



MAKE STEWARDSHIP COUNT

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Eyes on the MSC Review – Big Blue Future or Big Blue Failure?

Global Coalition Releases Second Scorecard on Marine Stewardship Council's Standard Review Process

Zürich, Switzerland - As the sustainable seafood certifier Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) completes the first phase of public consultations for its [Fisheries Standard Review](#) (FSR), the 90 plus members of the Make Stewardship Count coalition continue to watch the process closely and have released a new [set of scorecards](#) which cover the public consultation phase in 2020.

The Coalition wants to know: will the Fisheries Standard Review (FSR) make the critical improvements needed to ensure all certified fisheries are applying global best practices, such as a Fins Naturally Attached (FNA) policy for all shark landings, and a complete ban of encirclement of marine mammals? And how open and transparent is the review process really?

There has been little change to the [Critical Improvements scorecard](#), which highlights that the scope of the recent public consultation failed to address many of the [key concerns](#) with the MSC standard raised by the Coalition. In addition, it is unclear yet whether those issues that are still on the table will actually result in the needed improvements to the Standard and ultimately on the water.

The MSC did, however, show some improvements in regard to stakeholder engagement and information transparency in the Review process, and this is reflected in improved scores from all 'RED - Below Expectations', in the Coalition's first scorecard, to two RED and two 'YELLOW-Improving' in this second round for the [Transparency of Engagement and Decision Making scorecard](#).

There are substantial concerns about the next steps of the review, when feedback from the public consultations will be discussed by the Technical Advisory Board (TAB), Stakeholder Advisory Council (STAC), and MSC Board to develop proposals for the next stage of the Review in 2021. This stage has been problematic in past reviews with opaque decision making, and output that bears little resemblance to the stakeholders submissions and previously public records of discussion. MSC has denied the Coalition's request to observe these upcoming meetings despite the terms of reference allowing for observers. This raises further concerns about the MSC's commitment to a transparent process.

The Coalition notes that the MSC is under increasing scrutiny by marine conservation and industry experts concerned about the credibility of the seafood label and who are, therefore, watching this Standard Review closely.

Quotes:

Iris Ziegler, International Cooperation, SHARKPROJECT International, said:

“It was clear in the public workshops and online surveys that there was overwhelming support for the MSC to introduce a requirement that all certified fisheries land sharks with their fins naturally attached. But, the MSC still seems reluctant to get in line with global best practice on this. It is baffling. We want to know: will the MSC finally listen to global experts in shark management and conservation, stakeholders from civil society and sustainable seafood retailers who are all of one voice on this? Or, will MSC once more settle for weak certification requirements full of loopholes that may allow shark finning to continue?”

Shannon Arnold, Senior Marine Program Coordinator, Ecology Action Centre, Canada said:

“For years, marine conservation and management experts have been disappointed by the seafood label’s weak incentives for fisheries to reduce their impact on threatened species and unwanted catch that is thrown back injured or dead. Together with many others during this Standard Review, our coalition is pressing home the need for MSC to make significant changes on bycatch issues. We see this as a last chance for MSC to regain credibility and contribute again to improvements on the water for some of the ocean’s most vulnerable species. So far there has been much consultation on how to decide if an animal is categorised as ‘endangered, threatened, or protected’ in MSC certification lingo, but not much on how the MSC Standard will actually score fisheries on what they do to those animals. We hope to see strong proposals for change from MSC on this front in the next stages of this process.”

Kate O’Connell, Marine Animal Consultant, Animal Welfare Institute, USA, said:

“It is disappointing to see that ending deliberate encircling of marine animals, like dolphins and whale sharks, to catch schooling fish by MSC certified fisheries is not on the table in this Standard Review. This obvious and crucial management measure is recognised as a priority for protecting marine mammals and the MSC will again miss an opportunity to require this for fisheries that bear their label. The failure to include this in a new Standard means the MSC certification scheme may actually undermine the progress towards adoption of this measure by international fisheries governance bodies. This is not the role we expect of a sustainable seafood program.”

The Make Stewardship Count Coalition is an international coalition of more than 90 NGOs and experts that aim to drive urgently needed improvements to the MSC standard and certification process. It is important that consumers can trust the MSC label and be confident that it represents seafood products that are sourced sustainably and responsibly, and are not associated with destructive or wasteful fishing practices.

<https://www.make-stewardship-count.org/>