



SSC Codes of Conduct

2024

The Sustainable Seafood Coalition is a pre-competitive progressive collaboration platform comprised of businesses and organisations from across the seafood value chain, working to ensure a healthy future for our oceans. Our vision is that all seafood sold is from sustainable sources.

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Part 1

Code of Conduct on Responsible Seafood Sourcing

1. Objective

- 1.1 The Sustainable Seafood Coalition (SSC) is a progressive partnership of businesses co-operating to address important issues in seafood sustainability. This Sourcing Code outlines general good practice in seafood sourcing which must be used by SSC members to inform their own policies for seafood procurement.

The SSC Codes do not constitute legal guidance. All members are expected to align with relevant legal and regulatory requirements.

- 1.2 This Code applies equally to all members irrespective of size or sector. It is accompanied by the SSC Guidance document which helps members to implement the Code. Compliance with the SSC Codes is a membership requirement (see SSC Terms of Reference) and members are required to provide timely responses for the biennial Implementation Report which assesses implementation of the Codes.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This Code applies to the sourcing of all products with a minimum of 5% fish and seafood content (hereafter 'seafood'). Seafood is defined as any wild captured or farmed marine, freshwater, anadromous or catadromous fish, crustacean, mollusc or other aquatic invertebrate used for any purpose (including but not limited to seafood, fishmeal, and fish oil). Its central focus is on environmental and social aspects relating directly to fisheries and aquaculture. It is not a certification standard.
- 2.2 This Code relates to sourcing processes and behaviours regarding members' seafood buying practices for own brand seafood and owned brand seafood. Members who are buyers of branded products are also encouraged to include these products. It underpins the SSC Code of Conduct on Claims.
- 2.3 All members are encouraged to advocate for the wider adoption of the Codes, including encouraging others in the seafood industry to implement the Codes and join the SSC.

3. Members' commitments

3.1 The SSC Codes constitute a continual process: accurate and up-to-date annual data collection, clear evaluation based on that data, decision making and transparent communication (see Figure 1).

