



# Fish Health and Welfare

Stakeholder Consultation

FAQ (External)

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### 1. Why is ASC running a stakeholder consultation on Fish Health and Welfare criteria? What topics will be covered in this round of consultation?

ASC is running a stakeholder consultation for two topics on the Fish Health and Welfare Criterion 2.14) which is part of the wider ASC Farm Standard development. The topics cover specifically an audit mechanism on Slaughter (Criterion 2.14c), and a tentative indicator to address shrimp eyestalk ablation. ASC aims to gather feedback from stakeholders on these two topics.

### 2. What is the rationale for introducing an audit mechanism for Slaughter?

Until now, there was no slaughtering requirements within the ASC standards and this explains why there is currently no mechanism within the ASC auditing system to cover slaughter operations. For this reason, a new audit mechanism is being proposed, with the purpose of guaranteeing transparency and assurance.

### 3. What is the proposal on the audit mechanism for Slaughter?

If slaughter takes place on-site (at the farm), then it will be audited as part of the ASC farm audit carried out through an ASC-approved auditor from a Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) and together with the rest of the ASC Farm Standard.

However, if slaughter does not take place at the farm but at another facility run by the same or another company, then the audit mechanism can be executed by:

- An internal (in the case of vertically integrated facilities), or a second party audit carried out by the farm or Unit of Certification (UoC)
- A third-party audit by an ASC-approved CAB auditor

In all these cases, the audit reports will be checked by the CAB during the ASC Farm audit, and the CAB will have the capability to carry out a spot audit to the slaughterhouse if considered necessary.

### 4. In case of using a third-party to audit an outside slaughterhouse: Should it be audited before the farm or UoC audit or could it be included in the UoC audit?

It should be audited before the UoC audit so reports are available, or during the UoC audit if carried out by the same CAB.



## 5. What is the timeline for audit mechanism for Criterion 2.14c on Slaughter?

ASC is running a stakeholder consultation on this audit mechanism in March-April 2023. If the proposed audit mechanism is deemed satisfactory by stakeholders, it will be accepted. Otherwise, another stakeholder consultation will be held in September 2023. The ASC Farm Standard will be released in Q2 2024 and will be effective a year after the release.

## 6. Why is the topic of eyestalk ablation relevant for Fish Health and Welfare?

Eyestalk ablation in shrimp production is a topic in animal welfare that is gaining stakeholder attention around the globe. Eyestalk ablation is currently viewed by most stakeholder groups as a cruel practice that leads to animal mutilation and suffering. What's more, the fact that recent [research](#) (S. Zacarias, Use of non-ablated shrimp (*L. vannamei*) in commercial scale hatcheries, PhD Thesis, May 2020, Stirling University) suggests that eyestalk ablation-free production is possible in Pacific white shrimp (*L. vannamei*), means that some consumers and retailers may expect certification systems to consider this. The latter was backed up by the feedback received during the Welfare Project first stakeholder consultation in September 2021.

ASC aims to gather feedback for the proposed indicator on eyestalk ablation through this stakeholder consultation.

## 7. What is eyestalk ablation?

Eyestalk is defined as one of the movable peduncles bearing an eye at the tip in some crustaceans or a protrusion that extends an eye away from the body.

Ablation is defined as the removal of one or both eyestalks in a female crustacean.

Eyestalk ablation is a widespread practice to induce rapid maturation and spawning through hormonal manipulation.

## 8. Why remove the eyestalk specifically?

The eyestalk produces hormones (the gonad inhibiting hormone, GIH, in particular) that are involved in controlling ovarian maturation. Thus, eyestalk ablation can accelerate ovarian maturation in female shrimps resulting in accelerated spawning.

9. Which species is covered in the proposed eyestalk ablation indicator. Why are other species (such as black tiger shrimp or *P. monodon*) not included?

Recent research suggest that ablation-free (AF) production is possible in Pacific white shrimp (*L. vannamei*). The current proposal only covers the Pacific white shrimp and not other species such as the black tiger shrimp (*P. monodon*) due to lack of research on the specific specie.

However, during the stakeholder consultation in March 2023, we will be consulting on whereas the indicator scope should be extended to black tiger shrimp.

10. What are the consequences of an ablation-free production in a farm? Are there positive and/or negative impacts?

There are both positive and negative consequences of ablation-free production. Some of them include:

- Positive consequences: increase in broodstock survival, gain in the reproductive lifespan of the broodstock, the perception that nauplii and post-larvae perform better in the grow out farms.
- Negative consequences: decrease in the maturity/spawning frequency, decreased total nauplii output, increase in production costs due to a larger number of broodstock being needed.

11. What is the proposed indicator requirement on eyestalk ablation?

This covers Pacific white shrimp or *L. vannamei*. All nauplii (the crustacean's first stage of larvae), larvae or post-larvae (PL) to originate from ablation-free female broodstock. The following timelines shall apply:

Date the standard is effective (Q2 2025): 25% of the production to originate from ablation-free broodstock.

- 2 years from the date the standard is effective (Q2 2027): 50% of the production to originate from ablation-free broodstock.
- 4 years from the date the standard is effective (Q2 2029): 75% of the production to originate from ablation-free broodstock.
- 6 years from the date the standard is effective (Q2 2031): 100% of the production to originate from ablation-free broodstock.

## 12. Where can I find more information?

If you want to read more about the ASC Farm Standard and its development process, please click [here](#).

## 13. How can I participate and provide feedback?

ASC welcomes and encourages all interested stakeholders to take part in our survey or our workshops, please click [here](#) for the survey and [here](#) for all other information on ways to engage in the consultation.

## 14. What are the next steps for the tentative indicator on Shrimp Eyestalk Ablation?

ASC is running a stakeholder consultation on this indicator in March-April and in September 2023. The latter as part of the final ASC Farm Standard consultation. The ASC Farm Standard will be released in Q2 2024 and will be effective a year after the release.