

DRAFT

**Shrimp Aquaculture Certification--
Principles, Criteria and other Certification Issues**

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The purpose of shrimp certification is to market shrimp produced by responsible techniques that would meet the expectations of socially- and environmentally-aware consumers. The goal of certification should be to reward producers who have complied with better practices and management systems, reduced their impacts, increased the efficiency of their resource use and been exemplary in terms of the socially responsibility of their employee relations as well as their interactions with other local stakeholders. A credible shrimp certification program should address the following issues:

- Be based on objective, independent and measurable performance-based standards—both environmental and social;
- Be based on a balanced participation of a broad range of stakeholders;
- Be based on a labeling system that includes a credible chain of custody;
- Be based on reliable and independent third party assessments and annual field audits;
- Be fully transparent to the parties involved and the public;
- Take place at the production unit as well as the larger ecosystem level;
- Be cost effective and voluntary;
- Demonstrate a commitment from the shrimp farmer to improve management; and
- Be applicable globally to a wide range of producers.

Shrimp aquaculture certification can be an important tool to improve management. It is neither a panacea to the world's fisheries crisis nor can it replace regulations and legislation. However, it can and should compliment these tools. The role shrimp aquaculture certification ultimately will play depends on the strength of the certification system as well as the process that created it.

Certification is based on a set of basic principles. These are the overall goals. Compliance with each of the basic principles is evaluated in terms of key criteria that serve as indicators of overall performance. Finally, the actual measurement of performance is the standard. This is normally a quantitative measure that a producer must achieve if a product is to be certified. The principles and criteria are the heart of any certification system. To be credible, they must reflect a consensus of most of the groups interested in shrimp aquaculture. Several principles and criteria are offered in this document as a starting point for discussion. They have been identified by many as key issues to address. Even so, they are offered here only as a point of departure.

For any given operation on a shrimp farm, there several practices for accomplishing the same objective. The environmental impacts from a particular operation depend on the practices used. Some practices are more harmful to the environment than others. Thus, a shrimp certification program should require producers to use “better practices,” those that are less likely to have negative impacts and to prohibit the use of “worse practices.”

The concept that practices have impacts and the impacts fall at different points on a continuum is important. Where one draws the line on what is acceptable could vary depending on what the end goal of the exercise actually is. Governments may want to draw the line closer to what some stakeholders would see as worse practices as a way to eliminate the absolute worst practices. By contrast, any proponents of a certification program would want to take the higher ground by drawing the line closer to what are the impacts that result from the known better practices.

Where a line should be drawn also will depend on the species produced, the scale and intensity of the system, the ability of the producer to comply, and the available technology and management systems. In addition, where the line is drawn will have some impact on how willing producers are to comply, how much product may ever be certified to go to market, and the net return to producers who sell certified product.

Six principles are identified below. A set of criteria are identified for each. Feedback about the appropriateness of the principles or the criteria is a useful way to start the discussion on certification.

Principle 1

Obey the law and comply with all regulations.

Criteria

- Have clear legal title to land where shrimp production takes place.
- Obtain all necessary permits and licenses for operation.
- Comply with all regulations and monitoring requirements.
- Comply with all labor laws.
- Pay all taxes and fees.

Many of the social and environmental problems that have resulted from shrimp aquaculture production in different parts of the world occur when individuals and companies do not obey existing laws. At minimum, a certified producer would be expected to respect such rules and regulations whatever they are and however incomplete they may be.

Principle 2

Conserve habitat.

Criteria

- Recognition that other people and species depend on the ecosystem as well.
- Maintain biodiversity and ecosystem integrity.

- No net loss of critical habitat.
- Water treatment or sedimentation area for improving effluent quality so that it does not degrade natural habitat.

Principle 3

Use resources efficiently.

Criteria

- Improve siting and construction in order to reduce maintenance and increase the life of the operation.
- Reduce energy use to product ratios.
- Eliminate overfeeding, increase FCRs, and improve total fishmeal to product ratios.
- Reduce water exchange rates.
- No prophylactic use of chemicals.
- Increase survival rates.

Shrimp aquaculture uses many different resources. The overarching goal should be to reduce resource use per unit of shrimp produced. The resources used include land, water, PL, energy, inorganic nutrients, feed and feed ingredients, chemicals, etc. Thus, the efficiency of resource use in shrimp production must be part of any analysis of overall environmental performance. A certification program for shrimp aquaculture should have a major focus on the overall efficiency of resource use.

Principle 4

Prevent impacts.

Criteria

- Comply with international best practices regarding the movement and quarantine of animals.
- Obtain PL from hatcheries that rely on captive breeding and domestication programs.
- Improve harvesting systems to reduce escapees.
- Manage the discharge system to eliminate escapees.
- Adopt disease management protocols to isolate disease and eliminate its spread.

In general, the introduction of exotic species to an ecological system should be regulated by governments in compliance with best international practices for movement and quarantine of animals. Any shrimp aquaculture certification program should insist that such guidelines covering the movement and quarantine of animals (alive or processed and frozen) are followed.

Principle 5

Improve management over time.

Criteria

- Establish monitoring criteria that allow management to improve resource use and reduce impacts.
- Have systems in place to effectively exchange information between shrimp farmers and between shrimp farmers and others who can improve overall management.

Principle 6

Shrimp farms should be responsible neighbors to local communities and other residents.

Criteria

- Do not impede the access of local residents to public resources.
- Support programs to improve welfare in local communities (e.g. clinics, schools, roads or other services).
- Support a net increase in the resources available to local communities (e.g. increased productivity of wetlands, mangroves, or fisheries; or increased markets for local goods).
- Do not increase disease vectors in the area.
- Develop waste disposal systems and use them.
- Hire and source inputs locally if at all possible.
- Adopt worker benefit and incentive packages that are better than the local norm.

Consumers do not want products that are simply green, e.g. that have been produced through the adoption of environmentally sustainable practices. They want to know, too, that the employees who produced the products were treated fairly, and that the company that produced the product is a respected member of society. For such consumers, compliance with existing laws is expected. By itself, it is not an indicator of responsible behavior. Companies who want to be certified will have to prove that they are not just legal operators but exemplary ones.