

RFM Procedure 2: Application to Certification Procedures for the RFM Fishery Standard Version 2.1

Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) Certification Program

Fully Aligned to ISO 17065



RFM Procedure 2: Application to Certification Procedures for the RFM Fishery Standard

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1. Purpose

This document defines the procedures required by all fishery applicants wishing to apply for certification to the RFM Fishery Standard Version 2.1. These procedures ensure that all applicants are handled in a consistent, professional, and equitable manner. These procedures offer Certification Bodies a format that can be used wholly or incorporated into existing Certification Body procedures.

2. Scope

This document sets out the procedures for fishery assessments and awarding certificates against the RFM Program. It covers applications for certification under the RFM Program, commissioning of initial audits, notification of results to relevant parties, and surveillance activity.

The current RFM Fishery Standard is available on the RFM website. A 'Guidance to Scoring' has also been created which shall be used by Certification Bodies to ensure consistency. The current RFM Scoring Guidance is available on the RFM website.

3. Application to Certification: Outline Procedure

3.1 Inquiries and Applications

Upon receipt of an inquiry concerning certification from an eligible fishery by a 'CSC approved' Certification Body, the Certification Body will contact the potential Applicant directly to discuss primary terms of Application including:

- a) A description of the Applicant group;
- b) Unit of certification;
- c) Target species;
- d) Geographic regions covered;
- e) Catch methods/gear type;
- f) Principal management authority; and
- g) Certification timeframe.

The Certification Body shall ensure that it has the capacity and resources to carry out the assessment of the subject fishery and that the potential Applicant has been fully briefed on the expected or anticipated timeframe of evaluation.

These primary terms of the Application will be recorded and agreed upon by the potential Applicant and the Certification Body.

The RFM Program is built on the principle of 'One Fishery, One Certificate'. Any request of a potential Applicant or Client to split a fishery into multiple certificates must be agreed by the CSC Management Board prior to the Certification Body beginning an assessment of the fishery.

After agreement of the primary terms of the application, the Certification Body will send the following documents to the potential Applicant:

- a) An RFM Program Application Form;
- b) Certification Body Regulations;
- c) A copy of the relevant RFM Program documentation;
- d) Quotation for audit and estimated travel costs.

Only signed applications received on the RFM Program Application Form with an agreed payment schedule will be accepted by the CSC.

Upon the Certification Body's confirmation to the CSC of the receipt of the complete application and agreement on the payment schedule by the Certification Body, the application will be assigned the next sequential membership number.

The signed application constitutes a contract between the Applicant and Certification Body confirming the Applicant's commitment to abide by the relevant rules, regulations, and standards.

3.2 [Certificate Sharing](#)

The RFM program requires the certification body to incorporate the following into the contract between the Certification Body and its Applicants and Clients.

Certificate sharing is required in order to:

1. Prevent redundant assessments and associated burden on fishery participants and managers;
2. Encourage use of the RFM Program by allowing all eligible fishery participants to opt into the certification process and access fishery certificates; and
3. Ensure that the program reduces barriers to free trade and fosters market access.

Certificate sharing mechanisms are established and made publicly available by the Client and shall include cost sharing provisions which shall be applied fairly and equitably across all participants. Cost sharing shall be limited to costs associated with obtaining and maintaining certification, including

- Direct costs paid by the Client to a Certification Body,
- Direct costs incurred by the Client in managing or facilitating the assessment, reassessment, and annual audit processes and
- Cost of the Client's time spent managing or facilitating the assessment, reassessment, and annual audit processes.

Upon application by a fishery participant to a Client to access certificate sharing pursuant to the cost sharing measures specified by the Client, the Client shall have 10 working days to provide the applicant access to the certificate subject to the applicable cost sharing arrangements. Failure by the Client to provide timely access to the certificate shall result in withdrawal of the certificate by the Certification Body. Failure by the applicant to meet cost sharing requirements shall void their application and relieve the Client of the requirement to share the certificate with the applicant for a period of two years. If a fishery participant in the current certificate does not meet its cost sharing obligations, the Client group may inform the Certification Body to remove the non-paying participant from the certificate.

3.3 Application Validation

Application Validation occurs prior to Initial Assessments by the Certification Body. Application is optional. A Client may choose not to undertake Application Validation, instead proceeding to the initial assessment. Application Validation is required for all Applicants using the Data Limited Framework (See Appendix 1 for further details).

The results of the Application Validation will be recorded in a confidential Application Validation Report that documents the history and current status of the fishery and the Applicant's details, and reviews the general consistency of the fishery management relative to the North America RFM Fishery Standard's fundamental clauses (clauses 1-12, or for enhanced fisheries clauses 1 -13).

Objective:

The primary objective of Application Validation is to establish the feasibility of the Unit of Certification, gather information that supports the initial assessment of the fishery, and identify potentially challenges or issues that may prevent the fishery from achieving certification. The Application Validation Report is not intended to capture and assess all information required for a full assessment, but should provide confidence that sufficient evidence is available to allow a full assessment to take place. The Application Validation may include an initial site visit plan to:

- a) Confirm and document the organizational structure of the fisheries management entities involved in the fishery;
- b) Confirm and document the proposed Unit of Certification, management bodies, species, and geographic location of fisheries, gear types, and seasons. This information is used to assess and confirm the practicalities and feasibility of the assessment;
- c) Provide an opportunity to explain and clarify the main parts of the assessment process, the broad assessment timelines, and the Certification Body's contact point for information transfer to management organizations and fishery participants.
- d) Gather information on, and confirm broad fisheries management performance across key areas, with respect to the RFM Fishery Standard fundamental clauses (clauses 1-12 or, for enhanced fisheries, 1-13).

Validation Method:

Application Validation evaluations are led and arranged by the Certification Body and are allocated an experienced team of approved assessors with relevant knowledge and expertise for the given scope.

An on-site visit to the fishery may be required during Application Validation where direct discussion between the Certification Body with the Applicant and fishery management organizations are necessary to completion of the Application Validation Report. Site visit dates and schedules are organized by an approved assessor with agreement of the Applicant and fishery management organizations. Confirmation of the site visit plan and agenda is provided to all participants in the site visit.

Travel arrangements, including flights, hotels, and ground transportation, as required, will normally be organized by the Certification Body in discussion with the and Applicant.

3.3.1 Application Validation Method

The Certification Body shall inform the applicant of the purpose and objectives of the Application Validation process.

The Application Validation will identify all the fisheries management organizations responsible for the fishery. The Applicant shall disclose information requested to facilitate full Application Validation. The Application Validation evaluation shall be based on, but not restricted to, reviewing documentation. The need for site visits to a fishery is dependent upon the complexity of the fishery and the level of information available.

The Certification Body shall determine the issues that will be addressed, documented, and reviewed in the Application Validation, which shall include the following:

- a) General historical background information on the area of the fishery;
- b) Principal management authority governance, including policy objectives and/or relevant regulations;
- c) Fishery sector landings and the general economic situation of the fishery;
- d) Overview of the fishery to be certified, including management practices, scientific assessment of the stocks, and a clear definition of the unit of certification being proposed;
- e) Other relevant fisheries in the vicinity not subject to certification but that may interact with the fishery being assessed;
- f) External factors (such as environmental issues) that may affect the fishery and its management;
- g) A list of key stakeholders in the fishery and their special interests, to the extent relevant; and
- h) Information for any subsequent product Chain of Custody certification, to the extent relevant.

