ASC Group Requirements For Farms

Version: V1.1 - Issue Date: 1 November 2026



Contact Information:
Aquaculture Stewardship Council, Maliebaan 50-B 3581 CS Utrecht, The Netherlands

Version Control, Available Language(s), and Copyright Notice

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) is the owner of this document.

Trade register number 34389683

For feedback or questions regarding the content of this document, please contact ASC via certification@asc-aqua.org.

Document ID: ASC-CAR-005

Version Control

Document version history:

Version:	Issue Date:	Effective Date:	Remarks/changes
V1.0	1 May 2025	1 August 2025	New document
V1.1	1 November 2026	1 May 2027	**Terminology:** updated Farm Standard references to include Species Standards under the collective term "ASC Standard for Farms". **Part B Table 1 & 2:** Clarified site ownership and land rights requirements. **3.3 Internal Audit (IA):** Clarified IA's shall occur when the site is in production. **4.9 Scope of Certification:** Clarified the exclusion of processing and packing activities. **7.1 Management Review:** Added an explicit requirement for an effective management review process to support continual improvement. **NC Grading:** Table 2.1 updated to reflect WHO antimicrobial classification for Critical NC. Table 2.2 Revised to clarify Group NCs. **Appendix 4 Group Site register:** updated to require the name of site owner where not owned by the client. **Other:** Minor, non-substantive amends for clarity.

It is the responsibility of the user of the document to use the latest version as published on the ASC website.

Review and Revision

ASC shall review this document at least every three years for accuracy and relevance and shall align this document with any revisions made to the ASC Standards documents if required.

If review determines that revision is necessary, ASC shall revise this document, publishing the new version on the ASC website with the issue date, effective date and date of next review.

If review determines that revision is not necessary, ASC shall reaffirm this document, communicate publicly about the decision and rationale, and establish the date of next review.

Available Language(s)

The ASC Group Requirements for Farms document is available in the following language(s):

Version:	Available Languages
V1.1	English (official language) Japanese Korean Spanish Turkish Vietnamese

In case of any inconsistencies and/or discrepancies between available translation(s) and the English version, the online English version (PDF format) will prevail.

Copyright notice



This document is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License.

Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be requested via certification@asc-aqua.org.

Table of Contents

Version Control, Available Language(s), and Copyright Notice 2

About ASC 6

ASC Group Requirements for Farms 8

Table 1: Requirements for Group Certification Types for ASC Farm Certification 9

1. Organisational Structure and Management Authority 11

2. Group Site Register 12

3. On-site Internal Audits 13

4. Traceability and Segregation 17

5. Non-conforming Product 19

6. Complaints and Appeals 20

7. Management Review 20

8. Document Control 21

9. Records Management 22

10. Personnel Training 22

11. Adding and Removing Sites 23

12. GMB Sanctions: Suspension and Withdrawal 25

13. CAB Sanctions 25

Appendix 2 - Internal Non-Conformities 27

Table 2.1: Definitions of Internal Site Non-Conformities 27

Table 2.2: Definitions of Internal Group Non-Conformities 28

Table 2.3: Internal Non-Conformity Closure Timeframes, GMB and CAB actions 29

Appendix 3 - Internal Auditor Competency Requirements 30

Appendix 4 - Group Site Register 32

Appendix 5 - Farming Agreements 33

About ASC

The Power of Seafood

A nutritious protein source and a key component of global food security, 3.3 billion people rely on seafood for at least 20% of their animal protein consumption, and between 400 – 600 million people are directly and indirectly involved with the industry[1].

With population estimates of 10 billion by 2050, and with wild caught fisheries at capacity, farmed seafood comprises almost 60% of seafood consumed as its numbers and importance continues to grow[1]. Care must be taken immediately to limit the industry's negative impacts.

Responsible seafood farming eases pressure on natural resources, protects precious ecosystems, promotes economic opportunities and addresses food security challenges, caring for seafood, people and the planet. A crucial link in the circular economy, it upcycles multiple by-product streams into much needed high-quality protein.



