification, of the certified fishery or its certification status.
  - 2.6.1. Applicants and certificate holders shall take appropriate steps to ensure that any raw material from this certified fishery is segregated from other approved raw material sources until changes have been verified.
  - 2.6.2. Where the verified changes results in the part or all of the fishery losing its certification status, or the fishery certificate becomes invalid under a recognised Fisheries Standard, or if the Standard (or Benchmark Tool) itself is no longer recognised by MarinTrust, the whole fish species will immediately lose its verified status under MarinTrust and will no longer be accepted as an approved raw material source<sup>5</sup>.
  - 2.6.3. The **auditor** at the next scheduled audit shall conduct a traceback exercise to ensure appropriate segregation of the raw material was implemented by the facility.
- 2.7. The verification report shall be valid for the same period of certification of the certified fishery.
  - 2.7.1. An annual surveillance verification is required.

### 3. Verification of a Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Chain of Custody certification

*If a facility has a valid MSC CoC certificate, they may choose to apply for a reduced verification of the raw material from an MSC certified fishery listed on their MSC CoC certificate scope.*

- 3.1. On application, the **MarinTrust Secretariat** shall review the submitted MSC CoC certificate details and confirm that the MSC certified source fishery on the application form is included in the scope of the MSC CoC certificate for the applicant facility, and both certificates have a validity date of no less than at least 6 months remaining.
  - 3.1.1. If the validity date of the MSC CoC certificate or certified fishery is less than 6 months remaining, additional information may be requested by the MarinTrust Secretariat of the applicant or certificate holder to confirm the validity of the certification(s).
  - 3.1.2. If the fishery is included in the scope of the MSC CoC certificate, the MSC certified fishery is accepted as a **MarinTrust approved** raw material source. For MarinTrust Standard compliance, these fisheries are defined as a 'MarinTrust recognised equivalent fishery.'
  - 3.1.3. If the fishery is **not verified**, the request for verification using MSC CoC certification is rejected, and the applicant shall be required to undergo the full verification process (section 1) to have their certified fishery verified.
- 3.2. The **auditor** shall confirm that the facility is sourcing raw material that is traceable to the valid MSC fishery certificate and that the scope of certification matches the verified (MarinTrust

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<sup>5</sup> Compliance with the relevant clauses in the MarinTrust Global Standard for Responsible Supply of Marine Ingredients Version 3  
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approved) fishery.

- 3.3. The **certificate holder** shall immediately inform their Certification Body and MarinTrust of any changes to their MSC CoC certificate or the unit of certification of the certified fishery or the fishery certificate.
- 3.3.1. Applicants and certificate holders shall take appropriate steps to ensure that any raw material from this certified fishery is segregated from other approved raw material sources until changes have been verified.
- 3.3.2. Where the verified changes result in the part, or all of the fishery losing its certification status, or the fishery certificate becomes invalid under a recognised Fisheries Standard, or if the Standard itself is no longer recognised by MarinTrust, the whole fish species will immediately lose its verified status under MarinTrust and will no longer be accepted as an approved raw material source<sup>6</sup>.
- 3.3.3. The **auditor** at the next scheduled audit shall conduct a traceback exercise to ensure appropriate segregation of the raw material was implemented by the facility.

## 4. Reduced assessment for remaining landings from certified fisheries

A further verification mechanism is available on a **case-by-case basis**. The reduced assessment for remaining landings from a verified fishery certified to a MarinTrust recognised fishery. This allows for partial verification of catches from certified fisheries.

In these cases, the source fishery has a valid fisheries certificate from a MarinTrust recognised Fisheries Standard, and the certified component of the catch is being utilised for human consumption, while the remainder of the catch is used to produce marine ingredients. In this mechanism, the whole fish fishery is first verified to be sourced from a fishery certified to a recognised Fisheries Standard and the remaining catches are assessed as Type 2 species against the MarinTrust whole fish fishery assessment criteria Category C or Category D. This is to verify the sourcing is fully from a certified fishery recognised by MarinTrust, and additional checks are completed to ensure the remaining species landed are responsibly caught.