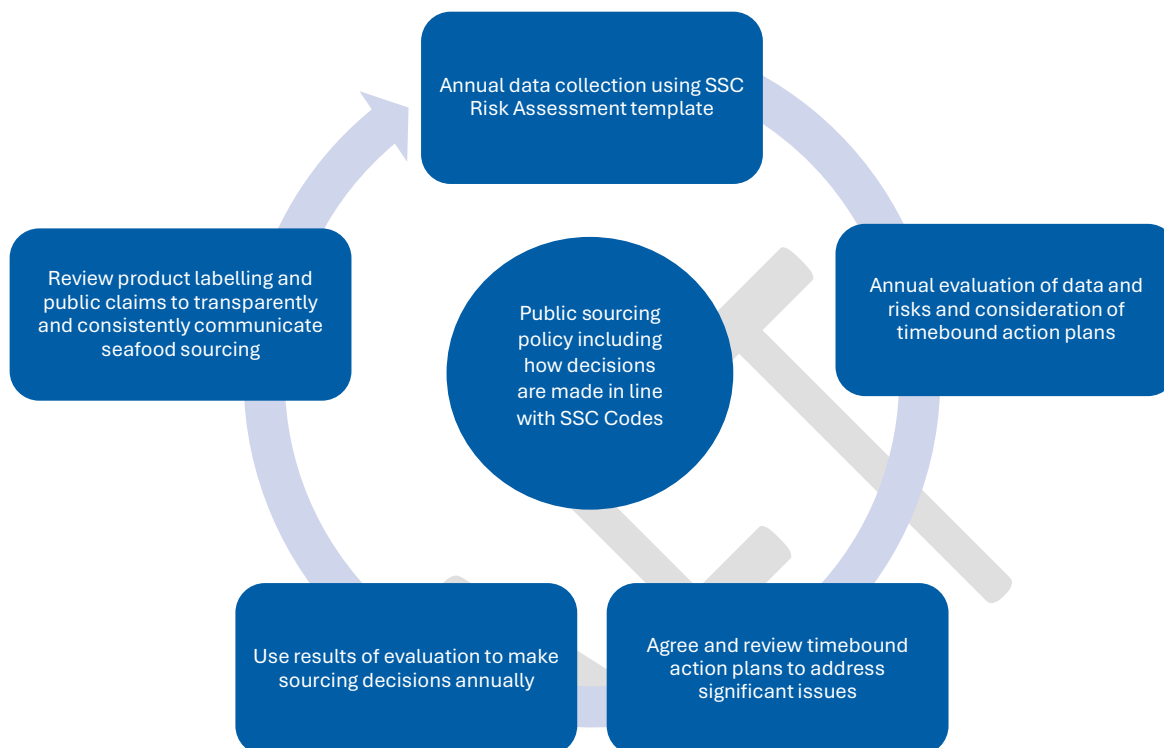


Figure 1: Continual SSC Code Process

3.2 SSC members commit to:

- I Sourcing requirements: for traceability, transparency, environment, human rights, feed, animal welfare and carbon.
- II Data collection and risk assessment: conducted and reviewed at minimum annually
- III Evaluation of risks and timebound action plans: engaging with supply chain partners, monitoring improvements, and participating in pre-competitive collaborations to address common challenges where industry collaboration is needed for impact (e.g., advocacy).
- IV Sourcing decisions: based on the outcome of the evaluation
- V Transparency: Ongoing openness and communication.

4. Sourcing policies

- 4.1 Members must have a sourcing policy that describes how responsible sourcing decisions are made in line with this Code. Members should clearly define the scope of this policy. Policies must be reviewed at a minimum in line with the review of the Codes, which will be at least every two years.

5. Sourcing requirements

5.1 Traceability

5.1.1 Members must include the following requirements:

- I For **wild** seafood, members must have a traceability system in place that is able to trace all seafood from the point of sale back to its source vessel / source group of vessels, including vessel identification number, license, and flag state, and fishery source. The system must trace the seafood products through all subsequent stages of handling, transshipment, processing, transformation, and distribution, ensuring any legal requirements are met.
- II For **farmed** seafood, members must have a traceability system in place that is able to trace all seafood from the point of sale back to its aquaculture farm and hatchery source through all subsequent stages of handling, processing and distribution, ensuring any legal requirements are met.
- III For fed species, the feed mill manufacturers must have a traceability system in place that is able to trace feed ingredients.
- IV For marine ingredients (including those originating from by-products) details of the fishery name, species and FAO area must be collected where available.
- V Certification status and country of origin (and if possible sub-national region) of the material should be collected for high-risk non-marine raw materials such as soy and palm.
- VI Members must test traceability systems at least annually, which could be through external audits.

5.2 Transparency

5.2.1 Members must include the following requirements:

- I Members must make publicly available their wild and farmed sourcing policies, which must include how sourcing decisions are made.
- II Members must be able to communicate sourcing decisions with relevant stakeholders on request.
- III Members must publicly disclose their seafood sources annually, comprising source fishery / farm country and region of origin, and method of fishing / farming at minimum.

5.3 Environment

5.3.1 Members must include the following requirements:

- I Members must prioritise sourcing from fisheries that have a healthy stock status, adequate management and low environmental impact.
- II For **wild** seafood, members must not source IUU (Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported) catch or from species classified as endangered or critically endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red list.
- III Members must consider current and future health of stock as part of their risk assessment.

- IV Members must prioritise sourcing from fisheries and aquaculture farms certified to third party standards (e.g., GSSI benchmarked certifications) or codes of practice that require environmental stewardship.
- V Low risk fisheries/farms, including those with well managed Fishery Management Plans, should be sourced if there are no certified alternatives.
- VI When certified sources and/or low risk sources are not available, members must prioritise sourcing from credible fishery or aquaculture improvement projects (FIPs/AIPs) that have an improvement plan and are reporting on progress.
- VII Members must advocate for strengthened government policies and enforcement.