Our Vision

A world where seafood farming plays a major role in supplying food and social benefits for humanity whilst minimising negative impacts on the environment



Our Mission

To transform seafood farming towards environmental sustainability and social responsibility, creating value across the chain using market mechanisms, improvement incentives and delivering value-added services from farm to fork

[1] *UN Fisheries Panel (COFI36):* Aquaculture as a solution to food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty

Transforming Seafood Farming

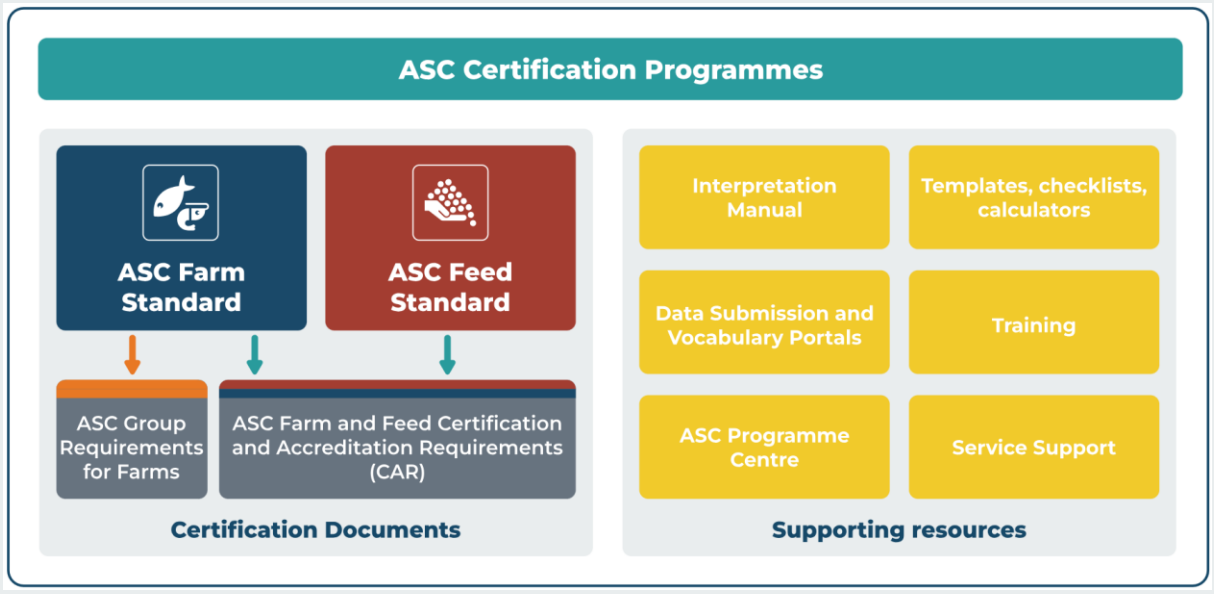
ASC is accelerating the transformation of the farmed seafood industry by:

Championing Change – raising awareness of what needs to change and collaborating to create pathways for the change required to accelerate positive impact on people and planet, fish and farms.

Making Change – developing and implementing the world's leading independent certification and improver programmes for responsibly farmed seafood.

Our supply chain partners choose ASC certification for the most robust standards and the highest assurance ensuring traceability and transparency throughout the supply chain. By choosing ASC labelled seafood, consumers in over 100 countries are contributing to a sustainable future.

ASC Certification Programmes



ASC Group Requirements for Farms

Scope

This document outlines the requirements for eligibility and collective certification against the relevant ASC Standard by a group of aquaculture production sites. The requirements provide the overarching framework for a central Internal Management System (IMS) to oversee the conformity to the ASC Standard at all the sites and coordinate the Group's certification process to apply for, obtain and maintain certification for a Group.

For the purposes of this document, the term 'ASC Standard' collectively refers to **either** the *ASC Farm Standard* or the relevant *ASC Species Standard*, unless otherwise specified.

Vocabulary Use

Intentional language is used in this document to ensure clarity in the following areas:

Modal Verbs

- 'Shall' denotes a requirement
- 'Should' denotes a recommendation
- 'May' denotes a permitted course of action
- 'Can' denotes a possible course of action

Appropriate vs. Adequate

- 'Appropriate' refers to what is suitable or proper for a particular need.
- 'Adequate' refers to what is sufficient to meet a need.

'And' vs. 'Or' in Lists

- 'And' implies inclusiveness (all items are required).
- 'Or' implies exclusiveness (only one of the items is required).

Calendar Day vs. Working Day

- Unless otherwise stated, the term 'day' refers to a calendar day. Where working days are intended, this shall be explicitly stated.

