



Conducting MarinTrust Fishery or By-product Assessments by Registered Certification Bodies

Document PRO-003 (prev. A3) – Version 4.0

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1. Purpose

This document provides guidance for registered Certification Bodies (CB) to carry out MarinTrust whole fish fishery, verification and by-product assessments to safeguard the efficiency, consistency, and reporting of all assessment reports.

Note: These are collectively referred to as assessments in this procedure.

2. Scope

This document outlines the procedure to be applied to all MarinTrust assessments carried out by registered CBs. This does not include Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) peer review assessments as part of the MarinTrust Improver Programme).

Please refer to the Improver Programme Acceptance Mechanism (IPAM) document for further information on the conducting of FIP assessments

Document PRO-012 (prev. A12) - Procedure for the monitoring and allocation of fishery and by-product assessments and PRO-014 (B2) - Training and appointment procedure are to be used as supporting documents in conjunction with PRO-003 (prev. A3).

3. Conducting the assessment

- 3.1. The CB shall assign an approved fishery assessor, in accordance with PRO-014 (B2) - Procedure for Appointment, Training, and Approval of Certification Body Personnel involved in the assessment, audit, and certification process, to carry out the assessment.
- 3.2. The assessment shall be conducted against the relevant (and current version) MarinTrust assessment criteria, and in compliance with the relevant MarinTrust assessment interpretation and/or guidance documents.
- 3.3. All assessment reports shall be produced using the relevant MarinTrust template.
- 3.4. For all assessments, including annual surveillance and reapproval, the assessor shall ensure that all relevant/applicable requirements or criteria are assessed, rating each clause/criterion to determine its compliance with the relevant MarinTrust assessment criteria and give an assessment determination/recommendation (approve or not approve).
- 3.5. All assessment determination/recommendations from the fishery assessor shall be recorded utilising a binary system of pass or fail, as follows, and shall be substantiated with evidence against each applicable/relevant assessment requirement or criterion:
 - Approve the whole fish or by-product as raw material for use in MarinTrust certified factories when it has achieved a pass rating against all applicable assessment requirements and criteria.
 - Do not approve the whole fish or by-product should it have a fail rating in one or more assessment requirement or criterion.
- 3.6. Upon completion of the assessment, all approved assessment reports shall be submitted to the CBs Internal Peer Review in line with Section 5.

- 3.7. In the case of a recommendation decision of “not approved” the assessment shall be sent to the relevant applicant/certificate holders as a Client Draft Report to ensure that all the evidence has been evaluated.
- A period of time as determined by the CB, but no longer than one calendar month, shall be given to the relevant applicant/certificate holder to provide further evidence that may affect the compliance rating.
 - The CB shall assess all further information provided by the relevant applicant/certificate holders and finalise the assessment determination and report.
 - The CB shall again submit the report to the CBs Internal Peer Review in line with Section 5.

4. Changes to scope of the assessment

- 4.1. The CB assessor may discover that a species name and/or fishing area (or other key information) is incorrect while conducting the assessment. In such cases, the CB shall consult the MarinTrust Fisheries Manager for discussion and agreement.
- 4.2. Where it is confirmed that a change in scope of the assessment is required, the MarinTrust Fisheries Manager or delegated/responsible person shall notify the relevant applicant/certificate holder of the necessary change(s). This change shall be carried out through scope extension.

5. The CB Internal Peer Review

- 5.1. All assessments shall undergo internal review by the CB. This is to ensure that the relevant assessments have been carried out in accordance with this procedure and assessment criteria, and to confirm or query recommendations from the evidence provided.
- 5.2. The CB personnel undertaking the internal review shall be assigned in accordance with requirements outlined in PRO-014 (B2) – Procedure for Appointment, Training, and Approval of Certification Body Personnel involved in the assessment, audit, and certification process.
- 5.3. For whole fish fishery assessments, following completion of internal review, the CB shall send the Draft Assessment Report ready for external peer review to the MarinTrust Fisheries Manager or delegated/responsible person.
- 5.4. For other assessment reports, following the completion of the internal review, the CB shall send the Final Assessment Report to the MarinTrust Fisheries Manager or delegated/responsible person.
- 5.5. Upon receipt of the report, the MarinTrust Fisheries Manager or delegated/responsible person shall quality check the assessment report prior to sharing the relevant reports for external review and/or publishing the report on the MarinTrust website.

