

Aquaculture Dialogues Process Guidance Document

Executive Summary

The purpose of this document is to describe the process of initiating and coordinating an Aquaculture Dialogue. The goal of each Aquaculture Dialogue is to develop performance-based standards that minimize the key environmental and social impacts associated with aquaculture production. The standards can be the basis for an aquaculture certification program. They also can be used to benchmark other standards; incorporated into existing certification programs; adopted for government programs; and, potentially, be the foundation for buyer and investment screens.

Guidelines for developing credible environmental and social standards through a transparent multi-stakeholder process are outlined in the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labeling (ISEAL) Alliance's Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards.

The Aquaculture Dialogue process document, written by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-US Aquaculture Team, is based on the ISEAL guidelines, WWF's extensive experience in creating standards and certification programs, and input from Dialogue participants.

The document emphasizes the need for the standards to be:

- Created by a broad and diverse set of stakeholders
- Based on consensus
- Developed through a transparent process
- Science-based
- Measurable and performance-based

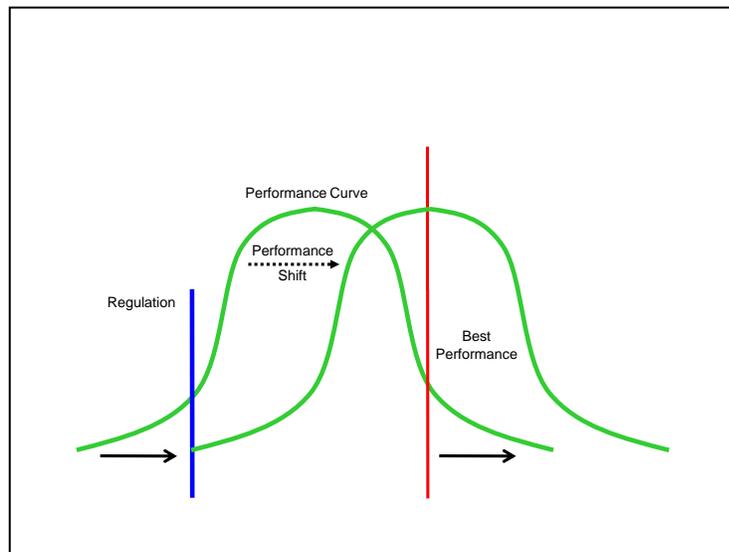
Each Dialogue must adopt its own process document – either this document or another one that, at a minimum, includes all of the components in this document. The option of amending the document for each Dialogue recognizes that there will be some inherent variation in the process used by each Dialogue, given that the Dialogues are species specific and the stakeholders involved in shaping each Dialogue are different.

This document will be revised as needed and is effective as of the date noted at the bottom of each page.

Dialogue Purpose and Timeline

The Aquaculture Dialogues are platforms for the development of performance-based standards that minimize the key environmental and social impacts associated with aquaculture production.

The Aquaculture Dialogue standards will be unique because they will simultaneously help transform the aquaculture industry and protect the environment. They will be the most robust environmental standards available, in large part because they will be geared toward the best performers in the industry, as illustrated below. Setting the bar at the “best performer” level will give more credibility to the standards and motivate others in the industry to adopt the standards. The standards also will be credible because they will be created by a diverse group of the world’s leading aquaculture industry stakeholders, based on the most current science related to aquaculture, measurable instead of subjective, and have mechanisms for continual improvement.



Each Dialogue will follow the same roadmap. After agreeing on goals and objectives for a Dialogue, participants will follow an iterative process that begins with identifying the key environmental and social impacts (sometimes referred to as “issues”) associated with the production of the species group. Although there are negative and positive impacts from aquaculture, the Aquaculture Dialogues will use the term “impacts” to denote negative impacts. Positive impacts will be recognized, but there generally is no reason to address these for mitigation. Next, agreement will be reached on principles, criteria, indicators and standards, with each phase building on the previous phase. These terms are defined in the table below.