The Application Validation Report shall include the following:

- a) A review of the Applicant's ability to represent the fishery to be certified;
- b) An overview of the fishery management framework with an organizational plan of the principal management organizations, their roles and responsibilities;
- c) A pre-assessment of the extent to which the fishery is consistent with the RFM Fishery Standard's fundamental clauses (note that supporting clauses are assessed only during full assessment);
- d) A review of the availability of data in the various categories to be included;
- e) A determination of the overall scope of the full certification assessment;
- f) A description of potential obstacles or problems that may be barriers to certification;
- g) Identification of organizations and entities that will be important for review and engagement in the event of a full assessment; and
- h) Approval of the report by the Certification Body is forwarded to the applicant for consideration before proceeding to full assessment.
- i) A confidentiality statement reporting that the report is confidential and will not be disclosed to parties other than the Applicant.

3.4 Validation Assessor(s)

If decision is made to carry out the Application Validation, suitably qualified and RFM approved/trained Assessor(s) must conduct it. The Assessor(s) must possess the following competencies directly, or through sufficient information review, prior to undertaking the site visit:

1. Literate in the English language; and
2. Understand the key features of the fishery in application – biology, fishing gears used, geographic range, and key management agencies.

The decision to utilize more than one Assessor shall be based on the size, technical complexity and competency profile of individuals. Normally, large- scale fisheries that exist over trans-boundaries and multiple states shall require at least two Assessors. Where the Applicant's fishery is a relatively small scale, national or regional fishery, one Assessor may be appropriate, assuming the assessor has experience in all key areas reviewed in the

Validation Report.

3.5 Application Validation Report

The Application Validation report shall be completed and submitted to the Certification Body. The Certification Body Program Manager shall review the report and shall seek any points of clarification from the assessors.

The Certification Body must be satisfied that the Application is feasible prior to advancing to a formal and full assessment. Should the Certification Body have concerns with any aspect of the application or the findings of the Application Validation Report, these concerns shall be discussed with the Applicant prior to confirming the fishery is fit to undergo full assessment. In the case of data deficiency, assessment as a data limited fishery may be considered (see DLF Framework details in Appendix 1).

3.6 Initial Full Assessment

Prior to commencing an initial full assessment, the Certification Body shall appoint an Assessment Team with expertise in appropriate disciplines, sufficient experience, and recognized standing, to assess the fishery against the RFM Fishery Standard.

The Assessment Team shall include a Certification Body Lead Assessor who shall be responsible for oversight and completion of the assessment in accordance with Certification Body procedures.

The Lead Assessor shall meet the minimum competency and training criteria and shall be knowledgeable of the assessment procedures, and have verifiable experience in one or more areas of fisheries science and or management listed below.

Individual members of the Assessment Team must meet the requirements specified under Procedure 1. The Assessment Team, as a whole, shall have appropriate demonstrated technical expertise in the following areas:

1. Fish stock assessment—a team member must have at least 5 years' experience in the production or review of stock assessment methods relevant for the fishery (or fisheries) under assessment;
2. Fish stock biology and ecology—a team member must have at least five years of experience in the biology and ecology of the target, or similar, species;
3. Fishing impacts on aquatic ecosystems—a team member must have at least five years of experience in research policy analysis, or management of fisheries impacts on aquatic ecosystems and marine conservation biology;
4. Fishery management and operations—a team member must have at least ten years of experience as a practicing fishery or aquatic natural resource manager, or as a fishery or aquatic natural resource management analyst. A team member must also have a good understanding of the management systems used in the fishery under assessment;
5. Current knowledge—a team member must have an up-to-date understanding of the country, language, and local fishery context sufficient to support meaningful assessment of the fishery;
6. Audits and the RFM Program - a team member must have experience and relevant qualifications as lead auditor, and must have a good understanding of the RFM Program.

The Certification Body Program Manager shall ensure that the combined expertise of the appointed team covers all the required areas for full assessment. The fishery client shall have the right to object regarding the chosen Assessment team members, before appointment and contracting. Assessors shall be required to enter a contract with the Certification Body as provided for under Procedure 1.

3.7 Assessment Team Verification

The designated Assessment Team members shall be reviewed by the Certification Body Program Manager to ensure that they achieve the minimum acceptable assessor criteria.

The appointment of the Assessment Team shall be confirmed to the Applicant and communicated to the RFM Team so that it can be noticed on the RFM website, for the information of registered stakeholders and the public.

3.8 Stakeholder Registration

The RFM Program requires that Certification Bodies solicit stakeholder input during the full fishery assessment or reassessment and the surveillance audit process. Under a full assessment or reassessment only, once the Assessment Team is in place, the Certification Body will announce the commencement of the process and request all interested parties register as stakeholders.

Certification Bodies will request the following when registering stakeholders – name and contact information; association with the fishery; and issues of interest or concern. Registered stakeholders will be consulted during the assessment and will be sent the draft assessment report when the 30-day open comment period begins.

3.9 Assessment Team training, briefing, coordination and defining specific roles

Assessors will be briefed on the basis of their specific role in the Assessment Plan. Training and confirmation will be required for all appointed Assessors in the RFM Responsible Fisheries Management Certification Procedures, including the following:

1. Overview of the Responsible Fisheries Program;
2. Understanding of FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and FAO Guidelines for the Eco-labelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries;
3. Understanding of the RFM Fishery Standard;
4. Familiarization and confirmation of the RFM Fishery Standard checklists used for assessment purposes through review of previous reports; and
5. Overview and understanding of roles and responsibilities for carrying out the assessment.

The Certification Body Lead Assessor or Certification Body Program Manager shall conduct the necessary training and briefing of Assessors.

The Assessment Team will receive copies of the following documents:

- a) FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries;
- b) FAO Guidelines for the Eco-labelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries;
- c) Other relevant FAO based reference documents
- d) The Assessment Validation Report of the applicant fishery (if available);
- e) RFM Fishery Standard;
- f) RFM Fishery Standard Assessment template/checklist;
- g) RFM Scoring Guidance; and
- h) Training materials (PowerPoint presentation).

3.10 Assessment Plan

Prior to beginning an Assessment, the Certification Body Lead Assessor in consultation with the Assessment

Team shall prepare a Fishery Assessment Plan. The primary objective of the Assessment Plan is for the Assessment Team to specify the process under which the fishery will be assessed against the requirements of the RFM Fishery Standard. Key objectives of the Assessment Plan include:

1. Identification of stakeholders for engagement
2. Scoping of the requirements for on-site verification activities;
3. Defining and planning the desktop review;
4. Defining and planning the roles and activities of individual assessors;
5. Defining and planning the timelines and schedule for assessment.

The Assessment Plan is based on the Application Validation Report (if available), and general information concerning the state of the fishery, including the history of the fishery, management and oversight of the fishery, scientific information concerning the fishery, and local knowledge.

The Assessment Plan must specify the following:

- a) The Unit of Certification and Assessment Units;
- b) The roles of each member of the Assessment Team with respect to the review and assessment of information against the RFM Fishery Standard;
- c) A list of fishery participants participating in the site visit;
- d) A draft schedule and timeline for each part of the assessment, including site visits.

The Assessment Plan shall incorporate all the required elements to conduct a full assessment against the RFM Fishery Standard. In the case of a fishery undergoing full assessment through the Data Limited Fisheries (DLF) Framework, details of the required workshop shall be provided, as appropriate (see Appendix 1 for details on DLF Framework).

The Assessment Plan shall include a desktop assessment and site visit meetings. The balance of on-site activities and desktop assessment shall be agreed by the Assessment Team and will be derived from the Application Validation Report or other relevant fishery information;

The Assessment Plan shall include consultations with the registered stakeholders and may include, as applicable:

- a) The Applicant;
- b) Appropriate management authorities, institutions and agencies;
- c) Fishery associations or representative groups;
- d) Fishing vessel owners;
- e) Seafood processors; and
- f) Non-governmental Organizations.

The assessment plan shall, among other things, specify the minimum audit duration giving due consideration to all of the required elements of the assessment as described above.

