



# **Shrimp Seal of Quality (SSOQ) Certification Standards**

## **Final Draft for Comment**

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These Certification Standards have been prepared by the Shrimp Seal of Quality Organization.

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## Introduction

The Shrimp Seal of Quality (SSOQ) has prepared these SSOQ Certification Standards [Standards] pertaining to food safety, quality assurance, traceability, environmental sustainability, labour practices, and social responsibility in the Bangladesh shrimp industry. These Standards apply to all operators in the shrimp sector, including shrimp hatcheries, feed mills, ice plants, farms, depots and transporters, and processing plants who are certified by SSOQ.

SSOQ has prepared SSOQ Guidelines that clarify the application and interpretation of these Standards for different types of shrimp operations, including farms, depots and transporters, and processors. Additional Guidelines will be prepared for hatcheries, feed mills, and ice plants in the future.

These Standards enable the Bangladesh shrimp industry to progress towards safe, traceable, environmentally sustainable, and ethical production. SSOQ developed these Standards in consultation with a range of stakeholders from the shrimp industry and civil society. The Standards are based on a review of international and national standards as well as an understanding of the economic, social, and environmental issues facing the Bangladesh shrimp industry.

Certification to these Standards is voluntary. These Standards have no legal status; no penalty can be applied to any shrimp operator for failing to follow the Standard and compliance does not offer any exemption from legal or regulatory requirements under Bangladesh law.

# Certification Standards

## 1. Food Safety and Quality Assurance

- 1.1. Internationally banned antibiotics, drugs, food additives and other chemical compounds, as listed in SSOQ's Allowable Levels of Chemicals and Compounds, shall not be used.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2. Therapeutics shall be used in the manufacturer's prescribed manner for the control of diagnosed conditions and diseases, not for prophylactic purposes. Levels of these compounds and other contaminants shall be within the restricted limits of SSOQ's Allowable Levels of Chemicals and Compounds.
- 1.3. Human and untreated animal wastes shall be kept away from shrimp operations and appropriate sanitary facilities shall be accessible.
- 1.4. Shrimp shall be harvested, handled and transported in a manner that prevents contamination and deterioration.
- 1.5. Shrimp processing plants shall prepare, implement, and keep records of HACCP plans per HACCP, GMP, and SSOP requirements.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.6. Shrimp shall not be modified or adulterated through the addition of undeclared materials.
- 1.7. Weights and counts of packaged shrimp shall be as declared.
- 1.8. All labels and packaging shall comply with the laws and regulations of the importing country.

## 2. Traceability

- 2.1. Shrimp operators shall keep records that identify and trace inputs used in their operations.
- 2.2. The origin of shrimp bearing the SSOQ seal shall be traceable to SSOQ certified operators throughout the custody chain to the producing farm.
- 2.3. Shrimp produced at SSOQ certified farms shall be handled, transported and processed separately from that produced at uncertified farms.

## 3. Environmental Sustainability

- 3.1. Wild caught shrimp larvae shall not be used.
- 3.2. There shall be no import or cultivation of non-indigenous shrimp species.
- 3.3. Shrimp operations shall not divert or obstruct public water flows.
- 3.4. Mangrove forests shall not be used for new shrimp farm development.
- 3.5. Earthen structures, such as dikes and canals, shall be constructed in a manner that minimizes erosion and seepage.
- 3.6. Water movement to and from shrimp ponds shall be minimized and water flows managed in a manner that prevents erosion or other adverse impacts to surrounding land and water.
- 3.7. All water shall meet SSOQ Effluent Discharge Standards before discharge.<sup>3</sup>
- 3.8. Effluents and solid wastes shall be disposed of in an environmentally sustainable manner.
- 3.9. Chemicals, fuels, and feed shall be stored, used, and disposed of in a manner to prevent contamination of the environment.

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex 1 for SSOQ Allowable Levels of Chemicals and Compounds.

<sup>2</sup> Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) is defined by the UN/FAO Codex Alimentarius Recommended International Code of Practice, General Principles of Food Hygiene, CAC/RCP-1, Rev. 3-1997 and by the US FDA in 9 CFR 417. GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices) and SSOP (Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures) are defined by US FDA in 9 CFR 416 and 21 CFR 110 respectively.

<sup>3</sup> See Annex 2 for SSOQ Effluent Discharge Standards.