Certification Type

There are two Group certification types for ASC Farm certification:

A) Group - Option 1

B) Group - Option 2

The requirements for these certification types are detailed in **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Requirements for Group Certification Types for ASC Farm Certification

Req.	Certification Type	
	Group Option 1	**Group Option 2**
1	The Client's Unit of Certification **(UoC)** consists of more than one farm site, controlled by a central Internal Management System **(IMS)** that is managed by a Group Management Body **(GMB).**	The Client's Unit of Certification (UoC) consists of more than one farm site controlled by a central Internal Management System **(IMS)** that is managed by a Group Management Body **(GMB).** The sites are predominantly small- scale producers.
2	The UoC's IMS shall be audited at every routine Conformity Assessment Body **(CAB)** audit against the ASC Group Requirements for Farms. A sample of sites within the UoC shall be selected for every routine CAB audit against the relevant ASC Standard.	
3	The Client shall identify a GMB with a defined location, which is not necessarily the headquarters of the organisation. The group management function shall not be sub-contracted to an external organisation.	The Client is the GMB. The GMB shall be a legal entity or a statutory body within a larger legal entity, or another form of legally recognised organisation i.e. registered with a government office. The GMB shall have a defined location, which is not necessarily the headquarters of the organisation. The group management function shall not be sub-contracted to an external organisation.
4	The Client (Certificate Holder[2]) shall be capable of signing a binding contract that is legally enforceable.	

[2] Client granted ASC certification for a specific UoC.

Req.	Certification Type	
	Group Option 1	Group Option 2
5	The Client shall be the only entity authorised to sell ASC certified product.	
6	For each site within the UoC, the Client or the entity responsible for operating the site, shall either own the area in which the site is located or have a legally enforceable right to use the area, such as through a lease, licence or other contractual agreement. The sites shall be owned or sub-contracted by the Client. The Client shall retain ownership of the ASC certified product until it is sold outside the UoC.	For each site within the UoC, the contract farmer or other entity responsible for operating the site shall either own the area in which the site is located or have a legally enforceable right to use the area, such as through a lease, licence or other contractual agreement. The sites shall have a Farming Agreement with the Client (GMB). In these cases, the farmer owns the ASC product and shall sell the ASC product to the Client before the Client can sell the ASC certified product outside the UoC. If the farmer sells the site's product directly to another third party, **the product cannot be sold as ASC certified.** Farmers can be responsible for the operation of either single or multiple small-scale production sites.
7	The sites shall have clearly defined boundaries as described in the associated legal licences and permits and may include multiple pens, cages, ponds, tanks, raceway systems or beds.	
8	The sites and any associated facilities shall have a defined location and area.	
9	All sites within the UoC shall operate within the same jurisdiction or within neighbouring jurisdictions that share relevant common regulations.	
10	The GMB shall be responsible for managing the IMS and of assuring conformity against ASC Requirements of all sites within the UoC.	

1. Organisational Structure and Management Authority

1.1 The Client shall establish processes that enable effective implementation of the Group's IMS to ensure conformity to the ASC Group Requirements and the relevant ASC Standard for every site within the Group's UoC.

1.2 The GMB shall appoint a designated person for the CAB, ASC, and ASC's Integrity Services Provider and clearly document who shall act as a deputy in their absence.

1.2.1 The designated person shall be responsible for all activities related to ASC certification within the Group and liaising with the CAB, ASC and ASC's Integrity Services Provider.

1.2.2 The designated person and their contact details shall be communicated to all site managers in the Group and the CAB.

1.3 The Client shall have a documented organisational structure that:

A) Details the management structure of the Group.

B) Details the interrelationships and lines of communication between the sites and Group management and between different sites within the Group.

C) Describes the degree of centralisation of process/activities that are applicable to all sites[3].

D) Details the key duties and responsibilities in place within the Group.

E) Identifies a GMB designated person and deputy as per **Requirement 1.2.**

1.4 The GMB shall ensure that the:

A) Sites within the Group conform to the applicable requirements of the relevant ASC Standard.

B) IMS conforms to the ASC Group Requirements as per this document.

[3] e.g. purchasing, distribution, harvesting.

1.5 The GMB shall be responsible for:

A) Overseeing the implementation of corrective actions to address non-conformities raised during internal audits and external CAB audits.

B) Ensuring non-conformities are resolved within the required timeframes.