3.10.1 Modified Assessment for Data Limited Fisheries

Depending on data availability and the findings of the Application Validation Report or other equivalent analysis, a fishery found to have data deficiency issues in areas related to 1) stock status, 2) associated species bycatch and 3) endangered, threatened, protected (ETP) species may be selected to undergo a modified version of the full assessment called Data Limited Fisheries (DLF) Framework. The RFM DLF Framework allows risk assessment of selected areas for which conventionally required information might be lacking, and for the production of valuable information that can be used as a substitute. Detailed procedural information on the DLF Framework can be found in Appendix 1 of this procedure. If there is no significant data deficiency in the three areas highlighted above, as defined by the evidence provided in the validation report, the fishery is required to undergo the standard full assessment, under the procedure detailed in this section.

3.11 Site Visit and Engagement

The Certification Body Lead Assessor subject to agreement of the Assessment Team shall produce the site visit plan. If applicable, the DLF workshop can be planned in connection with the full assessment site visits to allow for improved stakeholder access and attendance, and maximize the productivity of the time on site. The site visit plan shall be made public and normally take place as a single visit, but additional visits may be planned when further information is required. The requirements for information will be based on the outcome of the Validation Assessment Report or other background information and through contributions from the Assessment Team members.

Engagement with the stakeholders can take place throughout the assessment period, by in person meetings, e-mail correspondence, and telephone. A record log of all engagement meetings with the Applicant, fishery participants, and stakeholders must be maintained as part the procedures of assessment.

The term “site” refers to activities that the Assessment team conducts in the geographic region of the Applicant fishery, the Applicant, and stakeholders.

3.12 Desktop Review and Analysis of Information

Desktop review and analysis of fishery and fishery related information form a major component of the assessment. The review will specifically confirm the documentary evidence that fulfills the requirements of the RFM Fishery Standard. The review will take place against the RFM Fishery Standard Checklist and Scoring Guidance.

Each member of the Certification Body Assessment Team will be assigned responsibility through assessment planning, and assignment of specific section and supporting clauses for assessment. The RFM Full Assessment report template will be provided to each assessor in order to document the review in a consistent manner, in line with the standard.

Fishery Information:

Information types and sources include but are not limited to governing laws and regulations; management reports and other official documentation published or collected by the management authorities or official organizations (such as permits, landing records, and official catch records); and information, directly and indirectly received from the Client fishery, management organizations, fishery participants and associated entities, and through on-site interviews and witnessing of management processes.

Review activities may include evaluating scientific and statistical information concerning the status of the fishery resource, such as agency reports, stock assessments, and supporting research from management authorities or recognized scientific sources and organizations, including published scientific research or objective information from independent research produced by recognized institutions or otherwise credible sources.

Where possible, independent information should be peer-reviewed and published, although the Assessment Team must appropriately determine and weigh the validity and importance of information on the outcome of the Assessment. Information, either in printed format or contributed verbally at meetings, may also be used in supporting the general body of documented information and for verification of the conformance of the fishery to the RFM Fishery Standard.

The Assessment Team shall conduct desktop reviews of all available relevant literature, which shall be referenced within the appendix of the report produced. Desktop assessment shall include the following:

1. Management authority establishment legislation;
2. Management authority governance procedures;
3. Management authority reporting activities;
4. Management authority surveillance and enforcing activities;
5. Scientific stock assessment and advice;
6. International fishery stock assessment guidance (where applicable);
7. Published stock assessments conducted by third party organizations (where available); and
8. Information from non-governmental organizations.

Members of the Assessment Team are responsible for their own specific areas of assessment, including identification and sourcing of information and referencing of information used in the review and analysis. The Application Validation Report, if available, provides an initial list of fishery references and will be made available to each member of the Assessment Team.

3.13 On-Site Fishery Assessment

The site fishery assessment shall be conducted in accordance with the agreed plan; any required deviations from the plan shall be approved by the Certification Body Program Manager.

The site assessment shall take further opportunity, as necessary, to verify particular aspects of the assessment directly, through local consultation with fishery managers, the Client group, fishery participants, and relevant stakeholders. On-site meetings with management organizations also provide an opportunity for additional information to be gathered and verified.

The on-site portion of the investigation shall be communicated to all those identified in the plan as requiring an on-site meeting, preferably 30 days prior to the date requested. This period may be shortened with the consent of affected parties. The applicants shall be advised of all on-site activities.

A summary from each on-site meeting shall be documented in the Assessment Report, from both the Application Validation and the full assessment site visits, as appropriate.

3.14 Assessment Method

The Assessment Team will document the available evidence that addresses each RFM Fishery Standard Clause.

The fishery is assigned a confidence rating for each clause in the North America RFM Fishery Standard, which signifies the confidence of the Assessment Team that the fishery is demonstrated to be in conformity to the requirements of that clause.

To establish these confidence ratings, each Assessment Team member will work individually reviewing the evidence, assigning preliminary ratings, and drafting supporting rationales for the ratings for each clause in that member's subject area.

The draft rationales and preliminary confidence ratings produced by individual Assessors are compiled in the Assessment Report by the Certification Body Lead Assessor and circulated to all Assessment Team members for review.

The Assessment Team will review and collectively discuss the evidence-based rationales and preliminary ratings and agree on the final rationales and confidence ratings.

The Assessment Team review shall be convened and chaired by the Certification Body Lead Assessor.

A unanimous decision, wherever possible, shall be reached by the Assessment Team to score each of the clauses. In the event that the Assessors do not agree, scoring will be decided by a majority.

All ratings and rationales shall be clearly documented in the report for Peer Review, Public Comment, and Certification Committee consideration. The Assessment Team review may be convened in person or by phone.

3.15 Confidence Ratings and Assignment of Non-conformances

In the RFM assessment process, clauses of the fisheries standards are scored according to confidence ratings.

Confidence Ratings assigned by Assessors are defined as follows:

Critical Non-Conformance – Low Confidence Rating

Information/evidence is completely absent or contradictory to demonstrate conformance to a clause. Absence of information/evidence results in a low confidence rating. In these cases, a critical non-conformance is assigned.

Major Non-Conformance – Medium Confidence Rating

Information/evidence to demonstrate conformance to a clause is limited. In these cases, a major improvement is needed to achieve full conformance. A medium confidence rating with a major non-conformance is assigned. The assessment team will request further clarification of information with the Applicant (and collaborating fisheries management organization) to confirm the non-conformance. Where further substantive evidence is made available, assignment of either minor non-conformance or full conformance to a clause may occur. If more than one major non-conformance is found in any of the Key Components (A-D), assessment stops (applicant will not reach the next stage towards certification, the Peer Review stage) until evidence is made available to show a higher conformity level.

Minor Non-Conformance – Medium Confidence Rating

Information/evidence is broadly available to demonstrate conformance to a clause although there are limited gaps in information that, if available, could clarify aspects of conformance and allow the assessment team to assign a high confidence rating. In these cases, a minor improvement is needed to achieve full conformance. A medium confidence rating with a minor non-conformance is assigned. The assessment team will request further clarification of information from the Applicant (and collaborating fisheries management organization) to confirm the non-conformance. Where further substantive evidence is made available, the assignment of full conformance to a clause may occur. If more than three minor non-conformances are found in any of the Key Components (A-D), assessment stops (applicant will not reach the next stage towards certification, the Peer Review stage) until evidence is made available to show a higher conformity level.

Full Conformance – High Confidence Rating

Sufficient information/evidence is available to demonstrate full conformance to a clause. In these cases a high confidence rating is assigned. Sufficient evidence is that which allows objective determination by the assessment team that a fishery fully complies with a given clause in the RFM Fishery Standard.