If marine ingredient facilities wish to seek MarinTrust approval for part of a catch that is sourced from a certified fishery recognised by MarinTrust they may **contact MarinTrust (standards@marin-trust.com)** to learn more about this process and provide relevant information (catch, landings, certified fishery status, etc.) to apply for this verification mechanism.

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<sup>6</sup> Compliance with the relevant clauses in the MarinTrust Global Standard for Responsible Supply of Marine Ingredients Version 3  
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## 5. Verification scope – Marine Stewardship Council Fisheries Standard

The fishery assessor shall use Table 1 to help complete the current verification report template TEM-010.

**Table 1.** Verification scope comparison between MarinTrust and Marine Stewardship Council

Fishery details	MarinTrust unit of approval	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) unit of certification
<b>Species</b>	Species that make up >95% of the total catch.	Those species which have been assessed under Principle 1 of the MSC Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Fishing for an individual fishery. Presented as 'Common name ( <i>scientific name</i> )'.
<b>Geographic area</b>	Area of sea designated by FAO and/or ICES	A description of the geographical area within which the fishery is undertaken. This may be only a part of the entire stock unit included under the stock name. FAO and ICES definitions used. Location of fishing activity by <a href="#">FAO Major Fishing Area</a>
<b>Stock definition</b>	A sub-population of species which is self-sustaining within a distinct area, as commonly used in management and assessment reports	A description of the biological stock exploited by the fishery, as commonly used in management and assessment reports
<b>Gear type / Harvest method</b>	Fishing equipment as defined by the FAO or that is designated by the legal authorities.	FAO defined gear terminology and/or legally defined/recognised in that jurisdiction, used to describe fishing gears  Method used to capture the target species.

<p><b>Parties currently eligible to access this certificate</b></p> <p><b>Fleets, individual vessels</b></p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>Named vessels on a client list or the client group.</p> <p>Named fishing organisations/entities that have access to the certificate.</p> <p>Including, if applicable, any points of landing or other transfer, and/or other limits to product eligibility as described in the fishery certificate.</p> <p>The assessor shall describe and reference (including relevant weblink(s)) to the relevant sources of information and location of the information (e.g. report, website, etc.) where the vessel list or client group is published and maintained.</p>
<p><b>Traceability factors</b></p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>Summary of the main traceability risks and mitigation within the fishery relevant to the marine ingredient producer sourcing certified fish. Traceability risks include, but are not limited to, the risk of mixing of certified and non-certified fish or fish products.</p> <p>The assessor shall refer to Tables 10 and 11 in section 9.4 Traceability risks and mitigations of the relevant MSC Public Certification Report (PCR) and subsequent surveillance reports for relevant information on the traceability risks and mitigations to summarise in this section. <i>See the assessor interpretation guidance for further information.</i></p>

## 5.1. Verification scope – Certified Seafood International (CSI) Responsible Fisheries Management Standard

Please contact MarinTrust ([standards@marin-trust.com](mailto:standards@marin-trust.com)) if you want to verify whole fish sourced from a fishery certified to Certified Seafood International (CSI).

## 5.2. Verification scope – MEL Japan Fisheries Management Standard

Please contact MarinTrust ([standards@marin-trust.com](mailto:standards@marin-trust.com)) if you want to verify whole fish sourced from a fishery certified to MEL Japan.

## 5.3. Verification scope – Iceland Responsible Fisheries (IRF) Fisheries Management Standard

Please contact MarinTrust ([standards@marin-trust.com](mailto:standards@marin-trust.com)) if you want to verify whole fish sourced from a fishery certified to Iceland Responsible Fisheries (IRF).

## Interpretation Guidance

### 5.4. General guidance

There are three (3) pathways to recognise the equivalence of raw material sourced from fisheries certified to Fisheries Standards that are recognised as equivalent to the MarinTrust whole fish fishery criteria.

**Table 1.** Pathways for recognised equivalence of raw material sources: This table outlines how different certification schemes and raw-material types determine the verification requirements for MarinTrust.

