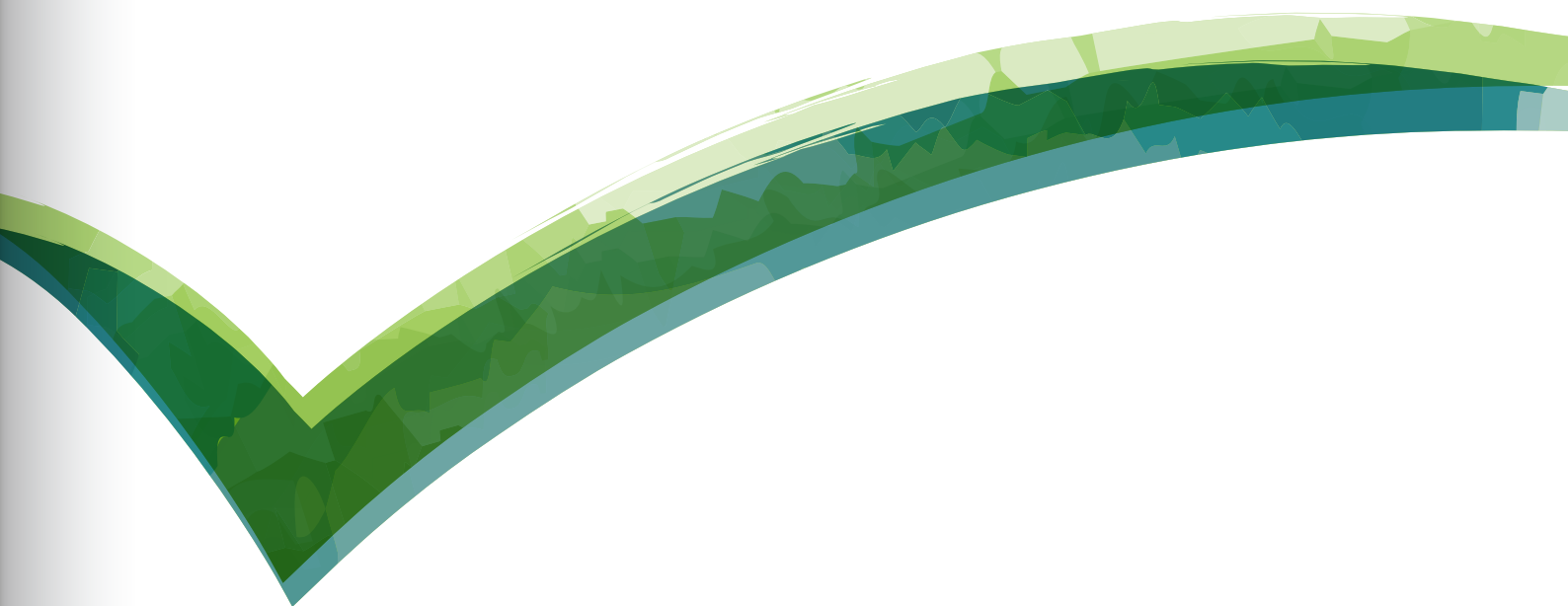


BIM Responsibly Sourced Seafood

AN OVERVIEW TO THE RSS SCHEME

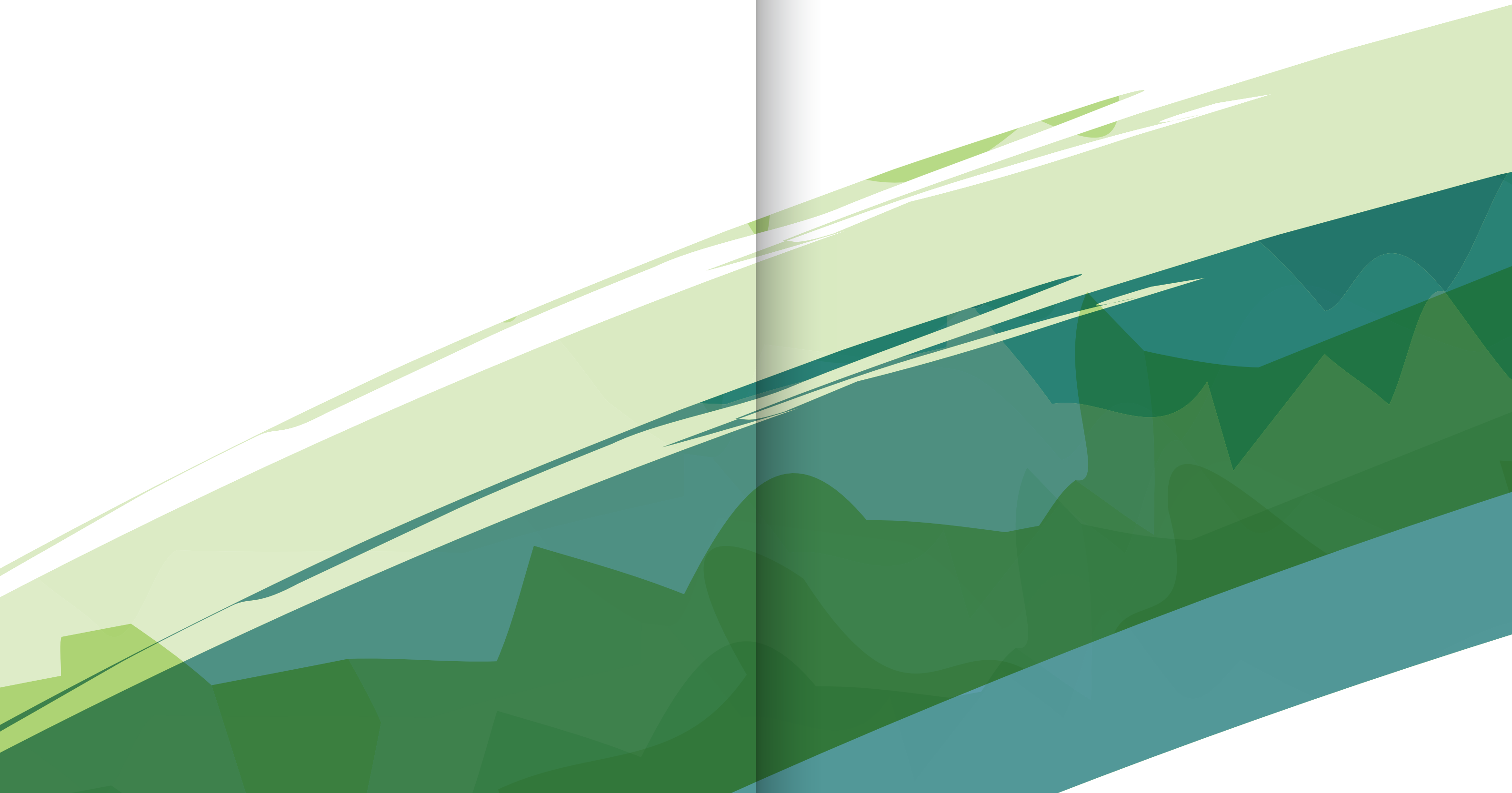


CONTENTS

1. Introduction	5
1.1 Development	6
1.2 Overview of the RSS scheme	7
1.3 Objectives	8
1.4 Benefits of Certification	8
1.4.1 For Vessels	8
1.4.2 For Onshore Facilities	8
1.4.3 Linkages to Origin Green	9
1.5 Normative References of the Standard	9
1.6 Definitions	9
1.7 Cautionary Notes	9
2. Scheme Rules and Procedures	11
2.1 Scope and Membership	12
2.2 Database Information	12
2.3 Eligibility	13
2.4 Control and Monitoring	13
2.5 Structure of the Standard	14
2.6 Application, Audit and Certification	15
2.7 Complaints and Appeals	17
2.8 Notifications of Change of Application Status	17
3. Meet your RSS Team	18
3.1 RSS Team Members Contact Details	19

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION



1.1 Development

Bord Iascaigh Mhara's (BIM) Responsibly Sourced Seafood (RSS) scheme provides the fishing industry and the consumer of wild caught Irish seafood with a 'Certification of Good Practice'.

The system is designed to promote consumer confidence in the fishing methods used by Irish fishermen and those who handle Irish fish, from the time of capture to the point of sale.

The RSS Standard was developed by a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprising representatives from BIM, the Marine Institute (MI), the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA), industry representatives (fishermen, co-operatives, producer organisations and processors), Bord Bia, NGOs and standards and certification experts. The TAC was supported by a number of technical working groups.

1.2 Overview of the RSS scheme

BIM's Responsibly Sourced Seafood Standard comprises of two integrated elements – a "Fishing Vessel Standard" for Irish fishing vessels and an "Onshore Handling & Quality Standard" for intermediaries through to the supply chain.