5.4 Human rights

5.4.1 Members must include the following requirements:

- I Members must promote social responsibility and respect human rights, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct and fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organisation including the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No.29, and the 2014 protocol).
- II Members must promote social responsibility and respect human rights in their individual businesses, direct and indirect operations, and throughout their supply chains by addressing social risks and impacts. This includes both full employees as well as contracted labour.
- III Members must make a public commitment to uphold rights of workers, approved by highest level in the organisation.
- IV Where human rights violations are identified, action plans must be developed to mitigate against these.
- V Members must undertake Human Rights Due Diligence, in alignment with UNGPs, to identify, prevent, mitigate and remediate actual and potential risk within their own operations as well as their supply chains:
 - *Data gathering to assess risk e.g. number of workers, use of labour providers, salient country or product risk etc.*
 - *Assess actual and potential risks and impact*
 - *Integrate and act on findings*
 - *Track effectiveness of solutions and commit to continual improvement*
 - *Communicate progress*
 - *Engaging workers and empowering worker voice*
 - *Developing (or supporting upstream suppliers in developing) effective operational-level grievance mechanisms and remediation processes for own operations and the supply chain.*
 - *Explicitly supporting and advocating for freedom of association and collective bargaining*
 - *Ensuring companies' business models align with their commitments, especially when it comes to procurement practices (preferentially sourcing from ethically responsible suppliers, working with existing suppliers to build capacity on social responsibility, ensuring the way orders are placed never put undue pressure on workers etc.)*
- VI As for the environment component, when certified sources and/or low risk sources are not available, members must prioritise sourcing from credible fishery or aquaculture improvement projects (FIPs/AIPs).
- VII Members must advocate for strengthened government policies and enforcement.

5.5 Feed

5.5.1 Members must include the following requirements:

- I For fed species, there must be a written policy that outlines the criteria for sourcing of feed ingredients.
- II Members must source marine raw materials in line with the environmental requirements of this Code, and also in line with the human rights requirements of this Code where information is available.
- III Plant raw materials, at minimum soy and palm, should be from supply chains which are low risk regarding deforestation and land conversion concerns and in line with relevant legislation.

5.6 Animal welfare

5.6.1 Members must include the following requirements:

- I Members must map their current supply chain and identify welfare concerns.
- II Members must ensure animals throughout their seafood supply chain are harvested humanely, or, in the absence of humane methods, members must be informed about the latest best practices and implement where feasible.
- III Members must advocate for strengthened government policies and enforcement.
- IV Members must include in their harvest policies how animal welfare risks are assessed when evaluating sources and describe how this assessment takes place.
- V For **Aquaculture**, members must ensure that farmed species follow either a certification standard that includes animal welfare within its criteria, and/or a veterinary health plan must be in place to address all aspects of fish health and welfare. For the veterinary health plan, the farm must hold this and the member should be able to access on request.
- VI For **Wild Caught**, as welfare standards are assessed and created for wild caught species, members are expected to follow best practice and engage with research and development (where feasible) for animal welfare in the industry.

5.7 Carbon

5.7.1 Policies must include the following requirements:

- I Members must develop a plan to map and identify their Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions for their operations.
- II Members must develop a plan to measure Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions from their seafood operations and seafood supply chain and develop a plan to reduce emissions.
- III Members can use an independently verified measurements tool or software to manage this process.

6. Data collection for Risk Assessment

- 6.1 Members must annually (as minimum) collect relevant information to evaluate the status of the fishery or aquaculture source, using the content at a minimum of the SSC Risk Assessment Template.
- 6.2 The SSC Risk Assessment Template's questions represent minimum requirements for the data points that must be collected to evaluate environment, human rights and feed risks. Members can also collect additional information e.g. for animal welfare and carbon – further information in the Guidance.
- 6.3 The Risk Assessment must be made available to the SSC Secretariat on request.

7. Evaluation

7.1 Evaluation requirements

- I Members must annually (as a minimum) perform an evaluation to categorise each fishery or farm as low, medium or high risk. This evaluation must include the content of the SSC Risk Assessment Template, including if any significant issues are identified alongside consideration of credible timebound action plan requirements.
- II The evaluation must be made available to the SSC Secretariat on request.

7.2 Significant issues

7.2.1 **Members must review the content of the SSC Risk Assessment to consider risks, in particular significant issues:**

- I Proven poor stock status
- II High risk of decline to poor status without appropriate management
- III No data or management (even if the fishery is not at high risk of decline)
- IV Unacceptable environmental impacts including:
 - *Risk of habitat destruction of vulnerable marine ecosystems*
 - *Lack of effective by-catch mitigation measures*
 - *High prevalence of ghost gear in the fisheries*
 - *Levels of discharge from farms exceeding regulatory boundaries (in the absence of regulations certification criteria should be used as a proxy)*
 - *High risk of deforestation and land conversion*
- V Breach of ETI Base Code including:
 - *Modern slavery*
 - *Forced labour or child labour*
 - *Lack of effective grievance mechanisms*

7.3 Credible timebound action plans for improvement projects

7.3.1 If significant issues and/or multiple moderate issues are identified in the Risk Assessment, a member must have an improvement project in place and/or being established to reduce and mitigate risks. The key requirements include:

Requirements	Active improvement project with credible timebound action plan:	Credible timebound action plan to establish improvement project:
Evaluation of fishery or farm	☑	☑
Clear objectives and timelines where gaps are identified	☑	☑
Workplan tracked, documented and monitored, including six monthly updates on progress	☑	☑
Commitment from relevant stakeholders to support delivery of the work plan Further details in Guidance for specific improvement project examples e.g. in country and ongoing government engagement; client group; pre-assessment and action plan; third party evaluation and verification during pre-assessment and action plan	☑	☑
Public information	Workplan published by the improvement project or by the member	Member commitment regarding work to establish improvement project

7.3.2 Any delays in the progress of the action plan should be documented and explained. In the absence of sufficient progress in the defined timeline, businesses must outline actions taken and planned and demonstrate supply chain commitment to mitigate risks previously identified.

7.4 Risk categories

7.4.1 Members must categorise each fishery or farm as low, medium or high risk:

LOW RISK

- No significant issues and not more than one moderate issue identified.
- The Risk Assessment is reviewed to consider where any additional improvements are needed and can be implemented.

MEDIUM RISK

- Significant and/or multiple moderate issues identified.
- Documented timebound action plan agreed and on-track.

HIGH RISK

- Significant and/or multiple moderate issues found and no timebound action plan in place.
- Documented insufficient progress in the delivery of the timebound action plan.

8. Sourcing decisions

8.1 Sourcing decision requirements

- I Members must annually agree and review timebound action plans to address significant issues and/or multiple moderate issues and use the results of the evaluation to make sourcing decisions.
- II Members must prioritise their engagement in the timebound action plans appropriate to their influence and resources. Members must use their leverage to influence improvement project development and establishment.
- III Members must follow the development of certified fisheries and aquaculture farms to ensure non-compliance or conditions are closed in a timely manner.
- IV Sourcing decisions and timebound action plans (including assigned actions) must be made available to the SSC Secretariat on request.

8.2 Responsible exit from supply chain

- I Members must source seafood only from low or medium risk fisheries or farms.
- II Members must not source seafood where there has been insufficient progress in the delivery of the timebound implementation plan, or in situations in which the member lacks the leverage to prevent or mitigate high risk adverse impacts and is unable to increase its leverage.
- III If exiting the supply chain, this must be performed responsibly in line with guidance from United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the member must consider credible assessments of potential adverse impacts of doing so.
- IV A responsible exit should be documented and reported to the SSC Secretariat on request.

Part 2

Code of Conduct on Claims

9. Objective

- 9.1 The Sustainable Seafood Coalition (SSC) is a progressive partnership of businesses co-operating to address important issue in seafood sustainability.

This Claims Code has been developed by the SSC to help agree industry best practice in respect of voluntary claims relating to the seafood industry. It is not intended to replace any legal or regulatory advice.

10. Scope

- 10.1 This Code covers all voluntary claims made by SSC members in relation to own-brand and owned brand seafood products. Members who are buyers of branded products are also encouraged to include these products. All members are encouraged to advocate for the wider adoption of the Codes, including encouraging implementation by others in the seafood industry.
- 10.2 Claims include the use of responsibility as communicated on product labels, websites including overarching claims, in-store messaging et cetera, as well as additional factual information provided.
- 10.3 The Code sets out what claims can be made by SSC members and the minimum criteria that must be satisfied to make such claims. The Code is not a certification standard. The individual member making the claim bears the responsibility for ensuring claims are accurate and meet relevant legislation. SSC is not liable for any claims made.

11. Members' commitments

- 11.1 SSC members commit to only using claims that are in accordance with these minimum criteria:

- I SSC members can use the claims of 'responsibly sourced' or 'responsibly farmed' only;
- II At least 95% (by weight) of the component seafood in the product or dish must satisfy the criteria for claims regarding responsibility;
- III Any images must reflect the claims or processes they are intended to depict (for example the fishing method);
- IV Sufficient assurance must be made available on request to support any claim, such as outlining the steps taken to comply with the SSC Codes;
- V Members must evidence any claim, either at the point of sale, or via a link on pack.