	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Non-aquaculture example</i>	<i>Aquaculture example</i>
<i>Impact</i>	The problem we want to minimize	Overweight	Water pollution
<i>Principle</i>	The guiding principle for addressing the impact	Maintain a healthy weight	Conserve and protect water resources
<i>Criteria</i>	The area to focus on to address the impact	Food consumption *	Effluents
<i>Indicator</i>	What to measure in order to determine the extent of the impact	Calories	Nitrogen concentration in the effluent
<i>Standard</i>	The number and/or performance level that must be reached to determine if the impact is being minimized **	< 10 calories/pound of body weight/day	4 mg/L total nitrogen in effluent

**For this example, only one criteria is listed, even though there often are several criteria for each principle, as well as several indicators for each criteria.*

***A number is not necessary when an indicator cannot be measured (e.g., the indicator for the principle “obey the law,” which might be “documentation of compliance with national and local regulations”).*

Each Dialogue will aim to develop standards that are simple yet address the major issues related to aquaculture production. For this reason, each Dialogue process will minimize the number of criteria per principle and the number of indicators per criteria. Although there will be some variation, Dialogue participants will agree upon 1-3 criteria per principle and 1-3 indicators per criteria.

There will be one measurable standard per indicator. The only exception to this may be when standards are created for more than one type of species (e.g., in the Shrimp Aquaculture Dialogue, which focuses on *P. vannamei* and *P. monodon*).

When completed, the standards will be given to a standards-holding entity that will be responsible for certifying producers through a third party auditing process. WWF will not be responsible for certification. The standards-holding entity will be required to evaluate and, if needed, amend the standards at least once every 5 years to address new scientific data relevant to aquaculture.

The standards also can be used to benchmark other standards; incorporated into existing certification programs; adopted for government programs; and, potentially, be the foundation for buyer and investment screens.

Dialogue Participants

A key aspect of the Aquaculture Dialogues is engaging multiple stakeholders in the process of creating standards. This includes environmental and social non-governmental organizations (NGOs); academics; producers and processors; seafood buyers from retail, restaurants and food service; government officials; traders; investors; importers; manufacturers of feed and chemicals;

certifiers; consultants; and others.

Anybody can participate in the Dialogues. The decision to do so is voluntary. If certain stakeholder groups are not well-represented in a Dialogue, the decision-making body for the Dialogue will proactively encourage participation from those groups. Factors to consider to ensure that each Dialogue includes a mix of stakeholders are:

- **Geography:** Stakeholders will include a mix of people from local, regional, national and international levels, with an emphasis on people from the regions where the species is produced/processed and regions that are influential in the markets. Dialogue meetings will be held at various locations around the world to encourage people (particularly small-scale producers and local NGOs from developing countries) to participate. Holding meetings in various locations around the world is not necessary if most of the production for the species is in one country/region. If English-speaking people want to attend a meeting in a country where English is not the native language, attempts will be made to provide simultaneous translation.
- **Expertise:** People with different areas of expertise will be involved.

Role of Dialogue Participants

Not all stakeholders will be willing or able to participate in the Dialogues at the same level. They will participate in the Dialogues at one or more of the following levels, all which will be explained at the onset of the Dialogue:

Full Dialogue: The full group of stakeholders interested in the Dialogue and committed to supporting its goals and objectives. They will participate in Dialogue meetings to review and comment on the progress toward the goals and objectives, as well as products of other Dialogues.

External Stakeholders: Individuals who do not attend Dialogue meetings, but are free to provide input on Dialogue documents and participate in Dialogue surveys.

Steering Committee: The Steering Committee usually will serve as the decision-making body and be made up of approximately 10 people. Members of the committee will agree upon and document the committee's decision-making process at the onset of the Dialogue. (See the "Decision-Making Process" section below for more information about committee structure/roles.) Committee members will commit to the funding and time (usually two in-person meetings and six phone meetings per year) to participate in the Dialogue. To eliminate confusion when key decisions need to be made, committee members will not represent more than one group (e.g., an NGO and coalition of NGOs).

Technical Working Groups: These groups will be made up of people, such as researchers and scientists and processors, with expertise in aquaculture. They can provide the Dialogue with input on any technical aspects of the Dialogue but not provide input on any political discussions

related to the Dialogue. Roles of the groups can include delivering policy-neutral advice on the state of research, identifying significant gaps or areas of disagreement, recommending terms of reference for additional research needs, and developing draft standards.

Advisory Groups: These groups will be made up of Dialogue participants who will offer advice on particular aspects and results of the Dialogue process or provide collective input on their needs as a stakeholder group (e.g., retail advisory committee or government advisory committee).