6. External Peer Review

- 6.1. External peer review is conducted through the MarinTrust Fisheries Assessment Peer Review Group (FAPRG).
- 6.2. External peer review activities and independent peer reviewers are registered, assigned and managed through the MarinTrust FAPRG.
- 6.3. All whole fish assessment reports shall undergo external peer review to evaluate and concur or disagree with the decision of the CB fishery assessor.
- 6.4. All by-product assessments and verification reports are not required to undergo further, independent external review, however, MarinTrust shall select at random no less than 10% of by-product assessments conducted by each CB for external peer review within a 12-month period.
- 6.5. The MarinTrust Fisheries Manager shall share the Draft Assessment Report with the assigned independent reviewer within **5 working days** upon receipt of the assessment from the CB.
- 6.6. The independent reviewer shall complete the Peer Review Report within **10 working days** upon receipt of the Draft Assessment Report from MarinTrust.
- 6.7. The Peer Review Report shall be produced using the relevant MarinTrust template.
- 6.8. The MarinTrust Fisheries Manager shall send the Peer Review Report with the CB within **5 working days** of receipt.
- 6.9. The assessor shall respond to all peer review feedback in the relevant sections of the Peer Review Report and amend the Draft Assessment Report where applicable. The Peer Review Report shall be added as an appendix to the Final Assessment Report.
- 6.10. Where the external reviewer agrees with the recommendation, the CB shall distribute the Final Assessment Report following Section 7.
- 6.11. Where the external reviewer disagrees with the recommendation, the CB shall either:
 - Request the assessor to investigate more evidence to provide more assurance to the compliance rating given, or
 - Make relevant amendments to the report and submit the final report to MarinTrust within **5 working days** upon receipt of the external reviewer comments.
- 6.12. Should there be a delay in meeting this timeframe, the CB shall consult the MarinTrust Fisheries Manager before any deadlines are surpassed.

7. Distribution of Final Assessment Reports

- 7.1. The CB shall share the Final Assessment Report with the MarinTrust Fisheries Manager, or delegated/responsible person, for record keeping, calibration, and research purposes.
 - The Final Assessment Report shall be sent in Word and PDF format.
- 7.2. Upon receipt of the assessment report, the MarinTrust Fisheries Manager or delegated/responsible person shall quality check the assessment report prior to sharing the relevant reports for external review and/or publishing the report on the MarinTrust website.
- 7.3. Approved assessments shall be published on the MarinTrust website (PDF version) by the MarinTrust Fisheries Manager or delegated/responsible person.
 - Failed assessment reports are not published. However, basic fishery information, such as species and location of failed species will be made publicly available. The MarinTrust Fisheries Manager or delegated/responsible person shall remove past reports associated with a failed assessment from the MarinTrust website.

8. Assessment outcome: not approved

In the case of a recommendation of “Not approved”, it is recommended to the applicant or certificate holder to wait for a period of up to 12 months from the assessment date, or as determined by the CB, or until further evidence is made available that may change the outcome of the assessment. When ready, a new application or scope extension is required to request a new assessment for the failed fishery or by-product. This shall be an initial assessment.

- 8.1. Where the final decision is not approved, the CB shall notify the relevant applicants/certificate holders and MarinTrust Fisheries Manager or delegated/responsible person of the decision immediately, within **24 hours** of finalising the assessment report.
- 8.2. Where the CB who conducted the assessment differs from the applicant/certificate holder’s CB, MarinTrust Certification Programme Officer or delegated/responsible person shall notify the applicant/certificate holder’s CB of the decision immediately, but no later than **2 working days** of receiving the final assessment report via email.
- 8.3. Upon receiving the information regarding the not approve decision, the MarinTrust Fisheries Manager or delegated/responsible shall:
- 8.4. Notify the MarinTrust staff, all registered CBs, and the relevant applicant/certificate holders about the decision to not approve immediately, but no later than **2 working days** of finalising the assessment report via email.
 - Instruct the applicant/certificate holders to segregate these raw materials from other MarinTrust approved raw materials where applicable.

