

Approved by: Managing Director



PSA

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6 . Certification options

6.2.1 There may be several certification options available to an applicant, as listed in Table 3.

6.2.1.1 The CAB shall evaluate each applicant to determine which certification option(s) the applicant is eligible for and which option will best suit the applicant's needs.

Guidance 6.2.1

For some clients, multiple certification options will be applicable. For example, a small restaurant chain with 3 sites could be audited against the [CoC Default Standard](#) as a multi-site, the [CoC Group Standard](#) or the [CoC CFO Standard](#). It is up to the CAB and client to decide which CoC Standard and certificate option is the best fit for the organization.

For both single and multi-site certificates, the client is certified against the [CoC Default Standard](#).

Eligibility for CoC Group certification

6.2.2 The CAB shall determine that an applicant is eligible for certification against the [CoC Group Standard](#) if all the following criteria are met:

- a. The proposed group's central office is a legal entity with whom a contract can be made.
- b. All sites undertake substantially similar CoC activities as defined by the MSC (see Table 4).

If they do not, the group can be stratified for sampling according to the requirements in 8.2.

- c. The entire group operation is within 1 geographic region.

If they are not, the group can be stratified for sampling.

- d. The same written language is used at all sites and can be read by all site managers.

If translations are provided, adequate document control procedures are in place to ensure version consistency across different languages.

- e. The proposed group's central office is capable of objectivity in audit and decision making.

- f. The proposed group's central office can demonstrate through their application an understanding of the [CoC Group Standard](#) such that it is likely that they will be able to qualify for certification.

Eligibility for CoC Consumer-Facing Organization (CFO) certification

6.2.3 The CAB shall determine that an applicant is eligible for certification against the [CoC CFO Standard](#) if all the following applicable criteria are met:

- a. The organization sells and/or serves certified seafood exclusively or primarily to final consumers.

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Guidance 6.2.3.a

In general, the **CoC CFO Standard** is designed for organizations selling to final consumers only. However, in some specific cases, organizations that sell to both businesses and final consumers may be eligible to be certified against the **CoC CFO Standard** (e.g. “cash and carry” wholesalers or fishmongers that sell to a small number of restaurants as well as final consumers). In these cases, to be eligible the client needs to demonstrate that sales to final consumers (i.e. by volume or value) are greater than sales to other businesses.

- b. Any sites that carry out processing or repacking of certified seafood do so exclusively on behalf of the applicant organization.
- c. If the organization uses contract processors or replacers, these organizations have their own CoC certification.
- d. If the applicant has more than 1 site handling certified seafood:
 - i. All sites are under the control of a common management system, which determines the parameters for seafood supply, traceability infrastructure, and staff operation procedures, and is maintained by the organization’s designated central office.
 - ii. The central office has an ownership or franchise relationship with each site, or a temporary right to manage all sites and staff where certified seafood is handled to ensure conformity with the CoC Standard.
 - iii. The central office has oversight of purchases conducted at site level, with controls to ensure that all sites can only order certified seafood from certified suppliers .

Guidance 6.2.3.b-d

Applicants for CoC CFO certification may have sites that carry out processing or repacking activities. However, these sites must be dedicated to handling certified seafood on behalf of the applicant organization only. Sites cannot process or repack certified seafood for other organizations or customers unless they are certified against the **CoC Default Standard**.

A temporary right to manage a site means the organization has direct control over the staff working at site level. This is mainly applicable to catering operations

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Eligibility for interim certification

- 6.2.4 The CAB shall determine if the applicant is seeking interim certification against any of the certification options.

Guidance 6.2.4

Interim certification is available in cases where exceptional circumstances make it impossible or highly impractical to carry out an audit prior to allowing the applicant to sell certified products.

Permission for interim certification may be granted by the MSC (on the basis of a recommendation from the CAB) for up to 90 days providing that the risk is low and adequate controls are in place.

- 6.2.5 If interim certification is being sought, the CAB shall verify that:
- a. There are exceptional circumstances making it impossible to carry out an on-site audit.
 - b. A risk assessment has been completed considering all potential risks of substitution or mixing between certified and non-certified products and how these risks will be mitigated.

Guidance 6.2.5.b

The MSC intends that the CAB uses its own judgment to determine risk factors as they may vary significantly between cases where interim certification is requested.

- c. Risks to the integrity of certified products have been determined to be minimal.
- 6.2.6 If the CAB is satisfied that interim certification is appropriate, the CAB shall:
- a. Inform the applicant that the MSC is not responsible for any costs associated with lapsing of an interim certificate prior to a CoC certificate being obtained.
 - b. Apply for interim certification on the scheme database, providing the following:
 - i. The proposed scope of certification.
 - ii. A written justification of the exceptional circumstances and risk assessment as per 6.2.5.
 - iii. A full timetable for further action, including timing of audit(s) to be held within 90 days.
- 6.2.7 Once the MSC has decided whether to allow the interim certificate, the CAB shall inform the applicant of this outcome.

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Ineligibility for certification

- 6.2.8 The CAB shall check if applicants for CoC certification:
- a. Have had their certificate withdrawn by a CAB within the last 2 years.
 - i. The CAB shall not issue a new certificate until at least 2 years from the date that the certificate was withdrawn following a suspension as per [GCR 7.4.15.c.i](#) or [GCR 7.4.18](#).
 - b. Have had their certificate suspended within the last 6 months.
 - i. For intentional and/or systematic causes as per [GCR 7.4.13.1](#), the CAB shall not issue a new certificate until at least 6 months from the date of suspension.
 - ii. Where the certificate holder has cancelled their certificate during suspension, the CAB shall not issue a new certificate until at least 6 months from the date of suspension.

Guidance 6.2.8.a-b

The certificate statuses of “withdrawn” and “suspended” can be found on the MSC Find a Supplier webpage and on the ASC Find a Supplier webpage. [GCR 4.11](#) specifies the requirements to be followed for certificate transfers between CABs.

- 6.2.9 The CAB shall require the applicant to declare any association to entities that have been successfully prosecuted for a forced or child labor violation.

Guidance 6.2.9

“Entities” refers to organizations, their sites, and subcontracted parties.

- 6.2.9.1 If an entity belonging to or currently contracted by an applicant has been successfully prosecuted for violations of laws on forced or child labor in the last 2 years, this entity shall not be allowed to continue in the CoC certification process.
- a. Where an applicant no longer holds a valid contract with a subcontractor that fulfills the criteria in 6.2.9.1, the applicant shall be allowed to continue in the CoC certification process.

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Guidance 6.2.9

This requirement aims to ensure that the CoC applicant does not include an entity that has been successfully prosecuted for violations against forced or child labour laws.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) definition of forced labour comprises 3 key elements:

- ☐ Work or service is exacted under the menace of a penalty, which can imply monetary sanctions, physical punishment or the loss of rights and privileges or restriction of movement (e.g. refusing to allow free access to identity documents).
- ☐ Work is not voluntary.
- ☐ Other unethical practices considered by the ILO to fall under the category of forced labour include debt bondage, human trafficking and other forms of modern slavery.

The ILO defines child labour as work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children, or work that interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school, obliging them to leave school prematurely or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

- 6.2.10 Enhanced fishery or farm operations that are out of scope of the MSC Fisheries or ASC Farm Standards are ineligible for CoC certification.

Guidance 6.2.10

Ranching operations that receive MSC certified fish are ineligible for MSC CoC certification.