

# RFM Procedure 1: Certification Body Approval for RFM Fishery Standard

Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) Certification Program

Fully Aligned to ISO 17065



**RFM Procedure 1 Version 5.1: Certification Body Approval  
for the RFM Fishery Standard, November 2022**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. PURPOSE .....	1
2. SCOPE .....	1
3. PROCESS .....	1
4. CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS.....	4
5. CERTIFICATION BODY REGISTRATION WITH ACCREDITATION BODY .....	5
6. <u>COMMUNICATION .....</u>	<u>6</u>

## Procedure 1: Certification Body Approval for the RFM Fishery Standard

### 1. Purpose

The Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) Program consists of an RFM Fishery Standard applicable to North American-based fisheries assessment and a standard for Chain of Custody certification for seafood through the supply chain.

This document describes the requirements for Certification Bodies to become approved to audit and certify applicants to the Fishery Management component of the RFM Program.

The RFM Fishery Management Standard is a third party, independent and accredited certification Program owned and operated by the Certified Seafood Collaborative (CSC) Board. The Program provides assurance that seafood is sourced from fisheries that have been certified to the RFM Fishery Standard.

### 2. Scope

The Certification Body approval requirements cover the auditing and certification of fisheries and their associated management systems and structures.

### 3. Process

#### 3.1 Registration

Prior to applying to assess against the RFM Fishery Standard a Certification Body must be accredited to ISO 17065 “General requirements for bodies operating certification systems” or have been approved by another fishery management certification scheme as a certification body by a recognized Accreditation Body (defined as a member of International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and a signatory to the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement) that has entered a memorandum of understanding with the CSC to provide annual reports to the CSC on accreditation activities including summary of accreditation activity, general program functioning, identified opportunities for program improvement, reviews of sanctions, and other related issues.

Upon request, the CSC will provide any party with a copy of this Procedure and other relevant documents concerning Certification Body approval and duties.

Only Certification Bodies that are registered and formally recognized by the CSC are authorized to quote for, and to conduct assessments against, the RFM Fishery Standard.

A registered Certification Body may apply to the CSC to extend its scope to include another RFM Standard following the same process used for the initial registration.

#### 3.2 Extension to Accredited Scope for The RFM Fishery Standard

Evaluations against the RFM Fishery Standard must be carried out in accordance with the requirements of ISO 17065 and as a consequence it is a prerequisite for all applicant Certification Bodies to be accredited to ISO 17065. In addition, applicant Certification Bodies are required to demonstrate that their scope of accreditation for ISO 17065 expressly covers the RFM Fishery Standard. When a Certification Body’s scope of accreditation does not explicitly identify the RFM Fishery Standard as falling within its accredited scope for ISO 17065, the CSC requires that the Certification Body must obtain an extension to scope to encompass the RFM Fishery Standard. Applicant Certification Bodies shall apply directly to their Accreditation Body for such extensions to accredited scope.

The applicant Certification Body must provide documentation that confirms that they have a current and active application in progress, as demonstrated by: An active application to its Accreditation Body for full accreditation that includes the RFM Fishery Standard, or an extension of the current scope of its ISO 17065 accreditation to include the RFM Fishery Standard.

Until full accreditation is achieved the Certification Body's certificates under the RFM Program must not contain the accreditation logo.

**3.3 Certification Bodies will be allowed an agreed amount of certification activity to allow for accreditation to be facilitated. Certification Bodies in the accreditation evaluation process can issue non-accredited certificates. [Named Certification Body Representative](#)**

On its application to the CSC to become an approved Certification Body for the RFM Fishery Standard, the applicant Certification Body will name a Program Manager (or Certification Body Program Manager) responsible for overseeing all aspects of the RFM Fishery Standard accreditation. This representative shall have a thorough knowledge of the RFM Fishery Standard and the RFM Program by attending a formal training session operated by the CSC RFM team. In the event that this named representative leaves the employment of the Certification Body, the CSC shall be informed accordingly and provided with the name and details of his or her replacement within five working days.

**3.4 [Certification Body Management System](#)**

As part of the approval process, the Certification Body shall provide evidence to the CSC to show that it has a fully documented and implemented management system meeting the requirements of ISO 17065, including:

**3.4.1**

- a) A quality manual, which is available to all staff and subcontractors working on certification under the RFM Program;
- b) A detailed management review process to ensure continuous improvement;
- c) A documented recruitment procedure, that includes selection, initial training, ongoing training, and performance assessment for relevant staff and assessors;
- d) Document control procedures satisfying ISO 17065, including procedures for approval, re-approval, appropriate and limited distribution, and preventing unintended uses; and
- e) Policies and procedures in response to appeals and complaints.

**3.4.2 [The quality manual shall:](#)**

- a) Include a quality policy statement, defining management's commitment to achieving its certification quality objectives, and quality procedures,
- b) Describe the management of the certification process, including technical review and control of certification,
- c) Identify and document ownership, have a clear organizational structure, and define key procedural documents, job functions, responsibilities, and reporting relationships of staff engaged in delivering their certification services, and
- d) Establish procedures for preventing, identifying, and managing non-conformities in the Certification Body's operations.