Overall Assessment Scoring

RFM Fishery Standard clauses are categorized into four sections:

Section A – The Fishery Management System

Section B – Science and Stock Assessment Activities, and the Precautionary Approach

Section C – Management Measures, Implementation, Monitoring and Control

Section D – Serious Impacts of the Fishery on the Ecosystem

Any one major non-conformance or three minor non-conformances assigned to any Section A to D will result in the assignment of a critical non-conformance at section level.

A critical non-conformance for any clause or section will stop the assessment (i.e. the Applicant will not reach the next stage towards certification, the Peer Review stage), unless the Applicant (and collaborating fisheries management organization) is able to provide additional information/evidence that demonstrates no critical non-conformance for any clause or section.

The assessment will also be stopped prior to the Peer Review Stage, if a fishery is assigned 4 or more major non-conformances or 12 or more minor non-conformances in total.

The Application Validation Report activities are designed to determine if critical non-conformances within the Applicant Management System are likely before proceeding with full assessment. Notwithstanding this, the option of assigning critical non-conformances remains in the discretion of the Assessment Team.

Notwithstanding the overall level of non-conformances allowed before a full assessment is halted, all non-conformances shall be addressed through the issuance of corrective action plans, reviewed and accepted by the Assessment Team, prior to the fishery progressing to the Peer Review stage.

3.15.1 Evaluation Parameters and Numerical Scoring

The Lead Assessor shall ensure that the Assessment Team fully understands the scoring mechanism and guidelines below, before scoring each of the supporting clauses of the RFM Fishery Standard.

In the assessment process, each supporting clause of the North America RFM Fishery Standard is associated with scoring guidance to ensure continuity and consistency across fisheries and Assessment Teams. Scoring is based on a systematic approach to the assessment of the fishery against each clause using a series of Evaluation Parameters (EPs): Process, Current Status/Appropriateness/Effectiveness, and Evidence Basis. These are considered of equal importance and are scored numerically and using the categories defined above (full conformance; minor non-conformance, or major non-conformance; critical non-conformance). These EPs break down a clause using the performance related parameters below. Certification Bodies shall follow the scoring guidelines below for all clauses of the RFM Fishery Standard.

Process Evaluation Parameter

The Process Evaluation Parameter requires that evidence is provided outlining the process or system used by a fishery management organization to implement or maintain key aspects of fishery management practices, such as systems for data collection, laws and regulations, stock assessments, and enforcement. If evidence on the current process/system of a given process-based requirement is scarce or non-existent, then this Evaluation Parameter is not satisfied.

Current Status Evaluation Parameter

The Current Status/Appropriateness/Effectiveness Evaluation Parameter requires that the current status, appropriateness, or effectiveness of an element of fisheries management practices (depending on which one of these attributes is most relevant to a given clause) is demonstrated, such as data collected, results of stock assessment including stock status, and enforcement data. If evidence on the current status, appropriateness, or effectiveness of a given output-based requirement is scarce or non-existent, then this Evaluation Parameter is not satisfied.

Evidence Basis EP

The Evidence Basis Evaluation Parameter requires that the availability, quality, or adequacy of the evidence that is the base for scoring a given clause is assessed. If evidence availability (such as studies, reports, other data, and regulations) is scarce, low quality or non-existent, then this Evaluation Parameter is not satisfied.

The Assessment Team follows the guidelines below (see Figure 1) when scoring a clause:

- a) If all Evaluation Parameters are satisfied, the clause is scored in Full Conformance (with a High Confidence Rating).
- b) If one Evaluation Parameters (i.e., any) is not satisfied, the clause is scored in Minor Non-Conformance (with a Medium Confidence Rating).
- c) If two Evaluation Parameters (i.e., any) are not satisfied, the clause is scored in Major Non-Conformance (with a Medium Confidence Rating).
- d) If three or more Evaluation Parameters (i.e., any) are not satisfied, the clause is scored in Critical Non-Conformance (with a Low Confidence Rating).

Evaluation Parameter (EP)

Can be a Process, Status, or Evidence EP. Each (i.e., any) EP has the same numerical value of 3 across every clause. EPs form the key mechanics of the numerical scoring system.

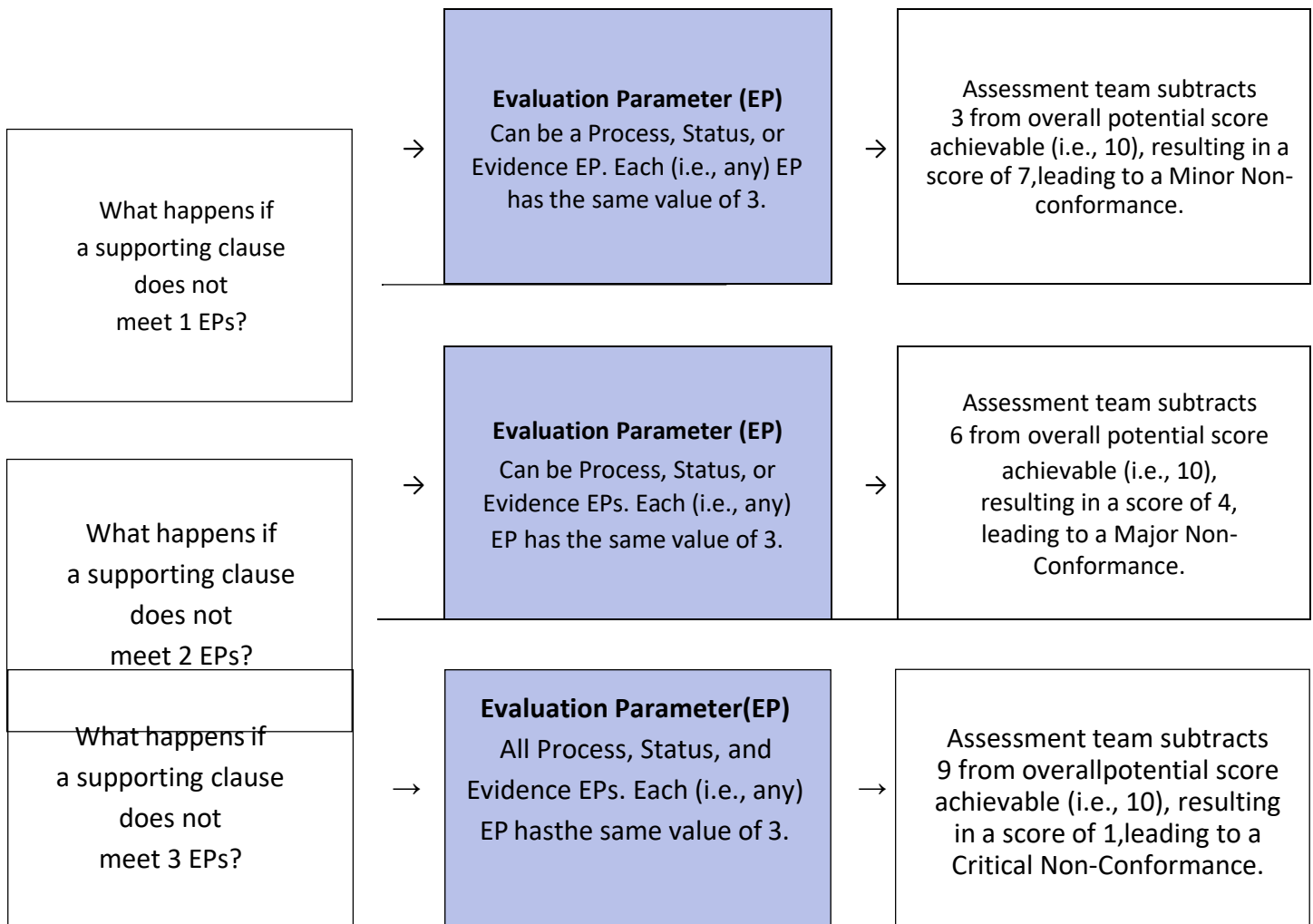


Figure 1. Scoring mechanics in the RFM V2.1 Standard. Each of the Evaluation Parameters has the same value of 3. Not meeting any 1 evaluation parameter will result in a score of 7 (i.e., minor non-conformance), not meeting any 2 evaluation parameters will result in a score of 4 (i.e., major non-conformance) and not meeting any 3 or more evaluation parameters will result in a score of 1 (critical non-conformance). This applies also to clauses that have 4 or more EPs as any 1, 2 or 3 EPs not met will result in the same NC level. Numerical scores apply only at the clause level and do not add up at the section level.