#### **4. Labor Practices**

- 4.1. Employers shall not use bonded or forced labor.
- 4.2. Employers shall compensate workers in compliance with laws in force in Bangladesh.
- 4.3. Employers shall ensure that working conditions comply with laws in force in Bangladesh. Employers shall evaluate health and safety hazards and take reasonable steps to eliminate or control risks to workers posed by these hazards, and educate the workers on these risks.
- 4.4. Employers shall not require workers to work for more than the regular hours prescribed by laws in force in Bangladesh. Workers shall be entitled to at least one day off in every seven-day period without jeopardizing their employment. All overtime hours must be worked voluntarily.
- 4.5. Employers shall not discriminate in employment based on gender, age, or religion.
- 4.6. Employers shall ensure that no worker is subjected to any physical, sexual, psychological, or verbal harassment, abuse, withholding of earned wages, or other form of intimidation.
- 4.7. Where children are employed, employers shall comply with the relevant provisions of laws in force in Bangladesh.<sup>4</sup> Where feasible, employers shall make accommodations to provide working children access to educational opportunities. Employers shall not employ children under the age of fourteen.
- 4.8. Employers shall comply with the relevant provisions of laws in force in Bangladesh relating to the welfare of female workers who are pregnant, breast-feeding, or on maternity leave.
- 4.9. Labor shall be allowed to associate, organize, bargain collectively, and execute their rights as prescribed by laws in force in Bangladesh.

#### **5. Social Responsibility**

- 5.1. Landowners shall have clear legal right of ownership to the land on which shrimp operations take place.
- 5.2. The terms or agreement pertaining to the use of land belonging to another shall be in writing and fully complied with by lessors and lessees.
- 5.3. Land used for shrimp operations shall not be acquired by coercion.
- 5.4. Shrimp operations shall not block or interfere with local communities' rights to access common property resources that they depend on for survival and livelihood, including but not limited to fishing grounds, rivers, canals and rights of way.
- 5.5. Shrimp operations shall not hinder or disrupt the daily activities of neighboring farms and communities.
- 5.6. Shrimp operations owners and workers shall respect and not interfere with the religious, cultural, and traditional beliefs and practices of the local community.
- 5.7. Shrimp operators shall make workers aware of their obligations to the local community as stated in this Standard and shall be held responsible for the acts and social conduct of their workers.

**These Certification Standards shall be reviewed by SSOQ on at least an annual basis.**

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<sup>4</sup> A child is defined as a person under the age of seventeen per Article 66 of the Factories Act, 1965.

## Annex 1: SSOQ Allowable Levels of Chemicals and Compounds

This list of chemicals, compounds, and heavy metals as well as the associated maximum allowable levels are based on the minimum requirements of major importing countries, including the United States and European Union. The chemicals and compounds included, as well as the allowable levels, shall be reviewed at least on an annual basis and are subject to change following changes in international market requirements.

Name	Description	Allowable Level	Notes
Chloramphenicol*	Antibiotic	0.3 ppb (US FDA)	BANNED FROM USE
Nitrofuren*	Antibiotic	1.0 ppb	BANNED FROM USE
Aldrin/ Dieldrin	Pesticide	0.3 ppm	
Chlordane	Pesticide	0.3 ppm	
Chlordecone (Kepone)	Pesticide	0.3 ppm	
DDT, TDE, DDE	Pesticide	5.0 ppm	
Diquat	Pesticide	3.0 ppm	
Heptachlor/ Heptachlor epoxide	Pesticide	0.3 ppm	
Mirex	Pesticide	0.1 ppm	
Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)	PCB	2.0 ppm	
2,4-D	PCB	1.0 ppm	
Arsenic	Heavy metal	76 ppm	
Cadmium	Heavy metal	3 ppm	
Chromium	Heavy metal	12 ppm	
Lead	Heavy metal	1.5 ppm	
Nickel	Heavy metal	70 ppm	
Methyl mercury	Heavy metal	1 ppm	

\* An allowable level above zero is not a license to use the compound. Chloramphenicol and nitrofuren are banned from use by all SSOQ certified operators, however levels up to the allowable limits are acceptable since these trace levels could have come from uncontrollable sources.

## Annex II: SSOQ Effluent Discharge Standards

Variables	Values	Frequency	Notes
pH (standard units)	6.0 – 9.5	Monthly	
Total suspended solids (mg/L)	100 or less	Quarterly	Final sample prior to discharge at time of harvest
Soluble phosphorus (mg/L)	0.5 or less	Monthly	
Total ammonia nitrogen (mg/L)	5 or less	Monthly	
5-day biochemical oxygen demand (mg/L)	50 or less	Quarterly	Final sample prior to discharge at time of harvest
Dissolved oxygen (mg/L)	4 or more	Monthly	
Chloride	800 mg/L or less	One sample per season at discharge at time of harvest	Applicable only for farms when discharged into freshwater

Farms with stocking densities above 9 PL per square meter and all processing plants are required to perform periodic testing per the schedule above. Effluents from farms with stocking densities below 9 PL per square meter will be surveyed by SSOQ on an ongoing basis to monitor effluent quality.

These standards will be reviewed on at least an annual basis.