Together, they comprise a product certification system that is accredited by the Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB) and audited by independent, third party certification bodies to the internationally recognized ISO/IEC 17065 standard. During the independent audit, the applicant's compliance with legal, quality and customer requirements that relate to fishing opportunities (fish quotas), fishing operations, food safety and traceability is checked.

The Fishing Vessel Standard is built around four pillars – Responsible Fishing Practices, Care of the Catch, Traceability & Provenance and Training, Welfare & Social Sustainability. In the context of Irish registered fishing vessels these pillars are derived from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisations' Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and from other European and international best practice initiatives.

The Onshore Handling & Quality Standard comprises certification criteria for onshore intermediaries such as fishing co-operatives and processors to demonstrate a commitment to the responsible sourcing of seafood and chain of custody through traceability back to certified vessels. Traceability and proof of provenance are the cornerstones of an assurance to buyers and consumers that products originate from vessels certified under the Responsibly Sourced Seafood Standard. The objective of the chain of custody is to preserve the identity of seafood that originates from a vessel certified to this standard throughout the supply chain, allowing it to be positively identified by the buyer and consumer.

Overview of the RSS Scheme



1.3 Objectives

The primary objectives of the Responsibly Sourced Seafood system are:

- To demonstrate stewardship of the marine environment and quality focused production;
- To demonstrate environmentally responsible fishing practices;
- To assure the quality and provenance of seafood in both the domestic and export markets;
- To advance the participation and co-operation of applicants in the provision of data towards a deeper understanding of the social and economic conditions of the fishing industry;
- To advance improved scientific knowledge;
- To further equitable, safe and appropriate working conditions on board fishing vessels and onshore intermediaries in the supply chain.

Applicants are encouraged to have an operational document management and record keeping system:

- To provide a means to document environmental performance;
- To drive continual improvement in fishing practices;
- To demonstrate evidence for sustainability initiatives;
- To facilitate audits through documenting supporting information in an easily accessible format;
- To build up a time series of supporting information that shows continued compliance with the criteria of the standard.

1.4 Benefits of Certification

1.4.1 For Vessels

Today's consumers demand to know where their food comes from, how it is obtained and what has happened to it prior to purchase. Good practices by the fishing industry must be communicated to the wider public through a trustworthy and understandable scheme. The standard aims to achieve this by providing documented evidence of care for the product, consideration for the environment, evidence of the origin of the product and the creation of a safe working environment for the skipper and crew of fishing vessels. This raises the profile and reputation of Irish fishermen and fish products, both nationally and internationally.

For a vessel owner and crew, the standard allows their catch to be certified as responsibly sourced. The current trends in international retailing are to grow the range of products on offer to be obtained from responsible and sustainable sources. This system helps vessels to meet these retail demands, giving best possible market access for the products caught.

Certification options within the Irish Industry to achieve Sustainability Certifications include e.g. Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) as well as engaging with Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) or equivalent. The RSS standard assists vessels meet their individual commitments as part of these schemes.

1.4.2 For Onshore Facilities

For onshore intermediaries, third party certification to recognised standards is becoming a pre-requisite in almost all food markets. Certification allows suppliers to demonstrate that they supply safe, legal products of consistent quality. Whilst international standards are recognised (e.g. BRC) they may not always suit small scale producers. The BIM Responsibly Sourced Seafood Onshore Handling & Quality Standard allows operators of all sizes to achieve internationally recognised third party certification. Through the standard, Irish seafood suppliers can demonstrate that their products are certified to internationally recognised accredited criteria from point of capture to finished product.

1.4.3 Linkages to Origin Green

Many international retail chains demand sustainability credentials as part of their supplier approval requirements. All food and drink companies, including seafood, can apply to Bord Bia's Origin Green Sustainability scheme. Origin Green applicants use this internationally recognised Bord Bia scheme to communicate their own sustainability initiatives. BIM's Responsibly Sourced Seafood scheme compliments Origin Green. In developing Origin Green plans, seafood companies set targets around their raw material sourcing and operational impacts. As part of each plan, companies are asked to source from suppliers with recognised certifications such as the Responsibly Sourced Seafood Fishing Vessel Standard or broader sustainability measures. The RSS system provides an accredited, independently certified raw material supply source as part of these plans.