The Certification Body shall ensure through appropriate training efforts that all Assessors understand that for certain clauses, some Evaluation Parameters are not applicable. This is because not all clauses require the presence of a process (e.g., a formal procedure), and a few clauses do not require evaluation of the Status Evaluation Parameter, as the current status, appropriateness, and/or effectiveness may not apply. The need for evaluation is dependent on the construction and type of supporting clause and its requirements. In such cases, clauses may have two or more requirements that may need to be satisfied by the Status EP. All clauses require evaluation of the quality and adequacy of the Evidence Basis Evaluation Parameter.

The Evaluation Parameters are the key mechanics to be used for determining a score. The general guidance provided under each of the numerical scores and respective level of conformity refers only to the general way these statements have been constructed across the Guidance and Scoring document and carries no real weight, and do not factor or provide details in how to score a clause. Instead, assessment teams shall determine a score by addressing the Evaluation Parameters, a more objective and structured system to score each of the supporting clauses of the RFM standard.

3.16 Requests for Clarification

During the review process, Assessors may request from the Applicant clarification on issues within the assessment for which the current level of available information/evidence is insufficient to demonstrate a given level of compliance. Requests for clarification may be incorporated into the site visit.

3.17 Corrective Actions

The Certification Body shall send a letter of notification to the applicant detailing any non-conformances identified during the assessment. The applicant has 28 working days after receipt of the notice to submit to the CB evidence and/or corrective action plans to address the non-conformance. The evidence shall be submitted to the Certification Body Lead Assessor for review for either acceptance, rejection or further clarification. The Certification Body Lead Assessor's conclusion shall be reviewed by the Assessment Team. If the Assessment Team does not reach consensus concerning the need for and scope of corrective actions, a majority of the Assessment Team shall define correction actions.

Corrective action may consist of information that directly addresses the non-conformity with no further action required. Additionally, corrective action may constitute a Corrective Action Plan prescribing activities that the Applicant confirms will be implemented within a specific timeframe to address the non-conformity.

The Assessment Team shall review the Corrective Action Plan and determine its adequacy at meeting the requirements of the particular clause and the appropriateness of the timeframe to address the non-conformity based on the complexity of the non-conformity and the requirements to address it.

Depending on the nature of the non-conformance issues, corrective action may be planned over a longer period, but where corrective action takes longer than 12 months, milestones and targets must be included and progress toward completion reviewed during each annual surveillance audit. Except in extraordinary circumstances, non-conformances shall be closed within the lifetime of a Certificate.

In cases of non-conformities that can only be addressed through the cooperation and support of fisheries management organizations, actions of the fishery management organizations must be identified with specific tasks and activities to be undertaken. The Certification Body Lead Assessor must confirm directly with management organizations the existence of a formal agreement to undertake the tasks and activities identified under in the Corrective Action Plan.

The Applicant must formally sign off on the Corrective Action Plan and commit to supplying information and evidence of progress towards its implementation, as requested by the Certification Body Lead Assessor.

The Certification Body Program Manager shall review and agree to all Corrective Action Plans submitted by the applicant before proceeding to the next steps in the certification process.

Assessment Report Review

The Certification Body Lead Assessor shall prepare the Assessment Report. The Certification Body Lead Assessor shall review all evidence submitted by the Assessment Team to ensure that the Applicant meets the requirements specified in the assessment plan and Assessors have completed their duties in accordance with Certification Body requirements.

3.18 Peer Review

The Certification Body shall arrange for the draft Assessment Report to be reviewed by a minimum of two peer reviewers considered to be competent in relevant aspects of fishery resource research and management necessary to technically evaluate the content of the Assessment Report.

Peer reviewers shall be appointed according to Certification Body procedure.

The Certification Body shall notify the Applicant and CSC RFM Team of the designated proposed peer reviewers.

The Certification Body shall agree with the peer reviewers on a timeframe for the peer review process and submission of feedback from the peer reviewers.

Peer reviewers shall be briefed in the review process and provided with a Peer Review Template and Guidance document, to be used to formally report their work.

Upon receipt of the peer reviewer's reports, the Assessment Team shall consider each comment and issue raised and responds in writing. The Assessment Team may incorporate any appropriate changes into the Assessment Report based on peer review comments. The peer review reports and Assessment Team response to the peer review comments shall be formally documented in their entirety, in the final Assessment and Certification Report.

3.19 Assessment Report Contents

The Assessment Team will prepare the Assessment Report for public comment. The Assessment Report released for public comment shall contain the following major items:

1. Identification of the Unit of Certification it considers;
2. The recommendation for certification of the Assessment Team;
3. The background, history, status, and management of the fishery;
4. A summary of the conformance of the fishery to the RFM Fishery Standard;
5. The detailed rationales and evidence ratings assigned by the Assessment Team against each clause;
6. Non-conformances identified and corrective action plans; and
7. Peer review reports and responses to peer review comments from the Assessment Team.

The Applicant shall be provided with an opportunity to question the Assessment Team concerning its findings, which may be revisited by the Assessment Team.

Any comments made by the Applicant, and responses from the Assessment Team, shall be documented and retained by the Certification Body.

3.20 Public Comment Period

Following the peer review stage, the full Assessment Report with peer review comments will be placed on the Certification Body website for a period of 30 calendar days to allow for comments by registered stakeholders. All comments will be made to the Certification Body.

Within 30 calendar days of the end of the comment period, the Certification Body Assessment Team will review and respond to all relevant comments and revise the Assessment Report, as deemed necessary.

A final Assessment Report will be compiled which will contain all the comments submitted and their outcome. If the Assessment Report recommends certification, the final Assessment Report will be submitted to the Certification Body Certification Committee for its consideration.

3.21 The Certification Committee Stage

The Certification Body's Program Manager or Administrator shall convene a Certification Committee Meeting with members of appropriate competence. Such competence shall be recorded on the certification meeting minutes along with statements in respect to conflict of interest.

The Certification Committee shall have members who are competent in relevant aspects of fishery resource management, as needed to technically evaluate the content of the full Assessment and Certification Report. The Certification Committee shall also have representation from members with competence in certification activities.

3.22 Certification Decision

There are three possible Certification outcomes:

Certify: The Certification Committee accepts the Final Assessment report, the peer reviewer's comments, and evidence submitted by the Client concerning non-conformances and corrective actions. The Committee may set additional requirements on the fishery with respect to non-conformances raised and based on peer review comments.

Defer: The Certification Committee is unable to reach a unanimous decision due to substantial concerns raised by the committee or the adequacy of corrective actions that may require further information from or additional actions to address non-conformances by the Applicant. The Certification Committee may agree to review the file again following submission of further information from the Applicant.

Reject: The Certification Committee concludes that the fishery does not meet the RFM Fishery Standard and cannot be certified based on the evidence submitted and their concerns cannot be resolved by setting conditions on the fishery.

3.23 Notification of Certification Decision

The Certification Committee will notify the Applicant in writing of its decision within 10 working days of the Certification Committee meeting. The notice will include notification of any conditions or non-conformance requiring corrective action and the time scale for completion. A copy of this correspondence will be held in the Applicant's file. A summary of the Certification Committee meeting will be included in the Assessment and Certification Report.