### 3.4.3 The Certification Body must:

- a) Maintain comprehensive records demonstrating competency and impartiality for all staff involved in RFM certification, including certifications, training, experience, affiliations, and relevant relationships and associations.
- b) Develop and adhere to a detailed procedure for the selection and oversight of subcontractors and maintain a list of all approved subcontractors and documentation of their qualifications.
- c) Have resources to undertake the RFM Fishery assessment and certification services prior to entering into a contract with a potential applicant or existing member of the RFM Program for those services.
- d) Identify the staff members accountable for the maintenance of its quality system.
- e) Establish management review procedures and policies. Reviews must be conducted at least once every 12 months.

The Certification Body will develop procedures for actions taken in response to any non-conformities raised in a certification audit, to evaluate the effectiveness of agreed objective evidence presented, or corrective or preventative actions taken by the applicant.

The Certification Body will also develop procedures in relation to the use of the RFM Fishery certificate, rules for granting, suspending or withdrawing the certificate, and the actions taken by the Certification Body should a suspension or withdrawal be required.

## 4. Contractual Arrangements

### 4.1 Certification Body Contract Arrangements with the CSC

On approval, the Certification Body will be required to enter into a contract with the CSC providing the basis by which the Certification Body can undertake assessments against the RFM Fishery Standard for potential applicants. The contract will identify the terms and responsibilities of each party with respect to conducting third party accredited audits and the certification of applicants to the RFM Fishery Standard, but will not constitute a guarantee of certification business

### 4.2 Certification Body Contract Arrangements with Applicants

The Certification Body must enter a contract with the applicant prior to undertaking any assessment activity and certification reporting.

The Certification Body shall inform the CSC of the identity of each applicant within a period of one week of entering a contract for the provision of assessment services.

The contractual arrangement shall include the notification to the applicant of the requirements of the Certification Body to provide the applicant's information associated with the assessment and certification status, to the CSC.

#### **4.3 Certification Body Contractual Arrangements with Its Own Staff and Sub-Contracted Assessors**

The Certification Body shall have in place agreements with staff, Assessors (including subcontracted assessors) such that the Certification Body carries out Assessments:

- a) With all due skill and care and staff conducting themselves in a professional manner;
- b) In accordance with the RFM Fishery Standard;
- c) In accordance with any conditions attached to their Accreditation and only for the RFM Standard categories for which it is registered;
- d) Using only assessors who are approved and formally RFM trained to meet the competencies of the RFM Fishery Standard for undertaking such assessments; and
- e) In accordance with international best practice in third party assessment and auditing, which includes auditor code of conduct for impartial and ethical behavior.

#### **4.4 Provision of Certification Information to the CSC**

The Certification Body shall inform the CSC of all certification decisions within a period of 3 working days of notice to the applicant.

### **5. Certification Body Registration with Accreditation Body**

Any Certification Body wishing to carry out assessments against the RFM Fishery Standard must be accredited to ISO 17065 by a recognized Accreditation Body.

Should accreditation to the scope of the RFM Fishery Standard not be granted within 12 months of registration with the CSC, the Certification Body's approval with CSC may be invalidated and re-registration will not be permitted until the Certification Body is approved for assessments under the RFM Fishery Standard by a recognized Accreditation Body.

#### **5.1 Accreditation Status**

The Certification Body shall inform the CSC of any change in accreditation status, within 7 days of that change. The Certification Body shall not contract for or conduct any assessments or audits when its accreditation is suspended or limited with respect to certification under the RFM Fishery Standard.

#### **5.2 Scope of Expertise**

Certification Bodies must demonstrate that their staff and contractors have the knowledge and expertise to work within the specified fields of knowledge relevant to the seafood sector being assessed. Each assessor undertaking certification assessments must have the appropriate qualifications, training, experience, and skills to perform an evaluation against the RFM Fishery Standard. Certification Bodies must demonstrate that each assessor and sub-contracted assessor has been given approved training conducted by CSC for conducting assessments under the RFM Fishery Standard.

#### **5.3 Assessor Registration and Qualification Requirements**

The Certification Body shall maintain up-to-date records for each assessor showing compliance with the requirements for qualifications, training, and experience required under the RFM Fishery Standard

These records shall be made available to the CSC on request.

All Assessors must be able to report in the English language. Assessors must have formal education to a minimum agreed by the Certification Body and Accreditation Board. Assessors must have formal auditor training in relevant assessment techniques.

Assessors must have successfully completed a recognized training course for the RFM Fishery assessment techniques which includes:

- a) General knowledge of the RFM Program;
- b) Knowledge of relevant legislative requirements and regulations; and
- c) Knowledge and understanding of the specific fishery management processes.

A Certification Body training program for each new Assessor to the Program shall include an assessment of knowledge and skills for each field of evaluation and document of satisfactory completion of the training program.

#### **5.4 Certification Body Assessor Practical Evaluations**

Each newly trained assessor will need to be supported by and have fieldwork reviewed by an experienced qualified RFM lead assessor (Procedure 8, 5.2.1). All lead auditors shall hold ISO Lead Assessor qualification based on ISO 9001, ISO 14011 or 18001 or 19011 through an IRCA registered training body.

