

Supply chains combine to test certification schemes

SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

A new benchmarking tool offers the chance to test where certification schemes sit against international standards

The Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI) has launched its new Global Benchmark Tool, which has been welcomed as an important advancement for the international seafood trade. The tool aims to build confidence in sustainably certified seafood and help seafood buyers make informed purchasing choices.

The benchmarking tool was officially launched as part of celebrations for the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

In recent years the number of certification schemes in seafood production has massively increased, posing considerable challenges for all players in the supply chain. GSSI seeks to provide a remedy. Its benchmarking tool is the first collective and non-competitive approach to provide clarity about seafood certification worldwide, and the first assessments are expected to be completed before June 2016.

The initiative was conceived in 2013 when seafood companies, non-government organisations, experts, and governmental and intergovernmental organisations joined forces to build confidence in certified seafood programs across the supply chain.

Thirty-two companies, including the FRDC, are currently backing GSSI as funding partners, together with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit and the Dutch Sustainable Trade Initiative. This includes some of the world's leading seafood wholesalers, processors and retailers, with several of the participating buyers already committing to sourcing seafood that uses certification schemes benchmarked by GSSI.

The GSSI is also supported by five non-profit affiliated partners, including the FAO and the World Wide Fund for Nature.

The benchmark tool was the result of an extensive multi-stakeholder discussion focusing on three reference documents: the Code of Conduct

for Responsible Fisheries, the FAO Guidelines for Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine/Inland Capture Fisheries and the FAO Technical Guidelines for Aquaculture Certification.

The GSSI Global Benchmark Tool will be used to make information available across the supply chain to drive change and lower costs. Producers will have more options to choose the scheme that is right for them and reduce the need for multiple audits. Seafood buyers worldwide will then have simpler, more consistent data to guide their purchasing decisions. The tool will also work towards minimising the environmental impact of seafood production to meet a growing demand. Open and checked information helps promote environmental sustainability.

The tool aims to make the certification

landscape more straightforward as schemes sign up to be benchmarked and achieve GSSI recognition.

The GSSI Expert Working Groups spent time implementing a pilot test with eight schemes that included worldwide stakeholder feedback and a second round of public consultation.

Participate

The GSSI is inviting seafood certification schemes to go through the benchmarking process and become GSSI-recognised. The aim is that by 2020, 30 per cent of seafood production will be certified in accordance with a recognised scheme.

The post-2015 business model and future strategy are being developed. New partners are being invited to join this global public-private partnership, and have the opportunity to work on this leading knowledge-exchange initiative and collaborate on topics shaping the future of the seafood sector. **F**

The GSSI Global Benchmark Tool is available at <http://ourgssi.org>.

The Benchmark Process