Raw material Type	Certification Scheme	CoC Certified?	Outcome	Report Type
Whole fish	<b>GSSI-recognised Fisheries Standards</b> (MSC, MEL Japan, CSI and Iceland RFM)	No (or n/a)	MarinTrust verification required	Verification Report
Whole fish	<b>MSC Chain of Custody (CoC)</b>	Yes (MSC CoC certificate held by MarinTrust certified /applicant facility)	Automatic recognition	None
Whole fish Non-Certified By-catch from MSC fisheries*	<b>MSC Fisheries Standard</b>	n/a	MarinTrust verification required	Reduced Whole Fish Assessment Report (Category C/D report)

The certified fisheries unit of certification (UoC) is often smaller than the full extent of a fishery. The fishery certificate will define where and when the fishery operations are allowed. It is important that all marine ingredient facilities wanting to source and make a verification claim for whole fish using certified raw material are informed of the scope of certification (e.g., the species, fishing areas, seasons and individual vessels allowed to land MSC-certified fish) and continuously confirm they are accepting only raw materials from the certified component of the fishery. This may require checks during landing or at intake to ensure the relevant documentation is in place to confirm that the scope of certification is met. **The certified fishery can change at any time, so real-time monitoring of certified claims is important.**

Certificate holders must review the fishery certificate scope to match the species, geographical or fishing area, gear types or methods of harvest, and vessel list or client group (where applicable) whenever sourcing raw material from certified fisheries. If the certificate includes any additional conditions of certification (e.g. specific landing points), it is expected that the facility will conform to these additional conditions when sourcing raw material from these certified fisheries.

If there are gaps between what is sourced and what the certificate includes, all raw material must be covered by a MarinTrust assessment, which could be further verification against other certified fisheries or a MarinTrust Whole Fish Fishery assessment. **Any raw material sourced that is not approved via one of these channels is not allowed to be used for MarinTrust marine ingredient production.**

## 5.5. Interpretation guidance for fishery assessors

The verification report must accurately reflect both the scope of the applicant or certificate holder(s)'s sourcing activities and the scope of the certified fishery being verified. Its purpose is to ensure that applicants and certificate holders understand the boundaries of the certification and source certified raw material correctly.

### Confirming scope alignment

The assessor confirms that the scope of the fishery under verification matches the information provided in the application. This includes verifying that the **species, gear types, and fishing areas** listed in the application correspond to those defined in the unit of certification (UoC). Minor differences in how fishing areas are formatted may be accepted, provided the underlying area is the same. Under Version 2 of this procedure, assessors are **not required** to review vessel lists as part of the scope-matching process.

### Validity of verification report

The verification report remains valid only for the duration of the fishery certificate's validity period. A full review of the verification is required once the fishery certificate expires. The validity of the verification report begins on the date the verification decision is approved and ends on the fishery certificate's expiry date. For example, if a fishery certificate is valid from May 2020 to May 2025 and the verification is approved in October 2023, the verification report is valid from October 2023 until May 2025.

### Annual surveillance

The verification report is reviewed annually as part of surveillance activities. During surveillance, the assessor checks whether any changes have occurred in the certified fishery's scope or associated information. For example, for MSC certified fisheries, this includes reviewing the certificate for scope changes, examining any gap analysis reports or similar documents, and checking for any changes to traceability risks.

If changes are identified, they must be reflected in the verification report. Where major changes result in a mismatch between the application and the certified scope, the assessor must follow the procedure for non-approved (or failed) raw material. If no changes or only minor changes are identified, such as updates to the location of vessel lists, the verification report remains valid.

### Verification scope – Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Fisheries Standard

The assessor uses the reporting template TEM-010 and Table 1 of this procedure to complete the verification report. The application or scope extension form provides the information needed for the first part of the table. The MSC fishery certificate contains details on the unit of certification (UoC), including target species, gear types, fishing area and vessel lists or client groups. Additional information on the UoC and traceability risk factors is available in the MSC Public Certification Report (PCR) and surveillance reports, specifically in the Traceability and Eligibility section.