1.6 The GMB shall ensure that:

A) Effective communication is maintained between the GMB and the sites within the Group, ensuring that key personnel are informed of their shared responsibilities.

B) Where shared procedures or policies are documented, both the relevant GMB and site personnel shall have access to the most recent versions of these documents.

2. Group Site Register

2.1 The GMB shall maintain an up-to-date register of all sites within the Group that includes the information outlined in **Appendix 4.**

2.2 The GMB shall identify the name and physical address of where the central IMS processes/activities are planned and controlled on the register.

3. On-site Internal Audits

Internal Audit Scheduling

3.1 The GMB shall implement an effective and documented scheduled internal audit programme.

3.1.1 The schedule of internal site audits shall be communicated to all sites.

3.2 The Group's IMS, and all sites within the Group, shall be internally audited within the 12 month period prior to the CAB initial audit and at least annually thereafter.

3.2.1 Prior to the CAB initial audit and as part of the CAB's document review, the GMB shall provide the CAB with the required evidence to demonstrate that all internal audit non-conformities are closed.

3.2.2 The GMB shall schedule site internal audits to be conducted while the site is in production.

3.2.3 The GMB shall plan internal audits to ensure that the Group's harvest activities are effectively evaluated.

3.2.4 The GMB may conduct unannounced internal site audits at their discretion. If conducted, the GMB shall not provide prior notice to the site.

3.3 Internal audits shall be conducted for:

A) Each site within the Group, against the applicable requirements of the relevant ASC Standard.

B) The Group's IMS against the ASC Group Requirements as per this document.

3.3.1 Internal audits of the site shall be conducted while it is in production.

Internal Auditors

3.4 The GMB shall be responsible for ensuring internal audits are conducted by appropriately trained and competent auditors who meet the Internal Group Auditor and Internal Site Auditor competency requirements[4] according to **Appendix 3.**

3.4.1 **Internal Group Auditors** shall be responsible for evaluating the Group's IMS against the ASC Group Requirements as per this document.

3.4.2 **Internal Site Auditors** shall be responsible for evaluating each site against the relevant ASC Standard.

3.5 The GMB shall ensure Internal Auditors are independent from the areas and activities they are auditing[5].

Internal Audit Reports

3.6 The GMB shall ensure the internal audit reports are completed using the ASC internal audit report template.

3.7 The scope of the internal audits shall cover the ASC Requirements for all sites, facilities, and activities within the Group and the IMS.

3.8 The internal audit reports shall accurately record conformity and non-conformity with reproducible[6] details of the objective evidence evaluated.

[4] An individual can be both an Internal Group Auditor and Internal Site Auditor once they meet the required competencies and are not auditing their own work.
[5] i.e. they shall not audit their own work.
[6] The audit report should include sufficient information to allow a secondary individual to locate identical documentation, information and data that was reviewed during the original audit, and arrive at the same conclusion.

Internal Audit Non-Conformity Findings

3.9 If non-conformities are identified against the relevant ASC Standard, the **Internal Site Auditor** shall categorise the non-conformity as a **site non-conformity**. The Internal Site Auditor shall:

A) Establish and record the non-conformity grade as site minor, site major or site critical according to the definitions in **Appendix 2, Table 2.1.**

B) Clearly record the details of the non-conformity against a specific standard indicator with a clear statement of the non-conformity, identifying the objective evidence on which the non-conformity is based.

C) Record the associated deadline for the non-conformity closure according to **Appendix 2, Table 2.3.**

3.10 If non-conformities are identified against the ASC Group Requirements, the **Internal Group Auditor** shall categorise the non-conformity as a **group non-conformity**.

3.11 The Internal Group Auditor shall coordinate with the Internal Site Auditor to review and determine if a site non-conformity is:

A) An isolated site non-conformity, that does not indicate failure of the Group's IMS, **OR**

B) A systemic non-conformity raised against more than one site, that indicates failure of the Group's IMS.

3.12 If **Requirement 3.11 B** applies, the Internal Group Auditor shall raise a Group non-conformity which shall be in addition to the non-conformities raised against the sites.

3.13 The Internal Group Auditor shall:

A) Establish and record the non-conformity grade as Group minor, Group major or Group critical according to the definitions in **Appendix 2, Table 2.2.**

B) Clearly record the details of the non-conformity against a specific ASC Group Requirement with a clear statement of the non-conformity, identifying the objective evidence on which the non-conformity is based.