9. Assessment frequency

- 9.1. The CB is responsible for the scheduling of assessments in accordance with document PRO-012 (prev. A12) – Procedure for the monitoring and allocation of fishery and by-product assessments.
- 9.2. The approval status of a whole fish fishery shall be valid for **3 years**, upon successful surveillance assessment results.
- 9.3. The assessment cycle of whole fish assessments shall consist of:

Initial assessment	Year 1 (on application)
Surveillance 1	Year 2
Surveillance 2	Year 3
Reapproval	Year 4 (another cycle)

- 9.4. All initial whole fish fishery assessments shall be conducted within **3 months** of allocation.
- 9.5. Annex 1 provides guidance for surveillance and re-approval activities for whole fish assessments.
- 9.6. The approval status for by-products and verifications shall be valid for **1 year**.
- 9.7. The assessment cycle of by-products and verifications shall consist of:

Initial assessment	Year 1 (on application)
Reapproval	Year 2, Year 3, Year 4, etc.

- 9.8. All initial by-product assessments and verifications shall be conducted within **1 month** of allocation.
- 9.9. To maintain the continuity of the assessment cycles, all surveillance/reapproval assessments shall be carried out within **12 months** of the previous assessment date.
- 9.10. Where an assessment cannot be conducted in compliance with the assessment frequency, the CB shall inform the MarinTrust Fisheries Manager, or delegated/responsible person, no less than **1 month** in advance of the assessment due date to discuss the most appropriate next steps, ensure that the approval status is not compromised, and reduce the effect this may have on applicant and certificate holders.

10. Records

- 10.1 A copy of the final assessment report, internal peer review results, and correspondence conveying the MarinTrust FAPRG comments shall be held for a period of **5 years**.
- 10.2 The CB shall keep an up-to-date fishery and by-product assessment schedule, in line with the Procedure for allocation and monitoring of fishery and by-product assessments, to ensure accurate traceability and records.

11. Assessor conduct

- 11.1. All assessors, whether for initial, surveillance, or reapproval assessment shall declare to the CB, which may give rise to a conflict of interest with respect to the fishery and/or by-product they have been requested to assess in line with ISO/IEC 17065.
- 11.2. Each assessor shall confirm that they will notify the CB should such a situation arise through a signed Conflict and Confidentiality Declaration Form.
- 11.3 In the case of independent reviewers as part of FAPRG, they shall declare any conflict of interest directly to the MarinTrust Fisheries Manager or delegated/responsible person through the signing of the Peer Review Mandate.

Annex 1

Guidance for surveillance activities for whole fish assessments

During a surveillance assessment, the assessor shall review the following:

- Any potential changes to the scientific base of information, including stock assessments
- Any potential or actual changes in management systems
- Any changes or additions/deletions to regulations.
- Any major changes to the ecosystem (ETP species, habitat or wider ecosystem).

Where the information base for the clause or sub-criteria has changed, the assessor shall:

- Report and record what has changed in the information or evidence base.
- Re-score the clause/sub-criteria following the process in document PRO-012 (prev. A12) and the MarinTrust whole fish fishery assessment.

If the changes result in a decision to fail a clause/sub-criteria, the assessor shall complete the report following the process in Pr-012 (prev. A12) and the MarinTrust whole fish fishery assessment criteria.

Guidance for re-approval activities for whole fish assessments

The assessor shall evaluate the fishery in full for a re-approval assessment. It is appropriate to take into account all surveillance reports and outcomes of past assessments in the re-approval assessment activities.

Annex 2

Guidance for harmonisation of overlapping assessments

MarinTrust wants to ensure the same level of performance for overlapping fisheries; i.e. the overall outcome of each clause is consistent, either a pass or fail. When there are 2 or more of the same fisheries assessed the same outcome is expected, unless there is a well-justified reason why different practices adopted in the fishery justify different scores. Rationales may be written differently, but assessor should use similar arguments and logic for their rationales.

If there is a difference in outcome, especially where that may result in failing an already approved fishery it is expected the assessments are harmonised. If this is identified, it is recommended that the fishery assessors discuss (verbally or via email) the information or evidence used, and the scoring rationales prepared. Past assessment outcomes and peer review feedback can be used to support the discussions.