### Additional information required for MSC-certified fisheries

For fisheries certified under the MSC Fisheries Standard, the verification report must include UoC-specific information such as:

- The vessel list and/or client group defined in the certificate
- A summary of key traceability risks relevant to sourcing by marine-ingredient facilities

This traceability information helps applicants and certificate holders understand the scope of the fishery certificate and any sourcing conditions. This is particularly important because MSC UoCs are often narrower than the full fishery; in many cases, only certain vessels, gear types, or designated landing ports are included.

### Using the MSC Public Certification Report (PCR)

Section 9.4 of the MSC PCR outlines traceability risk factors and mitigation measures. The assessor should use Tables 11 and 12 in the latest MSC PCR to summarise traceability risks, focusing on information that ensures raw materials sourced by the marine-ingredient facility originate from the certified fishery. A guiding question is: ***What is the risk of mixing certified and non-certified fish or fish products in this fishery?***

The assessor should also review subsequent MSC surveillance reports to identify any changes related to traceability and incorporate relevant updates into the summary.

### Referencing

Provide references to all sources of information.

## 5.6. Interpretation guidance for facility auditors

### Core requirements for verified raw material

The auditor must confirm that the facility meets all requirements related to sourcing whole fish from MarinTrust-recognised equivalent fisheries. This includes ensuring that the facility is fully authorised to source such material, that appropriate documentation is in place, and that the raw material can be traced back to the recognised fishery. Specifically, the auditor must verify that:

1. The facility has documented approval to source whole fish from a MarinTrust-recognised equivalent fishery (clause 1.2).
2. There is documented evidence demonstrating that the whole fish raw material originates from a recognised equivalent fishery (clause 2.11).
3. The raw material is traceable back to the recognised equivalent fishery (clause 3.2).
  - a. The auditor must review the verification report associated with the facility and ensure that it meets all MarinTrust requirements. This includes confirming that the verification report for the facility is publicly available on the MarinTrust website.
  - b. The verification report is valid (i.e. dates of approval are valid, not expired).
  - c. The scope of the source fishery and the certified fishery unit of certification in the verification report match 100%.

Where a vessel list or client group forms part of the certified unit of certification, the auditor must ensure that the facility can trace all whole fish raw material back to certified vessels. This requires confirming:

4. Can the facility trace back to certified catches/vessels?

- a. Documentation shall be in place for every batch that confirms the whole fish is supplied from the certified vessel. So, in addition to linking the catch to the vessel, a link to the relevant fishery certification is required.
- b. Procedures and documented evidence are in place to ensure the whole fish is traceable to a MarinTrust recognised equivalent fishery.
  - How does the facility monitor the supply from the certified fishery, as the unit of certification may change at any time?
- c. If any vessel supplying the facility is not part of the certified fishery unit of certification, any raw material supply from this vessel must be covered by another MarinTrust-approved fishery (i.e., a valid MarinTrust whole fish fishery report or validated Chain of Custody certification for the source fishery).

If the facility holds MSC Chain of Custody (CoC) certification, the auditor must ensure that the verified MSC-certified fishery is included within the scope of the facility's MSC CoC certificate. Auditors should note that MSC CoC certificates sometimes apply to the company, or multi-site operations, but may not always include the specific applicant facility.

#### **Important note on vessel lists**

The certified fishery may include lists of vessels within the unit of certification. These vessel lists are dynamic and may change over the course of a year. It is essential to confirm whether the vessels were certified **at the time of landing**. If the facility holds MSC Chain of Custody (CoC) certification, the auditor must ensure that the verified MSC-certified fishery is included within the scope of the facility's MSC CoC certificate. If a vessel is no longer certified at the time of the facility audit, raw material landed while the vessel was certified is still considered compliant with MarinTrust requirements.

The MarinTrust verification report will include guidance on how to find the most up-to-date vessel list. This can be cross-referenced to the Fishery Standard website or the fishery certificate. For MSC certified fisheries use the website 'MSC Track a Fishery'. Vessel lists can be listed on the certificate, within the Public Certification Report, Surveillance Report or hyperlinked to an external website.

Should the vessel list be unavailable or not made public, the fishery assessor should make every effort to find this information. This can include contacting the MSC CAB responsible for the MSC assessment or the MSC directly.