

# Species Extension Project – Catfish

## Terms of Reference

This Terms of Reference (ToR) is publicly available on the [ASC website](#). Comments are welcome and appreciated.

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1.0	June 2023	N/A	N/A

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The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that operates a voluntary, independent third-party certification and labelling programme based on scientifically robust standards.

## ASC Vision

A world where aquaculture plays a major role in supplying food and social benefits for humanity whilst minimising negative impacts on the environment.

## ASC Mission

To transform aquaculture towards environmental sustainability and social responsibility using efficient market mechanisms that create value across the chain.

## ASC Theory of Change

A Theory of Change (ToC) is an articulation, description and mapping out of the building blocks required to achieve the organisation's vision. ASC has defined a ToC which explains how the ASC certification and labelling programme promotes and rewards responsible aquaculture practices through incentivising the choices people make when buying seafood.

ASC's Theory of Change can be found on the [ASC website](#).

Intended Change: ASC standards are developed to deliver on the ASC Theory of Change by addressing key sustainability issues identified in the seafood sector and at the farm. Increased global demand for fish combined with rapidly growing and unregulated aquaculture practices will result in disruption of local ecosystems, negative impacts to biodiversity, wastewater, conflicts over resource use and poor working conditions. Certification against ASC standards addresses these sustainability issues through market demand and recognition of responsible practices.

## 1. Introduction

This document describes the objectives and scope of the ASC Species Extension Project - Catfish. The output of this project will be a scope expansion of the ASC programme to include multiple species of catfish (*Clariidae spp.*<sup>1</sup>, *Ictalurus spp.*<sup>2</sup>, and *Silurus glanis*<sup>3</sup>). An initial selection of catfish species is proposed based on producer demand and the outcomes of the Species Selection Framework - Risk

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<sup>1</sup> Including, but not limited to *Clarias gariepinus* (African Catfish); *Heterobranchus Longifilis* (Vundu); Hybrid of *Heterobranchus Longifilis X Clarias Gariepinus* (Claresse)

<sup>2</sup> Including, but not limited to *Ictalurus punctatus* (Channel catfish)

<sup>3</sup> *Silurus glanis* (European catfish/Wels catfish)

Matrix<sup>4</sup>. The catfish species will be added directly to the scope of [ASC Farm Standard](#), currently under development. Producers will thus need to conform to the ASC Farm Standard with specific metrics/indicator requirements for catfish.

## 2. Objectives of the Species Extension Project - Catfish

ASC currently manages eleven standards covering seventeen species groups. These standards were developed through stakeholder dialogues over several years. ASC is currently in the process of integrating all species-specific standards into one ASC Farm Standard and no further species-specific standards will be developed, ASC is working on a Species Scope Extension Project. In view of this, ASC is developing a Species Scope Extension Procedure to be added to the [Standard Setting Procedure](#). This aims to streamline the process of adding new species to the ASC portfolio. Using a Species Selection Framework - Risk Matrix, an initial number of species<sup>5</sup> were identified and approved by the ASC Board for addition to the ASC portfolio of certifiable species. Based on the development of a whitepaper, the main impacts of catfish aquaculture will be assessed, species-specific metrics will be developed, and the need for additional indicator requirements will be evaluated.

Learnings from the project will be used to improve the [Standard Setting Procedure](#). The project runs concurrently with the ASC Farm Standard development. It is expected that once launched, the process for adding new species to that standard will be clear and efficient.

## 3. Structure and Scope of the Species Extension Project - Catfish

The Species Extension Project - Catfish will add catfish species (*Clariidae spp.*<sup>6</sup>, *Ictalurus spp.*<sup>7</sup>, and *Silurus glanis*<sup>8</sup>) to the scope of the ASC Farm Standard by adding species-specific metrics and, if needed, additional indicator requirements. The development will follow the [ASC Standard Setting Procedure](#).

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<sup>4</sup> The risk matrix allows scoring species against criteria related to those addressed by current species-specific standards (i.e. production system, environmental, social and feed) as well as criteria related to compatibility with those standards and market demand.

<sup>5</sup> *Clariidae spp.*, *Ictalurus spp.*, *Scortum barcoo*, *Percoidea spp.*, *Sander spp.*, and *Silurus glanis*.

<sup>6</sup> Including, but not limited to *Clarias gariepinus* (African Catfish); *Heterobranchus Longifilis* (Vundu); *Hybrid of Heterobranchus Longifilis X Clarias Gariepinus* (Clairesse)

<sup>7</sup> Including, but not limited to *Ictalurus punctatus* (Channel catfish)

<sup>8</sup> *Silurus glanis* (European catfish/Wels catfish)

## 4. Stakeholder Engagement

During development, ASC will engage with catfish producers and other stakeholder groups. Key targets will be:

- Academia and research
- Catfish aquaculture farms of related species (including farm trade bodies / representative organisations)
- Civil society organisations – both environmental and social (NGOs)
- Communities (around farms growing related species) - this group may be represented by social NGOs
- Retailers and brands
- Farm inputs suppliers and service providers (e.g. feed, broodstocks, consultants)
- Industry (retails, processing/ trading companies)
- Governments (including inter-governmental agencies)
- Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs)

Engagement with catfish producers will include a questionnaire to provide insights on farming processes and data availability. Site visits and interviews with producers will be conducted to triangulate information.