Dialogue Coordinator: Each Dialogue will be coordinated by a WWF staff member who is charged with keeping the Dialogue process moving forward and in line with ISEAL guidelines for creating standards. Responsibilities of the coordinator will include, but not be limited to, co-facilitating meetings, coordinating technical working groups, publicizing and handling logistics for meetings, being the primary contact on issues related to the Dialogue, and maintaining content on the Dialogue website. WWF will have an equal voice in the decision-making process.

The decision to participate in the Full Dialogue or as an external stakeholder will be made by the individual. Members of the decision-making body will be chosen by the Dialogue participants. Members of technical working groups and advisory groups will be chosen by the decision-making body. The Dialogue coordinator will be chosen by WWF.

The names of Dialogue coordinators and the technical working group, advisory group and decision-making body members will be posted on the Dialogue website.

Decision-Making Process

Each Dialogue will choose a decision-making body and process for creating standards. The options available are described below.

Option 1 (Global Steering Committee):

- 1.) The Full Dialogue will support the formation of a Global Steering Committee that will serve as the decision-making body for the Dialogue.
- 2.) Goals and objectives will be developed by the Global Steering Committee and/or a subset of Dialogue participants at the meeting, then presented to the Full Dialogue for consideration and revision. The goals and objectives will be finalized by the Global Steering Committee with support of the Full Dialogue.
- 3.) Impacts identified by the Global Steering Committee, with Full Dialogue input, will be presented to the Full Dialogue for consideration and revision. Input from the Full Dialogue will then be used by the Global Steering Committee to finalize the key impacts.
- 4.) Scientists and technical experts may be commissioned by the Global Steering Committee, with input from the Full Dialogue, to conduct or compile research on key areas of impact relevant to the Dialogue. Experts also will participate directly as members of the Full Dialogue.
- 5.) Draft principles and criteria will be developed by the Global Steering Committee (and, in some cases, advisory groups) using input from technical working groups and/or other

Dialogues. The initial draft will be presented to the Full Dialogue for consideration. Input from the Full Dialogue will then be used by the Global Steering Committee to create the revised draft of principles and criteria.

- 6.) Indicators and standards will be developed by the Global Steering Committee and/or technical working groups (and, in some cases, advisory groups) based on their expertise and input from relevant technical working group reports, the indicators and standards from other Dialogues, and any outreach they undertake. Draft indicators and standards will be presented to the Full Dialogue for consideration as part of a full suite of draft principles, criteria, indicators and standards. Input from the Full Dialogue will then be used by the Global Steering Committee to create the revised draft of indicators and standards.
- 7.) In accordance with ISEAL guidelines, the full draft suite of principles, criteria, indicators and standards will be posted for two public comment periods. Input received during the public comment periods will be used by the Global Steering Committee to finalize the principles, criteria, indicators and standards.

Option 2 (Regional Steering Committees and one Global Steering Committee):

- 1.) Each regional Dialogue will support the formation of a regional Steering Committee, then identify three people from that committee who will serve on the Global Steering Committee. The Global Steering Committee will serve as the decision-making body for the Dialogue.
- 2.) Goals and objectives will be developed by each regional Steering Committee and/or a subset of Dialogue participants at each regional meeting, then presented to the Global Steering Committee for consideration and revision. The goals and objectives will be finalized by the Global Steering Committee with support of the regional Dialogues.
- 3.) Impacts identified by each regional Steering Committee, with input from regional Dialogue participants, will be presented to each regional Dialogue for consideration. Each regional Steering Committee will then revise its list of impacts. The regional lists will then be presented to the Global Steering Committee, which will combine the regional lists into one final global list.
- 4.) Scientists and technical experts may be commissioned by the Global Steering Committee, with input from the regional Dialogues, to conduct or compile research on key areas of impact relevant to the Dialogue. Experts also will participate directly as members of one or more of the regional Dialogues.
- 5.) Draft principles and criteria will be developed by each regional Steering Committee (and, in some cases, advisory groups) using input from technical working groups and/or other regional Dialogues. The initial draft will be presented to each regional Dialogue for consideration. Input from each regional Dialogue will be used by each regional Steering Committee to revise its list of principles and criteria. The regional lists will then be presented to the Global Steering Committee, which will combine the regional lists into one revised draft of principles and criteria.
- 6.) Indicators and standards will be developed by the Global Steering Committee and/or technical working groups (and, in some cases, advisory groups), based on their expertise and input from relevant technical working group reports, the indicators and standards from other Dialogues, and any outreach they undertake. Draft indicators and standards

will be presented to each regional Dialogue for consideration as part of a full suite of draft principles, criteria, indicators and standards. Input from each regional Dialogue will then be used by each regional Steering Committee to revise its list of indicators and standards. The regional list will then be presented to the Global Steering Committee, which will combine the regional lists into one revised draft of indicators and standards.