If certification is contingent on acceptance of conditions or resolution of non-conformances, Certificates will not be issued until the Applicant has accepted conditions and provided an action plan to resolve non-conformances within the time scale specified in the Assessment and Certification Report. The Assessment Team, the Peer Review Team and subsequently, the Certification Committee must approve any such plans.

3.24 Complaints and Appeals

Applicants or registered stakeholders can Appeal against a Certification Body's decision using the RFM Appeals and Complaints Procedure (Procedure 7).

The complaints are initiated with the Certification Body following the Certification Body's own procedure for handling complaints and appeals in accordance with ISO 17065. If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the Certification Body, the complaint can appeal to the RFM Fishery Standard Appeals Board.

Complaints that are verified by the RFM Fishery Standard Appeals Board will be communicated to the Certification Body and to their Accreditation Body. Only the Certification Body and their Accreditation Body have the ability to reverse a certification decision.

3.25 Certificate Issue

On receipt of the agreed accepted certification decision, the formal certificate may be issued to the client by

the Certification Body.

The certificate shall specify the following:

1. Name and Address of Certification Body
2. Name of Accreditation Body (when applicable)
3. Name of Standard Holder
4. Applicant's name and address;
5. Unit of certification;
6. Management authorities;
7. Species;
8. Geographic region;
9. Gear types;
10. Issue date (the certification decision date);
11. Surveillance date (annual);
12. Expiration date (five years less a day from the issue date);
13. Any corrective action plans and timescales for resolution where applicable (annexed to the certificate); and
14. List of fishery participants within the client group.
15. Signature of Certificate issuing Officer

Certificates shall be valid for a period of 5 years, after which period a full reassessment must be undertaken, to be concluded within the period of validity of the RFM Program certificate if the client wishes to maintain uninterrupted certification. The Certification Body may extend the length of the certificate for just cause (see section 6 below).

The Certificate is the property of the Certification Body and is issued subject to the Client complying with the Certification Body's general rules and regulations, a copy of which is provided with the certificate. The Assessment and Certification Report shall be sent to the Applicant and published on the RFM website.

4. Fishery Surveillance Audits

To ensure that a certified fishery remains in compliance with the requirements of certification, surveillance audits will take place at least annually and more frequently, if deemed necessary by the Certification Body. Audits may be undertaken on short notice (i.e. unscheduled audits), if deemed necessary by the Certification Body.

4.1 [Surveillance Audit Methodology](#)

Surveillance audits shall be planned and be completed within a target eight weeks window of the anniversary of the date of initial certification (as specified on the client certificate). The surveillance audit may consist of two parts:

1. a desktop review of the documentary evidence in the form of reports and published information available since the initial certification or previous surveillance audit
2. an on-site visit for auditing the unit of certification fishery.

Desktop reviews are the preferred assessment vehicle. In general, on-site audits are required only if the Certification Body deems that a desktop review may be inadequate for determining whether the fishery is continuing to comply with the RFM Fishery Standard, based on the performance of the fishery, status of non-conformances and related corrective actions.

Prior to a desktop review (and prior to any site visit), the Assessment Team shall request the Client to provide any known updates and changes in the management of the fishery relevant to assessing the continued compliance of the fishery with the RFM Fishery Standard and copies of relevant available reports. If deemed necessary by the Certification Body, an on-site audit shall be organized in agreement with the Client, to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to each visit and that all relevant management organizations are included in the visit. On-site visits can be conducted by one or more Assessors. Assessor approval shall be according to the RFM program criteria. If on completion of a desktop audit, the Certification Body determines that an on-site audit is merited, the Certification Body shall proceed to organize an on-site audit in agreement with the Client.

4.1.1 Surveillance Audit Additional Guidance

It is recommended that the work product of the pre-assessment for the 5th year recertification serve as the foundation for the fourth surveillance audit. It is anticipated that the 4th surveillance audit be conducted as a desktop audit unless the Certification Body determines an on-site audit is merited.

4.2 Surveillance Audit Focus

Surveillance audits are summary audits intended to evaluate continued compliance with the RFM Fishery Standard focusing on:

- a) Compliance and progress with non-conformances and agreed action plans;
- b) Changes in the management regime and processes that may affect the outcome of certification;
- c) Changes to the organizational responsibility of the main management agencies that form part of the fishery management framework;
- d) New information on the status of stocks from recent surveys and assessments,
- e) Significant changes in the ecosystem effects of the fishery (e.g., bycatch, discards, ETP species interactions, gear habitat interactions)
- f) Violations and enforcement information, and
- g) Other information that may affect the outcome of certification.

The Certification Body shall establish an agreed upon surveillance plan with the Client for the certified fishery, including surveillance of any items identified for surveillance in and any corrective action activities from the initial certification report and subsequent surveillance audit reports.

Registered stakeholders may submit information relevant to the audit.

4.3 Surveillance Assessment Report

Surveillance reports are summary reports in the form of the 'RFM Surveillance Report' template including:

- a) Client contact details, unit of certification, and confirmation that there are no changes or updates to the unit of certification;
- b) Surveillance report number (1, 2, 3 or 4) and date of the report;
- c) Summary findings and recommendations for continued certification, suspension or certificate withdrawal;
- d) Dates of any site visits to the Client or management organization and a summary of those audits;

- e) An update on key features of the fishery (including catches), and any new fishery developments since certification; and
- f) A statement of consistency to the fundamental clauses of each section A-D of the RFM Fishery Standard including an update on any relevant changes in the fishery.

Updates shall be based on information available since the latest assessment including:

- a) Consideration of the scientific advice and management actions on the stock and other information relevant to continued compliance with the RFM Fishery Standard;
- b) Changes to the management regime, particularly those that have potential to change the effect of the fishery on resources;
- c) A review of the performance of the Client specific to agreed corrective action plans to address non-conformances in the initial certification and subsequent surveillance summary reports;
- d) A list of non-conformances that remain unresolved, new non-conformances revealed in surveillance, and non-conformances that are resolved;
- e) Details of any revision or resolution of a corrective action plan, an update of remaining non-conformances (including a summary of progress toward resolution) and proposed surveillance activities, if surveillance is less than annual;
- f) Client-signed acceptance of the action plan;
- g) After presentation of the surveillance summary report for certification, the outcome of the surveillance assessment shall be specified in a separate section; and
- h) A list of references and supporting information used in the audit reporting.

Upon completion of the Surveillance Assessment Report the Certification Body Program Manager will convene a meeting of its Certification Committee to review the report.

4.4 Assessing Progress Against Corrective Action Plans and Observations

Assessors shall audit compliance progress and performance with respect to agreed corrective action plans. Compliance with the plan shall be assessed and reported within the Surveillance Assessment Report. The failure of progress to attain targets will be documented in the report for review by the Certification Committee.

The Certification Committee's review may result in additional requirements including:

- a) A revision in action plans and timelines;
- b) A requirement for new corrective actions to be implemented;
- c) Immediate resolution of non-conformances; or
- d) Suspension of the certificate until such time as the specified requirements are fulfilled.

4.5 Limited Re-Assessment

If the Certification Body identifies issues that have the potential to affect the continued compliance of the fishery with the RFM Fishery Standard, then a limited re-assessment may be initiated. The Certification Body shall notify the Client in writing of its intention to conduct a limited reassessment and the rationale for doing so. Pending completion of the limited re-assessment, the Certification Body may elect to suspend the certificate through its Certification Committee following the procedure set out below.

The limited re-assessment shall be conducted according to assessment and surveillance procedures, with a scope needed to assign a confidence rating to clauses that are potentially non-conforming. The re-assessment

report shall be specific to the clauses at issue and shall fully establish the conditions, non- conformity confidence rating, corrective action plans, and outcomes with respect to the certification status recommendation.