1.5 Normative References of the Standard

The standard incorporates the key legislative requirements relevant to commercial fisheries and food businesses. In addition to these documents it is recommended that applicants consult other best practices guidelines and legislation referenced in Appendix 1 of the full standard document.

This standard is based on the requirements of existing legislation and standards including:

- European Fisheries Legislation (including Regulations (EU) No 1380/2013, (EU) 1379/2013, (EC) 850/98, (EC) 1224/2009);
- European Food Hygiene Legislation (including Regulations (EC) 178/2002, (EC) 852/2004 and 853/2004);
- ISO 17065 (2012) Conformity assessment - Requirements for certification bodies certifying products, processes and services;
- Other European and codes of practices as set out in Appendix 1.

Note: compliance with this standard does not guarantee compliance with relevant European or national legislation.

1.6 Definitions

The main definitions associated with the standard are provided in Appendix 2 of the full standard document.


1.7 Cautionary Notes

BIM are owners of the BIM Responsibly Sourced Seafood Standard and scheme. The content is copyright of BIM. All rights reserved. BIM prohibits any modifications or changes to the content of this document whatsoever.

Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the standard, BIM cannot accept any responsibility for errors or omissions.

BIM is not liable for any costs or potential or estimated loss of earnings resulting from having to comply with any criterion of this system or in regard to the consequences of being found to be in breach of any legal requirement.

The official standard shall be the current standard. Members of the scheme should be aware of the current version and revision number of the standard. When future changes occur, updates will be issued as revision numbers in whole or in part to all applicants and certified members.



SECTION 2

SCHEME RULES & PROCEDURES

This section contains information on joining and becoming certified to the standard. It is important that applicants take sufficient time to read and fully understand this section.

2.1 Scope and Membership

The standard applies to the catching, handling and sale of wild seafood products. Membership of the scheme is open to all registered fishing vessels and onshore intermediaries registered with the competent authorities.

2.2 Database Information

A database indicating the status of all certified fishing vessels and onshore intermediaries will be maintained by or on behalf of the standard owner.

The Certification Body records all relevant/applicable data during the audit process. All data is maintained on a confidential basis on the database in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

The database performs a number of functions:

- To record details of the applicant that permits them to be contacted for audit purposes (name, address and phone numbers, operating port in the case of fishing vessels);
- To record the details of the applicant's activity (e.g. type of vessel, species targeted, gears used, species processed etc.) as relevant to the quality assurance criteria;
- To record the results of the audits carried out by appointed auditing personnel and communicating those results as needed to the applicant;
- To record metrics and/or measurable results of any of the audit criteria or voluntary objectives;
- To create an opportunity for aggregating data from the membership to communicate key messages on the competitiveness, sustainability and socio-economic value of the seafood sector.

It is envisioned that a selection of the above information, without compromising confidentiality, as well as certificates of verified members will be made available on the BIM web page in the near future. The BIM online presence will aid RSS members in communicating successfully with markets.

2.3 Eligibility

Application for certification under the standard is open to all registered vessel owners and registered onshore intermediaries that are in compliance with the legislation relevant to commercial sea fisheries.

Where applicants have been convicted of an offence under legislation relevant to commercial fisheries, application for participation in the scheme may be denied and certification under the scheme may be terminated based on an evaluation by the Certification Body (see also Section 2.7 Complaints & Appeals).

In addition, if, during the period of validity of the certificate, a member is convicted of such an offence, they are obliged to advise BIM and the Certification Body. In such cases certification may be revoked after investigation. Failure to inform BIM and the Certification Body of a conviction will also be deemed as not having met the conditions of membership.

2.4 Control and Monitoring

BIM reserves overall rights on decisions affecting the content and operation of the scheme.

BIM have delegated responsibility for overseeing and maintaining the standard to a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC comprises of industry, market, state and stakeholder parties providing a balance of expertise and interests that meets periodically to oversee the technical content of the standard and any proposed amendments.

Monitoring of compliance with the standard will be carried out by auditors appointed by BIM or its nominated agents. Independent auditors with relevant experience of the seafood sector will carry out these audits and a full report will be issued directly to the applicant or member.

After initial certification is awarded, each fishing vessel or onshore intermediary will be independently audited at determined intervals as detailed in Section 2.6.

