

# ASC Shrimp Standard v1.2.1

**Disclaimer:** This text provides an explanation of the ASC Shrimp Standard v1.2.1, in plain English with minimal jargon. It is not intended for use in certification. Only the [official standard document](#) is valid for certification purposes. ASC is bringing together its twelve species-specific standards into one robust Farm Standard to provide greater consistency across all species covered by ASC. The ASC Farm Standard will be operational in 2025 and will eventually replace the Shrimp Standard.

The ASC Shrimp Standard is structured in seven chapters that cover the principles for farms. It has the following requirements:

## PRINCIPLE 1: Comply with all applicable national laws and regulations

Principle 1 is intended to ensure that all farms aiming to be certified against the ASC Shrimp Standard meet the national legal obligations in the country they are based in. This principle has **one criterion** that is **about** compliance with all applicable local and national laws and regulations in the country or region in which production takes place, and to have all required permits in place, and this information must be accessible for communities upon their request.

## PRINCIPLE 2: Site farms in environmentally suitable locations while conserving biodiversity and natural ecosystems

Principle 2 addresses the potential impacts of shrimp farms on natural habitats, biodiversity, and ecosystems. It includes **six criteria**:

**2.1** (Biodiversity Environmental Impact Assessment): Farms must arrange for a biodiversity environmental impact assessment (B-EIA), which is a process that assesses the likely impacts of a farm on biodiversity and the environment and share the results and findings openly in a language that local people can understand. Conducting a B-EIA ensures that biodiversity and ecosystem impacts are considered and helps to avoid conflicts with local communities.

**2.2** (Impact on sensitive areas): Farms cannot operate in protected areas, places with High Conservation Value Areas (HCVAs) such as coastal wetlands and mangroves, although some exceptions apply. Mangrove or wetland removal is only allowed for certain very specific infrastructure needs, like pumping stations. If these habitats are impacted, the farm must restore or reforest an equivalent area, using native species. Any farms built before 1999 for which mangroves have been cut or wetlands altered, must rehabilitate at least 50% of the area affected.

**2.3** (Impacts on critical habitats): Farms cannot be in areas that are critical for endangered species, as listed by the IUCN Red List or other official sources. Farms must protect these important habitats and species within their farm boundaries

and take action to protect them, as identified by the B-EIA process described in Criterion 2.1.

**2.4** (Buffer zones): Farms must maintain a permanent (or natural) barrier between the farm and the ocean, and rivers and streams, as set by national laws at the time of construction or based on the B-EIA. Buffer zones near the ocean must be at least 100 metres wide and those near rivers and streams at least 25 metres wide. Farms must also maintain a natural corridor through their farm to allow movement of people or wildlife, as required by national laws or as determined by the B-EIA, considering wildlife needs and access issues identified during the assessment.

**2.5** (Preventing salinisation): Farms must not release saline (salt) water into freshwater bodies. They also cannot use fresh groundwater in their ponds. Farms should ensure that the water in any nearby freshwater wells does not have too much salt. They should also ensure that the soil around the farm does not have more salt than it did in the first year of checking. When the farm disposes of sediment (materials that settle at the bottom of the pond), it should not have higher levels of salt than the soil where it is being placed.

**2.6** (Water use): The farm must follow the water usage limits set by local authorities or a trusted independent organisation. All underground water being used must have permission from the relevant authorities. The depth of the wells must be checked at least once a year, and the results should be made available to the public.

### PRINCIPLE 3: Develop and operate farms with consideration for surrounding communities

Principle 3 focuses on how farms engage with people living around the farm and has **four criteria**:

**3.1** (Social impact assessment): Farms must carry out a Social Impact Assessment (p-SIA) with input from the local community and share the results in a way that is easy to understand for the people nearby. The local government and at least one community organisation chosen by the people must also have a copy. The p-SIA process includes a joint analysis of the risks and impacts on the community, with their feedback clearly included in the report. The report must outline how the farm and the community plan to manage these risks and impacts together.