If a client refuses to undertake a limited re-assessment or fails to provide sufficient information for limited re-assessment, the Client's certificate will be suspended pending potential withdrawal.

4.6 Suspension or Withdrawal of Certificate

If at any time Certification Body determines that the fishery no longer meets the requirements for certification, the Certification Body shall suspend the certificate for the fishery. A Certification Body shall inform the Client in writing of its intention to suspend the certificate, with a written rationale for its decision.

The Client shall be given 28 calendar days to provide further information in respect to the decision of suspension. The Certification Committee shall review this information determine whether the fishery is continuing to comply with the requirements for certification under the RFM Fishery Standard.

If, after the 28-day period, the Client fails to provide further information demonstrating that the fishery complies with the requirements for certification under the RFM Fishery Standard, the Certification Body shall notify the Client of its intention to withdraw the certificate and the Client shall have 14 calendar days in which to appeal the decision of the Certification Body. If the Client fails to appeal the decision of the Certification Body within the 14-day period, the certificate shall be withdrawn and any unreturned certificates shall be invalidated.

If, at any time, the Certification Body determines that the fishery meets the requirements for certification under the RFM Fishery Standard (including through the use of corrective action plans as permitted), the suspension or withdrawal shall be terminated and the certificate reinstated.

4.7 Certification Files

The Certification Body Program Manager or Administrator will review the Applicant's file within 30 calendar days of the any Certification Committee decision to ensure that all record files, forms, minutes and certificates are in place. The following records, relative to audits and certification decisions, will be maintained, either as hard copy or on electronic file:

- a) File checklist;
- b) Application form;
- c) Assessor and peer review contracts;
- d) Assessment validation report, if appropriate;
- e) Site visit schedule confirmation letter;
- f) Assessment plan;
- g) Audit report forms / peer review template;
- h) Letter detailing non-conformances, where applicable;
- i) Response from applicant on corrective actions;
- j) Letter notifying applicant of certification decisions by Certification Committee;
- k) Relevant certificate or acknowledgement Letter; and
- l) Minutes of certification meetings.

5.0 Transfer of Certification Bodies

Clients are permitted to transfer certificates to any 'CSC approved' Certification Body.

Clients must inform the Certification Body that holds its certificate and CSC, in writing, of a decision to change Certification Body at least three months prior to a scheduled surveillance audit to ensure that there is adequate time for this transition.

The new Certification Body must liaise with the existing Certification Body and the Client to ensure a transfer of all relevant information and the formation of a suitable Assessment Team.

Relevant information may include any outstanding financial considerations and any outstanding non-conformances and corrective action plans. The new Certification Body will conduct the Surveillance Audit under the standard procedures for surveillance audits and will issue a new certificate on the successful completion of the surveillance audit. The outgoing Certification Body will then recall the certificate of the fishery.

In the event that the surveillance audit by the new Certification Body determines that the fishery no longer complies with the requirements for certification under the RFM Fishery Standard, the new Certification Body shall follow the process for suspension and withdrawal of certificates set out above. In the event that the Client has failed to demonstrate that the fishery continues to comply with the requirements for certification under the North America RFM Fishery Standard after all opportunities for appeal, the new Certification Body shall notify the outgoing Certification Body, who shall withdraw the certificate of the fishery.

Any Certification Body receiving a certificate by transfer shall review the previous assessment and surveillance audits to ensure that the fishery meets the requirements for certification under the North America RFM Fishery Standard.

The transfer of a certificate shall not affect the timing of either surveillance audits or recertification of the fishery (except as permitted by certificate extensions).

6.0 Certificate Extensions

An RFM Fishery Certificate can be extended beyond the term for surveillance audits or recertification by a Certification Body for just cause. Extension requests will be accepted or rejected after a formal written request has been made to the Program Manager.

The Certification Body will initiate the request to the Program Manager after appraising its technical merit, providing its rationale for extension with the request. The RFM Team will review the request and respond to the Certification Body in writing. An Accreditation Body's review of a Certification Body's compliance with the RFM Certification Program will include a review of any extension requests.

The Certification Body will endeavor to ensure that a Surveillance Audit is carried out on the fishery on an annual basis (12 months) regardless of any extension requests.

Possible bases for a certificate extension may include:

- Adoption of a new RFM Standard Version by the Client
- A change in Certification Body by the Client
- Logistics of Data and Information Collection
- After an extraordinary event has been declared by CSC RFM Program Holder

7.0 Scheme Changes Affecting Certification

In the event that there is a significant change proposed to this program, CSC shall notify all Certification Bodies, who then must inform their Accreditation Body.

Upon receipt of the findings of the Certification Committee, the client may formally request an assessment of the feasibility of amending the Unit of Certification.

The Certification Body will undertake this feasibility assessment. The outcome and risk assessment of implications will be validated by the Certification Committee. The feasibility report and validation determinations will be copied to the applicant.

If the unit of certification can be amended without affecting the integrity of the standard or program, the applicant will be informed. If in agreement, the Certification Body will ask the applicant to return the original certificate, and the applicant will be issued with an amended certificate stating the specifics of inclusion and exclusion of the amended unit. There is no alteration to the date of expiration on the certificate.

The applicant is required to inform all relevant parties that the unit of certification has been amended and to ensure that companies certified to the Chain of Custody Standard are informed and directed as to the proper and approved use of certification claims and logo on the product and associated marketing.

The next surveillance audit will be against the amended unit of certification.

Appendix 1. Data Limited Fisheries (DLF) Framework

A1.1 Introduction to the DLF Framework

The RFM Program's Data Limited Fisheries (DLF) Framework is an addendum to the RFM Scoring Guidance and has been designed for use by Assessment Teams in cases of data limited fisheries as defined in Sections 3.5 and 3.9.1.

The DLF Framework uses a modified but equivalent risk assessment framework for three key clauses of the RFM Standard. The framework used is known as the Productivity Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) (as modified by Patrick et al. (2009) and previously used to evaluate 166 U.S. fish stocks (within 6 fisheries) that had varying degrees of productivity, susceptibility, and data quality).

The PSA evaluates an array of productivity and susceptibility attributes for a stock, from which index scores for productivity and susceptibility are derived. The resulting vulnerability to overfishing score (1 = low and 3 = high) is used as a proxy score for the three selected key clauses. All other clauses in Version 2.0 of the Standard are scored using the default system and information derived from the DLF can be used, if appropriate and as required, to address evidence needs of various other clauses in the RFM Standard. In this respect, the DLF Framework offers an alternative for addressing up to 3 clauses of the RFM standard in data limited situations.

The DLF Framework assumes that the fishery has minor deficiencies in data, not major gaps, and is designed to assess the vulnerability of the target stock and associated bycatch or ETPs and determine whether the risk is low medium or high. Low risk is acceptable. Medium or high-risk findings may result in one or more non-conformances, which may be address through corrective action plans.

The DLF framework provides information specific to stock status and depletion risk using a risk analysis. In this respect, the DLF substitutes for the traditional assessment, Assessment Teams should note that data limitations may not equate to poor management. Data limited fisheries can be responsibly managed using precautionary management measures (e.g. reduced harvest rates), which require less data. The DLF framework provides Certification Bodies with a structured approach to assess the risk that a fishery is impacting the stock under consideration or associated bycatch species, including ETPs.

The DLF relies heavily on consultation with fishery stakeholders through information-gathering workshops, as well as other data and information available from the fishery.

A1.2 Validation or other preliminary assessment of the fishery

When a data limited fishery from North America applies for Certification under the RFM Program, the Assessment Team will prepare an Application Validation Report. In that process, the Applicant and the Certification Body will discuss whether to utilize the DLF framework for identifying the fisheries adherence to the requirements of the RFM Fishery Standard, as well as areas in which the fishery may face challenges meeting the requirements for certification to fulfill the initial pre-assessment reporting requirements.