BIM (or its appointed agents and Certification Body) reserves the right to carry out unscheduled audits for the purpose of verifying compliance with the standard or to determine that corrective/preventive actions identified during the audit are in place. Failure to allow access for such audits may result in the suspension of the vessel or onshore intermediary from the scheme.

The onus of responsibility for compliance with the standard is on the scheme applicants and members and not on BIM or the Certification Body.

2.5 Structure of the Standard

The standard is divided into background information, mandatory criteria that must be met in order to become certified and a series of Continual Improvement Objectives which follow the relevant audit area. Over time, as appropriate, some of these may be made mandatory criteria as part of future updates to the system.

Mandatory criteria for the Fishing Vessel Standard are set out under points 3.1 to 3.5 of the full standard document.

Mandatory criteria for the Onshore Handling & Quality Standard are set out under points 4.1 to 4.4 of the full standard document.

Compliance with these criteria will be assessed and is required to be eligible for certification under the standard as a certified vessel/onshore facility.

For any Continual Improvement Objective chosen, a voluntary target can be identified. Applicants should set a target(s) to measure performance related to the objective chosen. The identification of targets will also help identify progress/performance that will be measured. Targets can define an overall desired result while letting the applicant determine how to achieve that result. A target is a detailed measurable indicator of performance, preferably quantifiable, related to that objective and time specific. Targets can help identify how progress/performance will be measured. A Continual Improvement template table containing examples can be found in Appendix 3 of the full standard document.

All this information will be used to provide feedback to the applicant and can also be compiled at an aggregate level for benchmarking and communication purposes.

The Appendices give guidance and provide template formats for forms identified throughout the standard. They also outline reference information of key Irish and EU legislation relating to applicants' responsibilities or signposted to the statutory authority with responsibility for updating legislation and monitoring industry compliance. This is not intended as a definitive list of all relevant legislation and does not replace any applicable statutory requirement. It is the duty of each applicant and/or member to keep fully up to date with all legislation and legislation changes relevant to their fishing activity and onshore responsibilities.

BACKGROUND

Text in the blue box sets out the context of the criteria in the sub-section and this is presented for information purposes only.

CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES

The green text sets out a list of objectives identified as an overall list with an uppercase letter and number as follows: CI 1- CI 43 for fishing vessels and CI 1- CI 14 for onshore facilities. Data and information can be presented either during the visit or collated in a data management system which will permit aspects of Environmental Performance, Sustainability Initiatives or Best Practice to be monitored and measured by the applicant thus demonstrating continual improvement and information on the targets met. While compliance with these objectives is not required for certification, it is recommended that at least 3 Continual Improvement Objectives are selected.

2.6 Application, Audit and Certification

Applicants to the RSS Fishing Vessel Standard are required to enter into a two year review process to achieve and maintain certification.

- Year 1- All Vessel applicants undergo a full audit, upon successful certification a certificate with two year validity will be issued and the following applies;
- End of Year 1- All Vessel applicants undergo a surveillance audit;
- End of Year 2 – All Vessel applicants re-apply and undergo a full audit.

The audit will involve, in every case, an inspection of the fishing vessel.

Applicants should note that the standard includes specific requirements of product quality that applicants must achieve. Therefore, the fishing vessel audit and surveillance audit will involve a review of the quality records for the vessel.

Applicants for the Onshore Handling & Quality Standard will be awarded a certificate valid for one year following successful certification.

All applicants are required to meet all mandatory requirements of the applicable standard before certification can be achieved.

Stage 1 - Request for Application

Applicants can request information from either BIM or the Certification Body. If applicants are considering seeking grant aid for certification, they must contact BIM directly for information on this process prior to audit.

An applicant can be a vessel or a group of fishing vessels or an onshore facility.

Applicants are advised to carry out a pre-assessment against the relevant standard in order to ascertain their readiness for external audit.

Stage 2 - Application Submission

To progress to a full application interested parties will be requested formally to provide a completed application form to the Certification Body on their operation(s).

In the case of a fishing vessel or group of vessels the application shall include the scope of operations, including main species, for which they require certification.

For an onshore facility, the application shall include scope of operations comprising raw material sourced from registered vessels, or raw material sourced from first point of sale/agents for which they require certification.

Using the information provided, the Certification Body will construct an audit plan specific to each applicant.

The Certification Body will provide the applicant with an audit cost based on the information provided in the application form.

The application will move into the audit process once the audit date has been agreed by the applicant and full payment for the associated audit has been received. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the information supplied during the application process is factually accurate and complete.