C) Record the associated deadline for the non-conformity closure according to **Appendix 2, Table 2.3.**

3.14 The GMB shall implement a process to:

A) Communicate the internal audit non-conformities and the closure timeframes to the personnel responsible for the activity audited.

B) Agree corrections and corrective actions and person(s) responsible for implementation.

C) Verify the effective implementation of the corrections and corrective actions within the required timeframes.

3.15 Records of **Requirement 3.14** shall be maintained by the GMB for each non-conformity.

3.16 The GMB shall close the non-conformity if it is determined that the evidence provided demonstrates effective implementation of corrections and corrective actions, except for **site and group critical non-conformities.**

3.16.1 To close a **site critical non-conformity**, the GMB shall conduct an on-site audit to evaluate the effectiveness of implemented corrections and corrective actions.

3.16.2 To close a **group critical non-conformity,** the CAB shall conduct an on-site audit to evaluate the effectiveness of implemented corrections and corrective actions.

3.17 The GMB shall appoint a person or group of persons who **was not involved** in the audit process to:

A) Review each internal audit report.

B) Evaluate whether non-conformity corrective actions have sufficient evidence of effective implementation.

C) Make an impartial decision on conformity of each site against the relevant ASC Standard and the IMS against the ASC Group Requirements as per this document.

D) If required, make an impartial decision on whether sanctions need to be issued in line with **Section 12.**

3.18 The GMB shall maintain records of internal audit report reviews, non-conformity evaluations, conformity decisions and issued sanctions.

3.19 The GMB shall communicate conformity outcomes and any sanctions to each site within the Group.

4. Traceability and Segregation

4.1 The GMB shall implement an effective central traceability system that identifies and minimises the risk of mixing or substitution of ASC and non-ASC certified products.

4.1.1 Where the GMB intends to also handle or sell non-ASC certified product from non-ASC certified sites, the GMB shall notify the CAB prior to commencing this activity.

4.2 The traceability system shall ensure all batches of sold or dispatched products are traceable back to the production unit(s) within the site(s) and vice versa.

4.3 The GMB shall establish the frequency in which to conduct a traceability test with a minimum testing frequency of at least once annually.

4.4 The GMB shall conduct the traceability test across a range of ASC products.

4.4.1 The outcome of the traceability test shall verify that traceability can be determined from the production unit(s) to the sale or dispatch of the product from the Group and vice versa.

4.4.2 The traceability test shall include a mass balance of production volumes.

4.5 The GMB shall, as a minimum, maintain an up-to-date map that defines the sites and facilities within the Group.

4.6 The GMB shall have a documented process flow diagram that describes:

A) The extent of centralisation of processes and activities relevant to the traceability of product[7].

B) The movement of product between sites and facilities within the Group, from production unit(s) to the sale of product from the Group.

C) The interactions, product flow, and transportation between sites and to central facilities. Facilities may include but is not limited to:

i. Central storage facilities[8].

ii. Central collection centres (grading operations).

iii. Central distribution, dispatch or sales.

4.7 If ASC certified product is transported from individual sites to a central facility, it shall be under strict control and supervision of the GMB ensuring no risk is presented to the security of the ASC certified product.

4.7.1 As a minimum, the following records shall be retained:

A) Transportation identification.

B) Time of harvest/dispatch/arrival.

C) Volumes (kg live weight, size).

D) Seal number, if applicable.

4.8 The GMB shall not permit the use of intermediary traders between sites and the GMB.

4.9 Processing and packing activities shall not be included in the scope of the Group UoC's ASC Farm Certification. Where processing or packing facilities handling the UoC's product are either vertically integrated[9] with, or subcontracted by, the Client, those facilities shall hold, or be covered by, valid ASC Chain of Custody (CoC) Certification.

---

[7] e.g. central purchasing, dispatch, sales distribution, harvesting etc.
[8] e.g. feed.
[9] A business arrangement in which the Client owns and operates the processing and/or packing facilities that handle product originating from their UoC.

4.10 If the GMB has contracted sites within the Group, the GMB:

A) Shall have ownership of the site's product before selling this as ASC certified product outside the Group.

B) Shall not permit the farmer to sell the site's product directly to another third-party as ASC certified.