Species-specific metrics, as well as potentially identified new indicator requirements, will be presented for stakeholder consultation in September-October 2024. The consultation aims to ensure that stakeholders have been provided with the opportunity to review the proposed metrics as well as potentially identified new indicator requirements and provide additional information to ASC to confirm or revise those. One 60-day consultation (see Table 1) is planned; an additional 60-day consultation might be added if deemed necessary. ASC will evaluate the need for further consultation before recommending the final scope extension for approval to the ASC Board.

ASC monitors the participation of stakeholders aiming for adequate and balanced representation during the standard-setting process. Should stakeholders be dissatisfied with this process, they should [contact ASC](#). Where discussions with ASC do not result in a resolution, a complaint may be filed using the [ASC Complaints Procedure](#).

## 5. Guiding Principles

The development of the catfish scope extension follows the [ASC's Standard Setting Procedure](#) and the guiding principles therein described.

## 6. Process of Standard Development (Species Extension Project - Catfish)

The process and the timeline for developing the catfish scope extension are described below.

Date	Activity
<b>June 2021</b>	Board approves standard development for several catfish species
<b>July 2023</b>	TAG approval of Terms of Reference (ToR) Species Extension Project - Catfish
<b>September 2023 (30-days)</b>	Stakeholder Consultation on ToR - Species Extension Project - Catfish
<b>October 2023 - March 2024</b>	Initial stakeholder outreach, contact with farms and farms visits, data collection, development of Whitepaper and establishment of a Technical Working Group (if deemed necessary)
<b>April - June 2024</b>	Development of proposal of species-specific metrics and identified new indicator requirements
<b>July 2024</b>	Presentation of the proposal to TAG for endorsement for Stakeholder Consultation
<b>September - October 2024 (60-days)</b>	Stakeholder Consultation on species-specific metrics and identified new indicator requirements
<b>November - December 2024</b>	Finalise proposal

<b>January 2025</b>	TAG recommendation to Board
<b>February 2025</b>	Board sign-off
<b>TBC</b>	<i>Release date to be communicated during Stakeholder Consultation '24 (September/October)</i>
<b>TBC</b>	<i>Effective date to be communicated during Stakeholder Consultation '24 (September/October)</i>

## 7. Governance and Decision Making

ASC staff will develop proposed metrics as well as identify new indicator requirements for Catfish following the [ASC Standard Setting Procedure](#) and the [ASC Metrics Methodology](#). Producer and expert engagement will be included in the development of a Whitepaper. The ASC Technical Advisory Group (TAG) then reviews and endorses the proposal for Stakeholder Consultation.

The TAG's role is to provide advice and recommendations on the proposed ASC's Standards and other technical issues, including (but not limited to) further development, modification and the technical and operational interpretation of the ASC standards and the application of these interpretations.

Following the consultation, TAG reviews stakeholder feedback and provides advice for the next steps or recommendations to the ASC Board, which takes the final decision to adopt the scope extension.

Where stakeholder feedback or internal review has identified areas for further technical development, Technical Working Groups (TWGs) might be formed to provide additional technical expertise and recommendations to the TAG. TWGs are not expected to be needed for this scope extension.

TAG recommendations are preferably made by consensus. If no consensus can be reached, agreement on advice by the TAG is made by simple majority of members. In such circumstances, the Executive prepares a report to the Board which clearly indicates a summary of the minority and majority positions.

More information on ASC Governance is available [here](#).



## 8. Assessment of Risks

ASC has identified the following aspects to be considered for the evaluation of risk and impacts on farms:

Risk Aspect	Evaluation of risk	Mitigation and residual risk
<p><b>Use of a streamlined process to add new species to the ASC programme.</b></p>	<p>Quicker addition of new species should benefit producers allowing quicker certification with associated benefits. An expedited process may reduce opportunities for stakeholders to engage and provide feedback.</p>	<p>Using the ASC Farm Standard as baseline for all species minimises the risk of stakeholders raising concerns over content. Careful stakeholder mapping and targeted outreach to key stakeholders should maximise engagement and reduce the risk of stakeholders missing opportunities to comment.</p>
<p><b>Metrics for catfish not appropriate.</b></p>	<p>There is a risk that metrics developed for assessing catfish production are not appropriate for the species.</p>	<p>Comprehensive research and engagement with catfish producers should mitigate this risk. Stakeholder consultation allows a further opportunity to gather information to refine metrics. ASC has a procedure for reviewing and updating metrics should they be proven inappropriate.</p>

## 9. Contact Information

Standards and Science Department

[Standards@asc-aqua.org](mailto:Standards@asc-aqua.org)

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## 10. Comments

ASC welcomes feedback to this ToR at any time. Please see the ASC website for more information about the latest involvement opportunities.