Stage 3 - Audit

The Certification Body will appoint an auditor who will carry out the audit.

Each audit will be carried out against the appropriate standard in line with the audit plan and audit checklist.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that there is access to the vessel or premises, access to relevant crew or staff members and access to relevant documentation for the vessel or premises, including access to relevant compliance reports from regulatory authorities such as the Sea Fisheries Protection Agency.

The Certification Body's auditor will carry out the audit in an independent, impartial, professional and courteous manner.

For the Fishing Vessel Standard, an audit will be conducted on board every two years. In the intervening year, a surveillance audit will be conducted, which will include a review of relevant information such as seafood quality reports.

For the Onshore Handling & Quality Standard, the audit will be carried out annually.

Stage 4 - Audit Report

The auditor will complete an audit report setting out how each applicant does/does not meet the mandatory requirements of the relevant standard. Specifically, the audit report will identify any nonconformities specific to a requirement. These will be communicated to the applicant during the audit and summarised at the end of the audit.

Applicants will be required to close nonconformities through the submission of corrective actions within a specific timeline and these must, subsequently, be accepted by the auditor prior to the Certification Body awarding certification.

Stage 5 - Certification Decision

The applicant's audit report and any necessary corrective actions will be submitted to the Certification Body for a certification decision.

The certification decision is made by persons with similar competence to the auditor and with expertise in certification.

Stage 6 - Certification Process

Where certification is awarded, certificates will be issued within 10 working days after the decision date. In the event that this cannot be achieved, the Certification Body will formally notify the applicant with reasons for the delay.

The Certification Body maintains responsibility over the validity of the certificate. Figure 1 below summarises the certification process.

Stage 7 - Surveillance and Audit Review Period (Vessels Only)

Under the terms of the requirements of the standard, a certified vessel is subject to a surveillance audit at the end of year 1 at a pre-arranged date. If a certified vessel fails to provide sufficient evidence to satisfy the surveillance audit then the vessel may be subject to a full audit, and certification may be immediately suspended or withdrawn.

The following information shall be reviewed as a main part of the surveillance audit and a surveillance report subsequently provided to the certification committee:

- Operational details;
- Previous Certification Report;
- Records;
- Vessel Registration, License;
- EU Approval number for freezer/factory vessels and
- Review of Seafood Quality Reports.

Certification is maintained where there is substantive and demonstrable evidence that the applicant remains in compliance with the criteria of the standard. Any non-conformity raised must be closed with objective evidence submitted within the specified timescales. At the end of a two year cycle a reapplication and full audit is required.

Note: For certified onshore facilities, a full audit every year is required in order to maintain certification.

2.7 Complaints and Appeals

The Applicant has the right to complain with regard to the audits or any other aspect of certification under the RSS system. All complaints must be made in writing or by email to the Certification Body. All such complaints will be acknowledged and investigated by the Certification Body.

The applicant has the right to appeal the certification decision. Appeals should be made in writing or by email within ten working days of the certification decision. Appeals should be made to the General Manager of the Certification Body.

The request to appeal will be acknowledged within ten working days and followed up by the General Manager of the Certification Body in accordance with their appeals procedure in conjunction with BIM, separate from the auditor and the original certification decision. The decision of the Certification Body on the appeal will be final.

A full response will be provided by the General Manager of the Certification Body.

2.8 Notifications of Change of Application Status

The Certification Body is to be informed within 10 working days in writing or by email if any substantial changes occur to the applicant's vessel or onshore facility, product or management system, or if relevant enforcement orders are issued against them. Notifiable changes include, but are not limited to:

