

RFM Procedure 3: Certification Body Approval for Chain of Custody Standard

Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) Certification Program
Fully Aligned to ISO 17065



**RFM Procedure 3 Version 5.2: Certification Body
Approval for Chain of Custody Standard, October 2024**

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1. Purpose

This document provides a comprehensive overview of the requirements for Certification Bodies seeking to become approved for the Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) Chain of Custody (CoC) Program.

2. Certification Body Registration of Intent

A Certification Body must be accredited to ISO 17065 by an Accreditation Body that is an International Accreditation Forum (IAF) member and Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) signatory to another internationally recognized program to be eligible to register for initial RFM Chain of Custody recognition.

Eligible Certification Bodies must first register their intent to apply by contacting the Certified Seafood Collaborative (CSC) RFM Program Manager, in writing or through email.

3. Certification Body Pre-Application Review

In anticipation of the application process and before submitting an application, Certification Bodies are advised to carefully review the program information on the CSC website and its requirements in order to determine whether they can fully meet the minimum competency, resources, and geographic requirements of the program.

The following list of base requirements should assist Certification Bodies when determining their potential for approval:

- a) Seafood and supply chain expertise and competency;
- b) Sufficient numbers of assessors in appropriate locations that have the proper seafood and supply chain competencies to conduct RFM Chain of Custody assessments;
- c) Sufficient numbers of Certification Body staff with seafood and supply chain competency in geographical locations suitable to properly manage certifications under RFM Chain of Custody Standard;
- d) Sufficient numbers of Certification Body staff and resources to ensure the integrity of assessments, to witness the approved assessors, to review and critique assessment reports, and to review corrective action within the time frames required by the RFM Chain of Custody Program;
- e) Management commitment and organizational competence to maintain the integrity of the RFM Chain of Custody Program and to sufficiently respond to applicants and the CSC in a timely manner.

4. Certification Body Application

Certification Bodies wishing to apply to CSC to become an approved Certification Body of the RFM Chain of Custody Program shall submit an application package. The application package must include a formal letter of application addressed to the CSC RFM Program Manager, as well as a minimum of the following supporting documents (all written in English):

- a) Organizational chart(s) of the applicant's organization;
- b) Copy of the Accreditation Certificate under ISO 17065 (including the scope of the certificate) for each Certification Body office seeking RFM Chain of Custody recognition; and
- c) Copy of a valid liability/indemnity insurance certificate with a minimum value of 2 million USD;
- d) Documented procedures that demonstrate how the applicant Certification Body will ensure impartiality and prevent conflicts of interest of Certification Body assessors and sub-contracted assessors;
- e) Documented procedures that demonstrate how the applicant Certification Body and all personnel participating in the certification process will safeguard the confidentiality of all information obtained in the process of certification activities;
- f) A list of Certification Body locations, relevant phone numbers, key contacts concerning the RFM Chain of Custody Program, and the roles and competencies of the key personnel, assessors, and sub-contractors at each location;
- g) Documented procedures for assessor and subcontracted assessor training, oversight, performance tracking, and calibration;
- h) Documented procedures for the technical review of assessment reports, non-conformities, and corrective actions;
- i) Documented procedures for making certification decisions;
- j) Documented procedures in relation to the use of the RFM CoC Certificate, rules for granting, suspending or withdrawing the certificate, and the actions taken by the Certification Body should a suspension or withdrawal need to take place;
- k) Documented certification procedures and guidance for multi-site (Group) certifications where applicable; and
- l) A defined fee range that the Certification Body will charge applicants for certification services to the RFM Chain of Custody Standard.

5. CSC Application Review

Final approval of a Certification Body application is at the discretion of the CSC Board. The CSC RFM Team will review only complete Certification Body applications, as described in Section 4.0 Certification Body Application of this document.

The RFM Team may request further documentation from the applicant Certification Body or request clarifications to allow determination of qualifications of the applicant. Failure on the part of the applicant Certification Body to follow up and provide the requested information may result in the rejection of the Certification Body's application.

The RFM Team will review each application to determine whether the applicant meets the qualifications for administration of RFM Chain of Custody Certification and provide written notice of its determination.

6. Certification Body Approval and Notification

An approved Certification Body, prior to contracting to perform any assessments under the RFM Program, must enter a Contractual Agreement with CSC agreeing to meet the following RFM Chain of Custody requirements:

- a) All approved assessors must successfully complete an RFM Chain of Custody Standard assessor course (with training materials supplied by the CSC).
- b) At a minimum, one management person (who may also be an assessor) for each approved office involved in the operation of the program must successfully complete an RFM Chain of Custody Standard assessor course;
- c) Certification Bodies must successfully complete the required training/ witnessing assessor Certification Body approval procedure in a timely fashion, prior to allowing an assessor to become approved for assessment and provide the CSC with updates on assessor progress and all final approvals.
- d) All approved assessors must have met all approval criteria of the RFM Chain of Custody Standard, Procedure 8 and the Certification Body.
- e) Procedures for reporting to CSC the assessment schedules for each program assessor must be in place.
- f) Relevant documentation must be in place to demonstrate the competency, training and calibration of all CB staff who will participate in the RFM CoC Program.”
- g) Process for extending the scope of accreditation to include the RFM Chain of Custody Standard in their accreditation status within 18 months must have been initiated; and
- h) A letter from the Certification Body's Accreditation Body confirming that an application was made to extend the scope of recognition to cover the RFM Chain of Custody Standard must be provided to the CSC.

7. Certification Body Compliance

Once an applicant Certification Body is approved, the Certification Body is required to comply with all requirements, policies, and procedures that are currently stated in the RFM Chain of Custody Program, as well as, all future amendments and revisions to the program. The CSC will notify the approved Certification Bodies regarding any amendments or revisions made to the program.

Approved Certification Bodies must agree to provide on-going access to information, staff, and sites as required by RFM Chain of Custody Standard Certification Body performance assessment and monitoring.

As a part of the CSC's annual management review of scheme performance, an approved Certification Body may be advised of any failure to meet the requirements of the RFM Program and remedial actions to address those failures. At its discretion, the CSC may apply sanctions for a failure to meet program requirements, which may include suspension or withdrawal of approval of the Certification Body.

8. Extension of Scope of Approval

Certification Bodies wishing to extend their scope of approval to additional RFM Standards, such as RFM Fishery Certification, must separately register their interest with the CSC. The process for extending scope of approval is the same as for initial registration.

RFM Procedure 1 describes the process for approval of Certification Bodies for the RFM Fishery Management Standard.

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 Standard; or an extension of the current scope of its ISO 17065 accreditation to include the RFM Standard.

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

The Certification Body will be allowed an agreed amount of certification activity to allow for accreditation to be facilitated. A Certification Body in the accreditation evaluation process can issue non-accredited certificates.