



Flatfish

Introduction to ASC certification

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) promotes responsibly farmed seafood through its certification and labelling programme. Working together with the aquaculture industry, seafood processors, retail and foodservice companies, scientists and conservation groups, it helps to guide the industry towards an environmentally sustainable and socially responsible future.

Fish farms that meet ASC's standards gain the right to sell their products bearing the ASC logo. This gives farms a public endorsement of their responsible practices, and gives consumers the reassurance that they're making an ethical purchase.

The ASC standards

The ASC farm standards were developed by more than 2,000 stakeholders globally. The standard development process adheres to ISEAL's¹ Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards.

The ASC standards focus on both the environmental and social impact of farming.

- Environmentally, farms must show that they actively minimise their impact on the surrounding natural environment. This extends to careful management of the fish health and resources.
- Socially, farms must be a good and conscientious neighbour; that means operating their farm in a socially responsible manner, caring for their employees and working with the local community.

¹ ISEAL is the global membership association for sustainability standards, it defines what good practice looks like along with the core characteristics of credible standards. ISEAL members demonstrate their ability to meet ISEAL's Codes of Good Practice and accompanying requirements, as well as commit to learning and improving to deliver increased positive impacts.



The ASC Flatfish Standard

The farming of flatfish including flounder, turbot, and halibut has been associated with a number of environmental impacts, such as the use of marine ingredients in feed, negative impact on biodiversity, use of antibiotics, disease and parasite transfer, and impact of pollution on water quality and the seabed. ASC certified flatfish farmers work hard to improve standards in their industry, work with their local community, and respect their workers and the environment:

- **Biodiversity.** ASC certified flatfish farms minimise impacts on the local ecosystem in a number of ways, such as the development and implementation of an impact assessment to protect wildlife and sensitive habitats, protection of the ecological quality of the seabed, ensuring farms are not sited in High Conservation Value Areas (HCVA). Certified farms must greatly minimise any fish escapes. All lethal incidents with wildlife must be reported to the ASC.
- **Feed.** ASC certification requires flatfish farms to adhere to strict limits to minimise the use of wild fish as an ingredient for feed. In addition, the standard requires farms to ensure full traceability back to a responsibly managed source, preferably certified, both for wild fish and non-marine ingredients including soy and palm oil.
- **Pollution.** ASC certified flatfish farms are required to measure various water parameters (phosphorus, oxygen levels, etc.) at regular intervals and remain within set limits. Potential copper release into the water must be minimised and monitored.
- **Diseases.** ASC certified flatfish farms are required to adhere to rigorous requirements to minimise disease outbreaks. A Fish Health Management Plan detailing steps for biosecurity management must be developed under supervision of a veterinarian and implemented on the farm. Certified farms need to adhere to low levels of parasites, and the use of medicine before a disease is diagnosed (prophylactic use), is prohibited. Producers must manage farms in such a way that survival rate is high, and they need to have a farm specific mortalities reduction program that includes defined annual targets.
- **Social.** ASC certification imposes strict requirements based on the core principles of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), these include among others prohibiting the use of child labour or any form of forced labour. All ASC certified farms are safe and equitable working environments where employees earn a decent wage and have regulated working hours. Farmers need to engage with local communities (including indigenous people), have a community stakeholder complaints process in place, and inform local communities about potential health and safety risks or changes in access to resources.

Why the ASC matters

ASC's standards set performance indicators across all of the criteria. Farms must not exceed metric-based limits to ensure their output meets all the requirements for certification. During the certification process the independent certifiers' reports are published for public consultation, which informs the certification decision.

Farms that meet the ASC standards deliver real benefits: a cleaner seabed, cleaner water and healthier fish. They also help to preserve local biodiversity, and work in a way that supports their community.

Through chain of custody certification, you can be sure that ASC labelled seafood can be traced back through every step of the supply chain to a well-managed farm that meets the strict requirements of the ASC standards.