If assessors have a difference of opinion based on the same information, they can request an interpretation or clarification from MarinTrust to support consistency. MarinTrust may engage an independent reviewer via the Fisheries Assessment Peer Review Group to support harmonisation or interpretation requests.

Timing of assessments

MarinTrust shall review during the annual allocation process as defined in document PRO-012 (prev. A12) - Procedure for the monitoring and allocation of fishery and by-product assessments the timing of overlapping assessments, where possible bringing the assessment timing in alignment. E.g. MarinTrust and CBs can review the assessment timing to align with key information release dates (e.g. ICES stock advice).

AMENDMENT LOG

DATE	ISSUE	AMENDMENT	AUTHORISED BY
13/11/2015	1.1.	Summary of changes available on request.	Francisco Aldon
21/01/2015	1.5		Francisco Aldon
12/09/2017	1.6		Francisco Aldon
08/03/2021	2.0		Libby Woodhatch
10/06/2022	3.0		Governing Body Committee
Version 2 edits (MarinTrust conversion)			
08/03/2021	2.0	MarinTrust Header & Footer inserted	Libby Woodhatch
08/03/2021	2.0	Wording throughout document amended to read 'MarinTrust' or 'MarinTrust Programme' where applicable in line with rebranding	Libby Woodhatch
24/03/2021	2.0	Removal of reference to V1.6 and V2.0 of the IFFO RS Standard in final paragraph, section 1.6	Libby Woodhatch
24/03/2021	2.0	Removal of reference to IB throughout document.	Libby Woodhatch
10/06/2022	3.0	Update of scope to reflect current practice.	Governing Body Committee
10/06/2022	3.0	Update of section 1.1 to incorporate a review of assessment requirements and scheduling instead of a 'pre-assessment check', and further guidance on roles, responsibilities, timeframes, and associated supporting documents.	Governing Body Committee
10/06/2022	3.0	Addition of further detailed guidance for conducting the fishery and/or by-product assessment in line with associated supporting documents and templates, and assessment determination and follow up to section 1.2	Governing Body Committee
10/06/2022	3.0	Addition of further detailed guidance on the CB internal peer review, and associated supporting documents, recommendations and follow up, to section 1.3	Governing Body Committee
10/06/2022	3.0	Addition of detailed guidance on the 'Distribution of final assessment report' – section 1.4	Governing Body Committee
10/06/2022	3.0	Addition of detailed guidance on 'Assessment Frequency' – section 1.6	Governing Body Committee

10/06/2022	3.0	Addition of assessment schedule requirements to records, section 2, in line with the Procedure for allocation and monitoring of fishery and by-product assessments, to ensure accurate traceability and records.	Governing Body Committee
16/09/2024	4.0	Throughout the document, edits have been made to improve language and grammar. These edits do not change the intent of the clauses. Document re-structured to improve process flows.	Governing Body Committee
16/09/2024	4.0	Section 2 Scope: Clarified scope. Removed reference to MSC verification being excluded, as it is now part of 'fisheries' assessment scope within the document. Added summary of A12 and B2.	Governing Body Committee
16/09/2024	4.0	Section 4 Changes to the scope of the assessment A new requirement added to clarify the actions when a change in fishing area or species name is identified during an assessment.	Governing Body Committee
16/09/2024	4.0	Section 5 CB internal peer review Added clause on MarinTrust quality control actions required. Clarified that only whole fish fishery reports are Draft for external review & final report for other assessment types.	Governing Body Committee
16/09/2024	4.0	Section 6 External peer review Added new content to clarify the actions for producing and distributing external peer review report. Added reference to QMS document that manages FAPRG	Governing Body Committee
16/09/2024	4.0	Section 8 Assessment outcome: not approved Added content to clarify roles and responsibilities in communicating failed (not approved) outcome of an assessment. Revised timelines to reflect appropriate action times.	Governing Body Committee
16/09/2024	4.0	Section 9 Assessment frequency Clarified assessment frequency, and summarised differences between whole fish, by-products and verifications in tables. Approval of by-products and MSC verification is valid for 1 year.	Governing Body Committee
16/09/2024	4.0	Annexes 1 and 2 Guidance on surveillance activities, re-approval and harmonisation New annexes added to include guidance on activities for surveillance and re-approval assessment activities and harmonisation of overlapping assessments.	Governing Body Committee