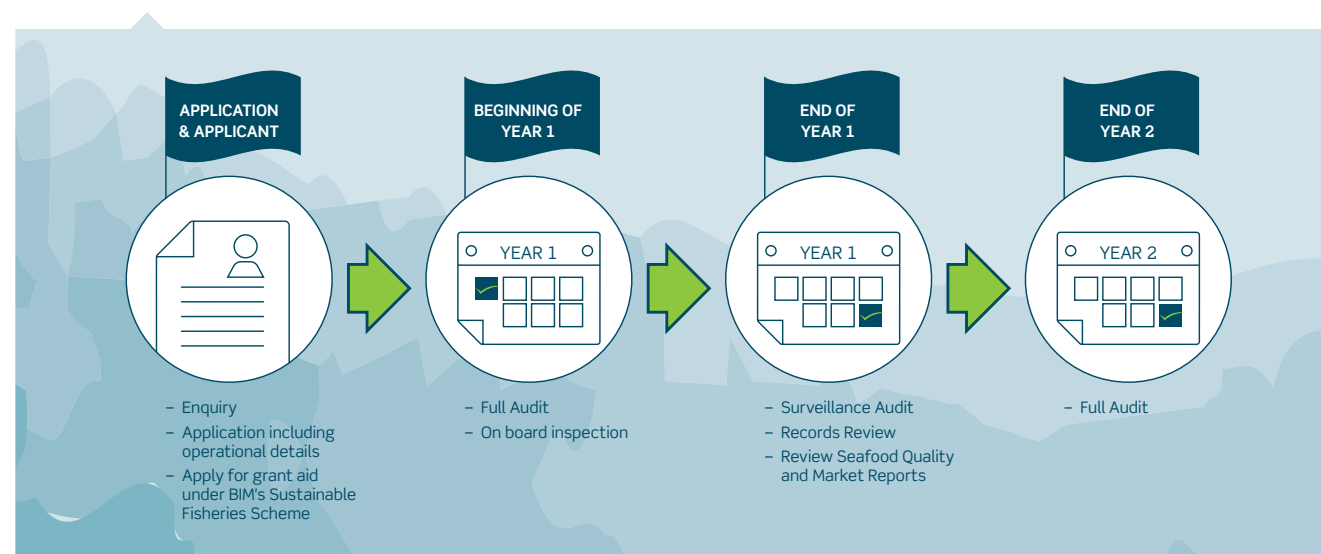
- New RSS contact person within the management team of the applicant or certified member;
- New/additional certified product received from certified supplier.

The Certification Body will then assess the status of the certification against these changes and may request further information, evidence of conformity or request that a re-audit is conducted. The certification will only be withdrawn if the applicant is unable to meet the relevant standard or conditions of the scheme. The applicant will be notified within 10 working days of a decision to withdrawal certification.

In the event that an applicant requests an extension to the scope outside that previously established in the operational plan and the audit plan, then another application with revised operational details will be required. The Certification Body will then formulate a revised audit plan. This may be used at the surveillance audit or in the event of a full audit. Notifiable changes in scope include, but are not limited to:

- Introduction of a new activity in relation to the certified product, which is not already covered by the scope of certification;
- Outsourcing activities, e.g. processing, packing/repacking, for the certified product to a new subcontractor.

Figure 1: BIM Responsibly Sourced Seafood Fishing Vessel Standard: Fishing Vessel Audit Frequency



SECTION 3
MEET YOUR
RSS TEAM

3.1 RSS Team Members Contact Details



Dominic Rihan
Fisheries Development
Manager

Bord Iascaigh Mhara,
Crofton Road, Dún Laoghaire,
Co. Dublin, A96 E5A0
T +353 1 2144159
M +353 87 2890781
E Dominic.rihan@bim.ie
bim.ie



Catherine Barrett
Fisheries Development
Officer

Bord Iascaigh Mhara,
Crofton Road, Dún Laoghaire,
Co. Dublin, A96 E5A0
T 01-2144251
M 0872897651
E Catherine.barrett@bim.ie
bim.ie



Frances O'Dwyer
Fisheries Development
Officer

BIM Office,
The Pier, Killybegs,
Co. Donegal, F94 P8YP
T +353 74 9732603
M +353 87 9197311
E Frances.odwyer@bim.ie
bim.ie



Mo Mathies
Fisheries Technical
& Sustainability Officer

Bord Iascaigh Mhara,
Crofton Road, Dún Laoghaire,
Co. Dublin, A96 E5A0
T +353 1 2144143
M +353 87 2382136
E Mo.mathies@bim.ie
bim.ie

Bord Iascaigh Mhara
Head Office
Crofton Road,
Dún Laoghaire,
Co. Dublin, A96 E5A0

T +353 (0)1 214 4100
F +353 (0)1 284 1123
E RSSstandard@bim.ie
www.bim.ie



Ireland's European Structural and
Investment Funds Programmes
2014-2020

Co-funded by the Irish Government
and the European Union



Department of
Agriculture,
Food and the Marine
*An tAire
Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara*



EUROPEAN UNION
European Maritime
and Fisheries Fund



Ireland's
Seafood
Development
Agency