TERMS OF REFERENCE

Technical Working Group – ASC Chain of Custody Module (Human Rights)

Contents

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1. Introduction

The TAG Terms of Reference make provision for the formation of Technical Working Groups (TWGs) and Ad-hoc Advisory Groups (AAG) to support the technical and scientific work of the TAG. Typically, both a TWG and an AAG will be comprised of technical experts external to ASC's governance bodies with a member of the TAG acting as sponsor to facilitate communication and understanding between the TAG and the TWG or AAG and support the ASC technical lead. ASC's Secretariat will provide logistical support to the group(s) and a technical coordinator from ASC will be appointed to provide the group(s) with the technical resources. This may include a white paper to initiate discussion and a draft Standard following TWG deliberations. An external facilitator may be appointed for complex topics. The difference between a TWG and AAG is that the AAG has a narrower focus and often operates in a shorter timeframe.

References

ASC Programme Development and Revision Procedure

ASC Metrics Methodology

ASC Complaints Procedure

TAG Terms of Reference

TAG Conflict of Interest Policy

2. Terms of Reference

This document describes the terms of reference of a Technical Working Group (TWG) for the introduction of the topic of human rights into the ASC Chain of Custody (CoC) module.

2.1 Statement of purpose

The purpose of this **Technical Working Group (TWG**) is to support the development of human rights elements in the ASC CoC Module.

2.2 Scope and aims

ASC envisages an aquaculture sector where employees and communities have a decent quality of life. It is our mission to respect and promote the human rights of those who work in aquaculture, or living in surrounding communities, and improve their wellbeing. We aim to act as a catalyst for broader, industry-wide change.

Approximately 22 million people are employed in the aquaculture sector. The FAO has recently started collecting data on how many are employed from the time a product has been harvested to when it has been delivered to a customer. Across 52 out of 223 reporting countries and territories, there are 1.7 million people employed in this work[1].

While ASC's Farm and Feed standards include comprehensive human rights requirements, ASC has not yet introduced similar requirements into its Chain of Custody standard.

Seafood processing and packing carries a wide range of risks to workers' wellbeing. In line with ASC's commitment to respect and promoting human rights of those who work in aquaculture, ASC is developing a system to expand its human rights' work along the supply chain, of which the TWG is a component.

The TWG will be assigned the following tasks:

- Provide advice on the approach for how to introduce human rights into the ASC CoC Module in a robust and feasible way.
- Evaluate the risks associated with the different proposals, the possible impacts on ASC's stakeholders, and the feasibility of different options.
- Provide guidance on the prioritisation of topics for inclusion, based on an understanding of the wider landscape in the seafood supply chain.
- Provide input and guidance into the development of credible and implementable indicators for human rights in the ASC CoC Module, that balance the importance of the inclusion of human rights, with the reality of an acceptable and feasible burden for the certificate holders.
- Provide input into the development of guidance and capacity building materials to support certificate holders in their compliance with the ASC CoC Module.
- Consider options presented by ASC on verification mechanisms and provide a recommendation based on the options.

The expected deliverables from this process are:

- A clear recommendation on how to include human rights in the ASC CoC Module.
- A set of requirements on human rights for the ASC CoC Module.
- Guidance on how to implement and comply with the requirements.
- Capacity building and resources for certificate holders.

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[1] FAO, The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2024, https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/66538eba-9c85-4504-8438-c1cf0a0a3903/content/sofia/2024/fisheries-aquaculture-employment.html

3. Membership

TWG membership shall focus on experts that are able to advise both on the approach for the module, and on the content and formulation of indicators. It will aim to balance interests, knowledge and experience from across seafood and broader work in human rights and include geographical representation. All members should support the aims of the ASC, its Vision and Mission, and commit to engage constructively.

3.1   Technical competencies required

The TWG shall include members with one or more of the following core competencies:

- Strong understanding of certification standard development, and social auditing.
- Understanding of and/or experience of the different parts of seafood production including processing and packing.
- Understanding of human rights risks across seafood.
- Ability to bring a rightsholder lens to the discussions.

3.2   Registered interests

ASC Technical Working Groups need to understand the interests of individual members to manage conflicts. Members are asked to declare these to ensure stakeholders and decision-makers have access to this information.

4. Reporting requirements

The TWG will report to the TAG on an annual basis. Output documents will be made available for review along with meeting minutes of the TWG meetings.

Materials made available for review will include:

- Meeting minutes
- Recommendations

5. Duration and review times

The TWG will be active until the approval of the revised indicators and complementary materials by the TAG. The TWG will meet regularly (online) and at key moments in the process as suggested in Table 1. The timeline and scope of each meeting will be further refined in consultation with the TWG at the first meeting. There is a possibility of reconvening the group after a year to review the progress.

Table 1. Key project milestones

Activity	Outcome/Deliverable
TAG meeting	Project ToR approval TWG ToR approval
Public consultation	Public consultation on Project ToR
TWG meetings	Kick-off Agreement on TWG scope, objectives, and timelines Advice on approach Advice on priority areas for inclusion
Internal Exco approval	Presentation of options and recommendation to ExCo for approval
TWG meetings	Advice on development of draft indicators
TAG meeting	Presentation of draft indicators to TAG for public consultation
Public consultation	Public consultation on draft indicators
TWG meetings	Advice on feasibility assessment Results of public consultation Advice on revision of indicators
TWG meetings	Results of PC Update on pilot Advice on revision of indicators for final document
TAG meeting	Presentation of final indicators to TAG for approval Final approval of indicators
Board meeting	Board approval
Include content in ASC CoC Module	New content included in revised ASC CoC Module.

6. Resources [INTERNAL ONLY]

Staff time: Significant staff time will be needed to organise the TWG meetings, develop documents, raise funds, and organise the pilots, including recruiting farms to participate, organising public consultations etc. Most time will be spent by members of the supply chain assurance team and human rights team, but contributions from other ASC staff are also required. These are listed in the project scope document.

Meetings: Membership of ASC TWGs is voluntary and unpaid. TWG meetings will be held online and will therefore not carry any costs.

7. Agreement

I agree to the above terms of reference.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

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