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Sent by email

Date: 4/13/2021

I write with reference to your submission on 4/12/2021 of a request for variation to the ASC-MSC Seaweed Certification and Accreditation Requirement (CAR) to allow:

The initial audit to be conducted as an 'Assisted Remote Audit' (not a fully remote audit), with the social and environmental auditor and translator on-site to facilitate the audit and the technical expert directing the audit remotely with assistance from the translator.

As you are aware, the CAR procedures relating to 17.10.1 state:

The team shall carry out the site visit as announced.

These are integral to ensuring all ASC-MSC accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies operate in a consistent and transparent manner. The ASC-MSC intends that these requirements be met across all seaweed operations and CoC certificate holders, except in exceptional, well-justified circumstances, as part of the ASC-MSC programme.

ASC-MSC notes the factors presented supporting your request, including:

- The Korean government requires a 14-day mandatory quarantine for foreigners visiting Korea, and health risk concerns related to COVID-19 exist should the auditor travel to Korea to attend the site visit.
- The risk of conducting this audit as 'Assisted Remote' is reduced with the social/environmental auditor and translator on-site.
- The operation already has UoCs certified, and one of the auditors (the one attending the site-visit) was on the original audit team.
- Video conferencing applications and internet connectivity will be tested prior to the audit.
- Stakeholders will be informed that this site visit will be held partially remotely when the audit announcement is made.

Given the rationale provided, ASC-MSC is willing to grant a variation to the CAR.

If you have any questions regarding this response, please do not hesitate to contact the Seaweed Accounts Manager.

Marine Stewardship Council
cc: Assurance Services International