**3.2** (Complaints procedure): Farms must create and use a clear policy to handle conflicts with local communities. This policy should explain how complaints, including those identified by the p-SIA, will be tracked, how third-party mediators can help, and how complaints will be addressed. The farm should use complaint boxes, registers, and receipts in the local language. Any areas of conflict must be

recorded and shared with the farm, local government, and community representatives, and resolved within a specified timeframe.

**3.3** (Local employment): Farms must prove they advertised job openings locally before hiring workers from further away. The farm must justify each hire based on skills or experience and keep records of applications, interviews, and reasons for success or failure.

**3.4** (Contract farming): Where contract farming is in place, contracts must be clear and written in a language that both parties understand. Negotiations between the farm and contract farmers should take place at least twice a year and be documented. Contracts should be signed by all representatives of the farms involved.

## PRINCIPLE 4: Operate farms with responsible practices

Principle 4 focuses on ensuring that farms treat their workers fairly and respectfully. It has **11 criteria**:

**4.1** (Preventing child labour): Farms must ensure no child labour is used, and all workers are 18 years or older.

**4.2** (Preventing forced labour): Farms must ensure no forced, bonded, or compulsory labour is used. Farms must not withhold any salary, property, or benefits from employees when their employment ends. Workers should be free to leave the workplace outside of working hours, and to keep their own identity documents.

**4.3** (Preventing discrimination): Farms must have policies and practices to prevent discrimination based on factors like sex, race, or other characteristics, including related to equality of salaries and promotion opportunities. They must also guarantee the rights to maternity leave.

**4.4** (Health and safety): Farms must provide health and safety training, and record accidents with corrective actions. Employers are responsible for covering work-related injuries and accidents not covered by national law.

**4.5** (Wages): Farms must pay at least the minimum wage, work towards paying a fair wage, and have clear and transparent wage-setting and conflict resolution policies. They cannot withhold any payments of salaries or other benefits. Labour contract schemes that aim to deny workers a fair pay and benefits are not allowed.

**4.6** (Freedom of association and collective bargaining): Farms must allow workers to join trade unions or other worker organisations. Employers shall not interfere with these organisations or punish workers for joining them.

**4.7** (Disciplinary practices): Farms should have a policy in place that aims to avoid excessive or abusive disciplinary actions. Disciplinary actions should focus on improving behaviour, with no fines or actions that harm workers' physical or mental well-being.

**4.8** (Working hours and overtime): Workers should not exceed 8 hours a day or 48 hours a week on average over 17 weeks, including "stand-by" hours, and must have one full day off each week. They can leave the farm after work. If they live on the farm, they must get four full days off per month, with the option to leave unless agreed otherwise. Transport must be provided, especially for remote farms. Overtime is voluntary, capped at 12 hours a week, and paid at least 25% more than regular hours. Maternity leave must be 14 weeks, with the right to return to work, and pay should match the country's social insurance level.

**4.9** (Labour contracts): Farms must provide contracts to all workers. Labour-only contracting or fake apprenticeships that deny benefits are not allowed. All workers must have the necessary work permits. Workers must understand and agree to their employment conditions. For farms with more than five workers, written employment policies and contracts are required. Any probation period must follow the law, not exceeding 30 days if no law exists.

**4.10** (Contact and complaints): Farms must ensure workers can communicate with managers about labour rights and working conditions. Management and workers should meet at least twice a year to discuss these matters, and their concerns must be recorded, addressed, and monitored. There should be a clear plan to handle any worker complaints, and 90% of complaints should be resolved within 90 days.

**4.11** (Worker accommodation): Living conditions for workers must be safe and decent, with clean, secure, and weatherproof accommodation. Shared rooms should provide privacy, and workers must have access to clean drinking water, cooking, or catering facilities. Separate sanitary and toilet facilities must be available for men and women, except for married couples.

## PRINCIPLE 5: Manage shrimp health and welfare in a responsible manner

Principle 5 ensures that shrimp farms protect local ecosystems by preventing diseases and responsibly treating them and using non-lethal methods for predator control. This principle includes **three criteria**.