#### **5.5 Continued Training and Competency Monitoring**

The Certification Body must have in place an annual review program to maintain Assessor competence to the RFM Fishery Standard, fishery sector best practices and relevant laws and regulations.

An Assessor shall undergo additional training by the Certification Body whenever the RFM Team issues new versions of the RFM Fishery Standard, procedures, checklists, policies, or guidance documents.

Training and monitoring shall also include calibration across Assessors to the RFM Fishery Standard, which will include assessment report reviews and comparisons.

Training is to be provided to each Assessor wishing to maintain their active status at least once every two years.

#### **5.6 Conflict of Interest, Confidentiality, and Code of Conduct**

The Certification Body and the Assessors it employs must avoid any conflict of interest, or breach of confidentiality or ethics. The Certification Body is bound by contractual agreement with the CSC to abide by these requirements. The Certification Body shall also have signed agreements in place with all Assessors registered to assess against the RFM Fishery Standard. These agreements shall include, at a minimum, the following types of topics:

- a) Prohibitions against conflicts of interest;
- b) A requirement to divulge to the Certification Body any potential conflict of interest (such as prior consulting, prior employment, and the like) before undertaking an assessment, or that may arise during the assessment;
- c) A policy for the Certification Body to investigate notifications or incidences of potential conflicts of interest and to exclude the Assessor for a specific period where appropriate;
- d) Prohibitions against consulting for or soliciting consultancy or other types of work with an RFM Fishery Applicant prior to or during an assessment and during the certification process;
- e) Prohibitions against conduct or remarks that may, in the view of the CSC, disparage the program, program management or owner and related staff, certified facilities, or associated organizations, (including

Certification Bodies and Accreditation Boards); and

- f) Prohibitions against using or sharing confidential information from the applicants assessed.

Copies of these agreements shall be provided to the CSC upon request. The Certification Body and its Assessors will notify the CSC immediately of any potential breaches of these requirements. The CSC and the Certification Body shall formally discuss possible actions to address any potential breach known to either party.

#### **5.7 Subcontracted Assessor**

The Certification Body's obligations concerning oversight, training, and competencies contained herein apply to all approved Assessors whether staff or independent subcontractors.

The Certification Body shall not, at any time, use any subcontractor Assessors that have not been approved through the Certification Body assessor approval process.

#### **5.8 Specific Qualification Requirements for Certification**

Body's Staff Information on the relevant qualifications, training, and experience of each member of the staff involved in the RFM Fishery certification process shall be maintained by the Certification Body. Records of training and experience shall be kept up-to-date. These records shall include, at a minimum:

- a) Name and address;
- b) Organization affiliation and position held;
- c) Educational qualifications;
- d) Experience and training related to fishery management, assessment processes, assessment reports and corrective action evidence, and the RFM Fishery Standard

Staff used by the Certification Body to conduct assessor training, calibration, and competency reviews shall also demonstrate proper experience, training, and competencies as described above.

Records of Certification Body personnel training, experience, and competency shall be provided to the CSC upon request. The certification review committee shall be adequately staffed to ensure timely reviews and decision-making.

New assessor had fieldwork reviewed by a qualified RFM lead assessor

All lead auditors shall hold ISO Lead Assessor qualifications based on ISO 9001, ISO 14011 or ISO 18001 through an IRCA registered training body.

For further details about assessor's requirements please refer to RFM Procedure 8: Appointment and Control of RFM Assessors.



## 6. Communication

The CSC welcomes communication and information exchange with the Certification Body. The CSC will, from time-to-time, seek a Certification Body's input into the RFM Fishery Standard, related documents, and the assessment process.

The CSC recognizes the importance of accreditation during the development of all the RFM Fishery and Certification Process. The CSC will continue to liaise with all approved Certification Bodies and Accreditation Boards, when appropriate in the further development of the program.

The Certification Body must commit to the CSC that the following are satisfied:

- a) All offices that make certification decisions related to RFM Fishery Standard are duly registered with the CSC and with their Accreditation Board;
- b) Each Assessor is qualified to perform the assessment services on behalf of the Certification Body in accordance with the criteria set out herein and other related RFM Fishery Standard documents and has complied with all training and competency requirements;
- c) The Certification Body maintains an accurate record of the qualifications of each Assessor and the training undertaken by such Assessor;
- d) All factual information supplied to the CSC and/or the Accreditation Board
- e) by the Certification Body is, or was when given, true, accurate and not misleading;
- f) The Certification Body has the power and all necessary consents, licenses and registrations to conduct their business, and to enter into and perform the contract, with the CSC; and
- g) The Certification Body has read and understood and shall comply with their obligations and requirements as established in this document and other RFM Fishery Standard, Procedures, and processes.

## 7. Use of the Certified Sustainable RFM Logo

Use of the Certified Sustainable RFM logo is governed by a signed agreement between the CSC, Certified Applicants and registered Certification Bodies. The Certified Sustainable RFM logo is the property of the CSC.