- 7.) In accordance with ISEAL guidelines, the full draft suite of principles, criteria, indicators and standards will be posted for two public comment periods. Input from the public comment periods will be used by the Global Steering Committee to finalize the principles, criteria, indicators and standards.

Option 3 (no Steering Committee):

- 1.) The Full Dialogue will support the formation of a Process Facilitation Group that will manage the Dialogue but not have decision-making power.
- 2.) Goals and objectives will be presented by the Process Facilitation Group to the Full Dialogue for consideration and revision, then finalized by the Full Dialogue.
- 3.) The process for standard development will be developed by the Process Facilitation Group and then presented to the Full Dialogue for consideration and revision. The process will then be finalized by the Full Dialogue.
- 4.) Impacts will be identified by the Process Facilitation Group and then presented to the Full Dialogue for consideration and revision. The impacts will then be finalized by the Full Dialogue.
- 5.) Draft principles will be developed by the Process Facilitation Group (and, in some cases, advisory groups) using input from technical working groups and/or other Dialogues. The draft principles will then be presented to the Full Dialogue for consideration. The draft principles will be revised by the Full Dialogue or a group charged with this task by the Full Dialogue.
- 6.) Criteria, indicators and standards will be developed by technical working groups (and, in some cases, advisory groups) and will be based on their expertise; the criteria, indicators and standards from other Dialogues; and any outreach they undertake. These draft criteria, indicators and standards will be compiled by the Process Facilitation Group and then presented to the Full Dialogue for consideration. The draft criteria, indicators and standards will be revised by the Full Dialogue or a group charged with this task by the Full Dialogue.
- 7.) In accordance with ISEAL guidelines, the full draft suite of principles, criteria, indicators and standards will be posted for two public comment periods. Input from the public comment periods will be used by the Full Dialogue or a body charged with this task by the Full Dialogue (e.g., technical working groups) to finalize the principles, criteria, indicators and standards.

Decision-making members of the Aquaculture Dialogues should be committed to working towards standards that support their respective overall goals as opposed to standards that support specific positions. Dialogue participants will seek to reconcile and accommodate interests, not rigidly adhere to specific positions.

Reaching Consensus

Regardless of which governing body model is used, the primary process for making decisions is through consensus at the decision-making body level. This approach is in accordance with ISEAL guidelines. The Dialogues will use the definition of “consensus” provided by the International Organization for Standardization, which is:

“General agreement, characterized by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interests and by a process seeking to take into account the views of interested parties, particularly those directly affected, and to reconcile any conflicting arguments. Consensus need not imply unanimity.”

(See Appendix A for an explanation of the terms and phrases in the definition, such as “substantial issues” and “sustained opposition.”)

If consensus is not reached, the Dialogue’s decision-making body will develop and document an alternate decision-making process. One option is supermajority voting, as outlined below:

- At least two stakeholder groups will be identified (e.g., profit/not for profit).
- Each stakeholder group will have equal weighting when votes are taken (e.g., if there are two groups, each will have 50 percent of the vote).
- A provision must achieve at least 80% majority in each stakeholder group engaged in the Dialogue discussion.
- The decision to move to voting from consensus will be based on a move by one decision-making body member and a second of that motion by a decision-making body member of a different sector.

Conflict Resolution

It is possible that irresolvable conflict may develop at the decision-making body or Full Dialogue level. All attempts will be made to resolve conflicts internally. However, in case this is not possible, a conflict resolution procedure will be followed. That procedure will be developed and documented by each Dialogue. One option is that the Dialogue will identify 2-3 professional mediators in advance who can be called on if irresolvable conflict develops. WWF will help identify mediators and the decision-making body will agree on them. The decision-making body will be expected to fund the costs of mediators if conflicts cannot be addressed internally.