12. Responsibility claims

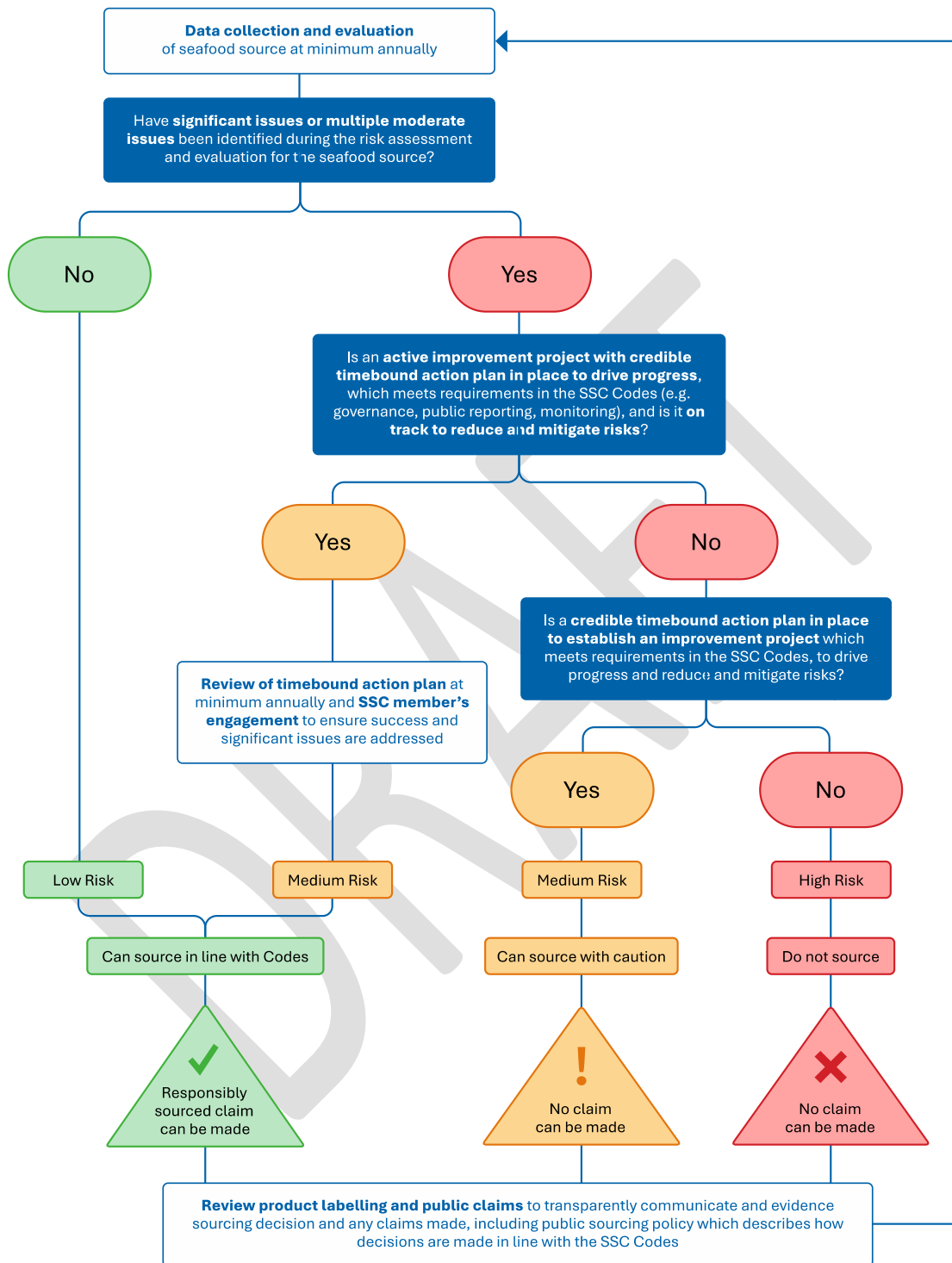
12.1 Responsibility

12.1.1 **Members must only make responsibility claims if they are satisfied the following minimum criteria are met:**

- I Sourcing requirements are met, and the outcome of the evaluation is low or medium risk;
- II A credible timebound action plan is in place to mitigate significant issues and/or multiple significant issues as identified in the evaluation stage, which meets the requirements in the SSC Sourcing Code;
- III The source fishery or farm is consistent with the principles of relevant key international standards and codes of conduct;
- IV If sourcing from certified fisheries and aquaculture farms, an independently audited chain of custody must be in place to trace the seafood to its source.

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13. Sourcing Decision Tree



Further information and examples are available in the guidance document and at www.sustainableseafoodcoalition.org or by contacting secretariat@sustainableseafoodcoalition.org

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