If key areas in the fishery are revealed as data limited (i.e. not assessable with available data) then a modified assessment can be utilized to address those shortcomings, using the DLF framework. The DLF framework provides for a risk assessment of clauses that require specific data and information concerning 1) the stock under consideration, 2) associated bycatch species (including retained and discarded catch), and 3) Endangered, Threatened and Protected (ETP) Species.

The DLF framework cannot address issues other than risks to 1) the stock under consideration, 2) associated bycatch species (including retained and discarded catch), and 3) Endangered, Threatened and Protected (ETP) Species. The DLF does not offer any means to successfully address other gaps in information requirements for certification, including habitat or specific ecosystem type impacts (e.g. food-web interactions). Coverage could be extended to these issues in future versions of the RFM standard (e.g. Version 3.0).

Before a fishery is approved for assessment against the DLF Framework, the client must communicate the proposed course of action (i.e. pursuing the DLF Framework route) to CSC to gain approval. This step is implemented to ensure that only applicable fisheries can enter the DLF Framework, while other fisheries go through the default assessment methodology, thus ensuring fair and consistent standard application. CSC shall then provide formal Notice of Approval to the Applicant and the Certification Body, which shall be posted on the CSC website, prior to continuing with the assessment to allow interested stakeholders to attend the DLF workshop.

A1.3 Stakeholder Notice and Workshop Preparation

The Certification Body shall organize a workshop to receive input from key stakeholders.

Key stakeholders include:

- Client;
- harvesters/processors;
- industry representatives;
- fishery scientists;
- fishery managers;
- other experts;
- NGOs and other informed stakeholders.

The Certification Body shall contact the key stakeholders and request their participation in the workshop in a notice that includes the venue and date of the DLF workshop.

The function of the DLF workshop is to complete a risk assessment for the fishery under consideration and other stocks (e.g. bycatch and ETP species) for which data deficiency has been identified.

The key stakeholders meet to ensure that the best available expertise and information are used (including available quantitative and non-quantitative information) for the PSA.

The workshop shall be scheduled to accommodate full discussion of the stocks at issue considering the complexity of the fishery, data availability concerning the stocks under consideration (including associated species and ETPs). The PSA tool shall be applied independently to each data limited stocks at issue, including associated bycatch species and two ETP species.

Prior to the DLF workshop, the Certification Body shall prepare a draft of the PSA tables for distribution to workshop attendees. The draft tables shall include information collected in the Application Validation report (as modified to meet the pre-assessment reporting requirements) and initial research for specific information on the productivity and susceptibility attributes of the stocks undertaken by the Certification Body, Applicant, and other key stakeholders, as appropriate. The Certification Body shall provide the draft tables to identified stakeholders at least 10 days prior to the DLF workshops. The DLF is a risk assessment framework, therefore, the participation of fishermen, industry operators, scientists, managers, experts and other informed stakeholders is required during the workshop to ensure the best available information is reported in the PSA tables.

A1.4 Integrating Full Assessment Site Visits and DLF Workshop

A Certification Body may coordinate the site visits required for a full assessment with the DLF workshop. This coordination may maximize stakeholder attendance, overall information collection, as well as minimizing the site visit time and the assessment costs.

If the DLF workshop is coordinated with site visits required for the assessment, the Certification Body shall take care in allotting sufficient time to conduct both the DLF workshop and site visits. Coordination of these meetings with other public meetings (e.g., management body meetings) relevant to the stocks under consideration may facilitate attendance and access to a larger spectrum of stakeholders.

A1.5 The DLF Workshop

The Lead Assessor shall participate in the DLF workshop, to lead the discussion of the PSA analysis.

At the workshop, input from stakeholders shall be solicited concerning each productivity susceptibility attribute for each relevant stock, including associated bycatch species and ETP species. Written evidence and references for each of attribute' will be included in the report of the workshop to allow for review of the information in later stages of the certification process (including Peer Review).

A1.6 Workshop management and requirements for PSA evidence collection

To ensure complete unbiased information is derived from the workshop, the Certification Body shall endeavor to reach a consensus for each of the attributes scored in the PSA among workshop participants. If consensus cannot be achieved, the best source of information shall take precedence in scoring a given attribute. Alternatively, the most conservative attribute scores will take precedence.

Where possible, data proposed for the productivity and susceptibility attributes will be derived from scientific studies, agencies reports and in the case of severe lack of information, professional expertise (or more informal sources such as fishermen knowledge).

At the end of the workshop, all PSA scores shall be calculated and the overall results shared with the DLF stakeholder group.

A1.7 Workshop results

The scores in the PSA table will be finalized at the end of the workshop so that all parties can be aware of the performance of the fishery as scored under the DLF Framework.

This process is intended to allow for a more consultative and precautionary approach to scoring the stocks under assessment. For critical and major non- conformances, the Certification Body will follow standard procedure and develop corrective action plans.

A vulnerability score of between 1 and 2.5 will result in a full conformance. A score between 2.5 and 2.75 will result in a minor non-conformance. A score between 2.75 and 3 will result in a major non-conformance. A score of more than 3 will result in a critical non-conformance.

A1.8 Minimum assessable clauses under the DLF Framework

The Certification Body shall apply the DLF Framework to provide risk assessment vulnerability scores for any of the three separate classes of stocks/species

1. the stock under consideration,
2. associated bycatch species (including retained and discarded catch), and
3. Endangered, Threatened and Protected (ETP)].

A DLF assessment should be undertaken when any of these classes of stocks is recognized as data limited. Any stocks for which adequate information is available for a standard assessment shall be assessed through the standard process.

A1.9 Merging into the default assessment procedure

The workshop defines the final vulnerability scores for the fishery assessment for the DLF stocks. All other aspects on the fisheries (including stocks with sufficient data) will be assessed under the standard procedure, which will include the required site visit, production of draft full assessment report, scoring meetings, potential assignment of non-conformances depending on assessment findings, review of corrective action plans generated by the client, peer review stage, and certification stage.

A1.10 Certificate

For fisheries that undergo the RFM DLF Framework, the certification will represent the finding that the fishery meets the RFM program requirements, but will specify that due to data deficiency, the fishery has undergone a modified assessment under the DLF framework. In this respect, certificates issued by the Certification Body for DLF fisheries shall state:

“The xxxxx fishery has been subject to “an advanced risk assessment/evaluation of selected data limited areas”

A1.11 Annual Surveillance

Annual Surveillance audits for fisheries certified under the DLF framework shall be conducted under the standard procedures with additional surveillance as specifically provided for in this section.

The surveillance assessment team shall examine fishing or management practices, management actions or data availability that may affect the PSA scores previously assigned to the stock under consideration, associated species catch, and ETP species.

If significant changes occur that may affect some of the productivity and susceptibility attributes for one or more stocks, the assessment team shall revise the PSA analysis and derive new vulnerability scores. The modified tables shall be discussed with the client and the relevant management organization. The Certification Body shall report all changes in the PSA scoring to the CSC RFM Team with its report of the surveillance audit.

If the vulnerability scores present a higher risk level, the Certification Body shall follow standard procedure for the development of corrective action plans and consideration of whether the fishery continues to satisfy the requirements for certification under the North America RFM Program.

A1.12 Re-certification

In the case a fishery which has undergone full assessment through the DLF framework and progresses through the 5 years of the certificate's lifetime, the fishery can undergo a modified assessment using the DLF Framework during a re-assessment provided the fishery shall have shown some sign of improvement over the previous 5 years, to demonstrate that data collection, conservative management practices, or precision in the derivation of harvest limits and recommendations.