**5.1** (Disease prevention): The farm must have a health plan to stop diseases from getting in, leaving, or spreading on the farm. This includes controlling predators, managing waste, and checking for illnesses. Water inlets must have barriers to keep out harmful germs, and the farm must achieve certain survival rate goals. The farm must use post larvae (the early life stage of shrimp) that are free from or resistant to diseases of concern.

**5.2** (Predator control): Killing protected, threatened, or endangered animals is not allowed, nor is the use of lead shot (small pellets made of lead used in shotgun ammunition). Only registered chemicals can be used for predator control, and non-lethal methods must be tried first. If lethal control is necessary, the farm must monitor predator visits, and the types and numbers of animals involved.

**5.3** (Disease treatment): Antibiotics and medicated feed cannot be used for ASC-labelled products (farms can be certified, but products with medicated feed cannot carry the ASC label). Antibiotics that are considered important by the World Health Organisation (WHO) are not allowed for use, even if local authorities approve them. Farms must keep records of chemical use, and workers must be trained on how to use them properly. Water cannot be treated with banned pesticides or those considered dangerous by the WHO. Harmful chemicals must be made safe before being released. Farms can only use probiotics (beneficial bacteria) that have been officially approved by the relevant authorities. They are not allowed to use fermented products to create new batches of probiotics for future use.

## PRINCIPLE 6: Manage broodstock origin, selection and effects of stock management

Principle 6 describes the requirements for broodstock, the parent animals used for breeding purposes. This principle has **four criteria**.

**6.1** (Introduced shrimp species): Using non-native shrimp species is only allowed if they are already produced locally, there is evidence they do not harm nearby ecosystems, and proper import rules are complied with, such as permits and licenses. Farms must prevent escapes with properly sized barriers, double screens for non-native species, strong pond banks, and regular inspections. Repairs, escape traps, and recovery plans are required, with records kept of escapes and actions taken.

**6.2** (Broodstock origins): Post larvae (PL, the early life stage of shrimp) and broodstock (the parent animals used for breeding purposes) must be disease-free and follow import guidelines. All PL should be farm-raised; wild-caught PL is not allowed, except for those naturally flowing into ponds that have tidal flow or other water movement.

**6.3** (No use of transgenic species): These are shrimp species that have been genetically modified by adding genes from other species to give them new traits. They pose significant risks to ecosystems if they escape, and their use is prohibited.

**6.4** (Transporting live shrimps): Farms must transport live shrimp in sealed containers that prevent any escapes.

## PRINCIPLE 7: Use resources in an environmentally efficient and responsible manner

Principle 7 addresses negative impacts that come from resource use, including feed, energy use and effluent and waste disposal. This principle has **seven criteria**. The feed requirements are an interim solution until the Feed Standard becomes fully effective from 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2025 from which point all ASC certified farms must source and use only ASC compliant feed produced by ASC certified feed mills.

**7.1** (Traceability): Farms must verify the origins of feed ingredients that make up over 2% of the feed.

**7.2** (Sustainable sources of feed ingredients): All fishmeal and fish oil in the feed used by farms must come from sustainably certified fisheries by 2025, with interim standards for sustainable sourcing and bans on illegal fishing or endangered species. Agricultural ingredients (such as soy and palm oil) must also come from sustainable sources, certified by a credible scheme.

**7.3** (Use of GMO ingredients): Farms must disclose any genetically modified plant materials in feed.

**7.4** (Use of wild fish in feed): Farms must maintain a balanced ratio of wild fish used for feed compared to the amount of shrimp produced, with specific limits for each type of shrimp. They must keep records of how efficiently the feed is used for shrimp growth and ensure that a significant amount of the protein in the feed is retained in the shrimp.

**7.5** (Effluents): Farms must limit the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus they give to shrimp in the feed, to limit the amount that is released in the water. They cannot discharge or dispose sludge and sediments to public waterways and wetlands. Any water that is discharged must be treated before discharging, and they must ensure that there is sufficient oxygen in this water. They must monitor water quality.

**7.6** (Energy consumption): Farms must track energy use and record total annual energy consumption per ton of shrimp for verification.

**7.7** (Waste disposal): Farms must have procedures for safe chemical storage, waste handling, and recycling, with records as proof.