Communication/Transparency

Transparency is key to effective engagement in the Dialogues. To ensure transparency, each Dialogue will develop a communications strategy. The strategy will, at a minimum, include the following:

- Meetings will be publicized on the Dialogue website and in the Dialogue e-newsletter at least two months prior to each meeting.
- An invitation will be sent electronically or by mail to all key stakeholders at least one month prior to each meeting. They will be encouraged to distribute the invitation to other relevant groups/individuals.
- A press release about the meeting will be distributed to seafood and retail trade publications at least one month prior to each meeting.
- The meeting agenda and documents to be discussed at the meeting will be disseminated electronically or via mail to meeting participants and posted on the Dialogue website at least one week prior to the Dialogue meeting.
- Documents that are outcomes of the meeting will be posted on the Dialogue website within three weeks after each meeting (or four weeks if documents must be translated). At a minimum, this will include the list of meeting participants, presentations made at the meeting, documents reviewed at the meeting, and a meeting summary.
- Each meeting summary will highlight key decisions made, action points created and proposals presented. Meeting summaries will not be verbatim or identify the affiliation of speakers. This is in line with the Chatham House Rule, which states “When a meeting or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other person may be revealed.” Within two weeks after each meeting (or three weeks if documents must be translated), the meeting summaries written by WWF will be provided to all Dialogue participants to review. The participants will be given one week to provide feedback to WWF.
- Pertinent draft documents (e.g., draft research reports and draft principles) will be posted on the Dialogue website for public comment. Each Dialogue’s decision-making body will specify how comments will be posted, processed and incorporated into the standard development process.
- The draft suite of principles, criteria, indicators and standards will be posted on the Dialogue website for public comment. In accordance with ISEAL, there will be two 60-day comment periods, with 30 days in between each comment period to address comments. Each comment, with attribution, will be posted on the Dialogue website. Responses from the decision-making body also will be posted. The decision-making body will determine whether to post a response to the body of comments as a whole or responses to individual comments. If Option 3, as described in the “Decision-Making Process” section is used, the technical working groups will respond to the comments and the Process Facilitation Group will compile the comments.
- Documents will be made available in English and the primary languages spoken by the stakeholders.

- Each decision-making body will be responsible for reading and responding to all comments related to the Dialogue that are raised during the course of the Dialogue.
- Within six months after the Dialogue begins, a work program will be posted on the Dialogue website. It will be updated once every 6 months. The document will include the program name and address; a contact point; a summary of Dialogue activities during the reporting period; and upcoming action items for the Dialogue. This is a requirement of ISEAL.
- When finalized, the principles, criteria, indicators and standards will be posted on the Dialogue website.

Each Dialogue also will rely on other entities, such as local NGOs and government agencies, to disseminate information about the Dialogues. This is particularly critical for small-scale producers and others who do not have Internet access or the time/funding necessary to attend Dialogue meetings.

Funding

Expenses related to the Dialogues will include the costs of holding meetings (e.g., food, room rental and paying for the Dialogue coordinator's time). These expenses will be paid for by WWF. If these expenses are paid for by another source(s), no more than 25 percent of funds will come from one stakeholder.

If research related to the Dialogues is needed, the decision-making body will determine how to finance that research.

Contributions can be made directly in cash or through in-kind contributions, such as research, terms of reference, time and travel, hosting of meetings, and collaboration on grant proposals.

APPENDIX A

Following is an explanation of several of the phrases used in the International Organization of Standards' definition of "consensus:"

Sustained opposition - Sustained opposition means that an important part of concerned interests has indicated, despite meaningful discussion of an issue that the position or solution put forward continues to be unacceptable to that interest.

Substantial issues- Issues that materially affect the standards or decision being taken as appropriate.

Important part of concerned interests - Clearly recognized representative of a segment of concerned interests that have been engaged in the discussions as a member of the decision-making body, such as all Steering Committee members.

Interested parties - Any party that has participated substantively in the dialogue process, including those outside the Steering Committee, that may present issues for the steering committee to debate and decide.

Directly affected - Includes those whose lives or livelihoods would be altered by the proposed decision or standard financially or otherwise, as well as the affected public.

Consensus need not imply unanimity- Under consensus, one or more parties may not fully agree with a decision, but is able to accept it.

For more information about the Dialogues, go to www.worldwildlife.org/aquadialogues or send an e-mail message to aquacultureinfo@wwfus.org.