5. Non-conforming Product

5.1 The GMB shall have an effective process for managing non-conforming ASC product that includes:

A) Secure storage and clear identification of non-conforming product.

B) Defined responsibilities for decision making on the use of products appropriate to the issue[10].

5.2 If non-conforming product is detected, the GMB shall immediately cease to identify, dispatch or sell any implicated non-conforming product as ASC certified product.

5.3 If the GMB identifies and downgrades the non-conforming product from ASC certified to non-ASC certified product, the GMB shall ensure this product is re-labelled or re-identified as non-ASC certified product prior to sale.

5.4 The GMB shall notify all customers confirmed to have received non-conforming product within **four days** of the non-conforming product detection and advise the customer of potential impacts on any ASC related claims associated with this product.

5.5 The GMB shall notify their CAB within **four days** of detecting the non-conforming product and inform the CAB of the implicated lots/batches and actions taken to resolve the situation.

5.6 The GMB shall identify the reason the product is non-conforming and implement measures to prevent recurrence where necessary.

5.7 The GMB shall maintain records relating to the non-conforming product; including any decisions made or actions taken.

[10] e.g. downgrading to non-ASC certified product.

6. Complaints and Appeals

6.1 The GMB shall have an effective documented procedure to manage internal and external complaints and appeals.

6.1.1 The complaints and appeals procedure shall include the contract farmer's right to raise complaints and appeals to the GMB about the outcome of internal audits against their sites.

6.2 The GMB shall retain a record of all complaints and appeals including details of the associated investigations and outcome actions.

6.3 Complaints and appeals shall be analysed by the GMB to determine trends that may affect the conformity of the Group against the relevant ASC Standard and the ASC Group Requirements as per this document.

7. Management Review

7.1 The GMB shall implement and maintain an effective management review process, supported by documented procedures and records, to ensure the continuing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the Internal Management System (IMS), and to drive continual improvement.

7.2 The GMB shall hold management review meetings to review the Group's performance against the ASC Requirements at planned intervals, at least annually.

7.3 Management review meetings shall be attended by the Group's senior management.

7.4 The management review shall evaluate the following as a minimum:

A) Previous management review action plans, timeframes, and status.

B) Results of internal audits and the status of corrections, corrective actions and non-conformity trend analysis.

C) Results of CAB's external audits and the status of corrections and corrective actions.

D) Complaints and where relevant, appeals and the actions taken to resolve them.

E) Sanctions issued and where applicable, appropriate follow-up.

F) Improvements made or planned to be implemented.

7.5 Conclusions and agreements reached during the management review shall be documented by the GMB and distributed to all sites.

8. Document Control

8.1 The GMB shall establish an effective document control process to ensure that only the most recent version of documents and forms are accessible for use.

8.2 The document control process shall include:

A) A master list of all controlled documents indicating the most recent version number.

B) The method for the authorisation and identification of the documents.

C) Identification of amendments or changes to documents including the reason for change.

D) A system to ensure obsolete documentation is removed from circulation and updated or revised documents are circulated.

8.3 Where documents are electronically stored, they shall also be stored securely[11].

8.4 Documents shall be available in the language most used by the personnel in each of the sites within the Group.

8.5 If translation of documents is required, the GMB shall ensure the translations are accurate and the translated document is controlled under the document control process.

[11] e.g. password protected and backed-up to prevent loss.

9. Records Management

9.1 The GMB shall have an effective record retention process that defines the controls needed for the identification, storage, protection, access and retention of records related to the Group's conformity to the ASC Requirements.

9.2 Records shall be genuine, retrievable, and legible.

9.3 Records shall be retained for a defined period, considering legal and requirements of the relevant ASC Standard.

9.4 Where records are electronically stored, they shall be stored securely.

9.5 The GMB shall assume responsibility for maintaining the records of individual sites that require assistance to manage records[12].

10. Personnel Training

10.1 The GMB shall have an effective training programme that documents the training needs of relevant key personnel within the Group, at group and site level.

10.2 The personnel training programme shall include as a minimum:

A) Identification of the necessary competencies of specific key roles.

B) Provision of training or other action to ensure personnel have the required competencies.

C) Review of the effectiveness of training.

D) Delivery of training in the appropriate language of trainees by competent trainers, who have been selected by the GMB.

10.3 The GMB shall develop, implement, and maintain an annual training plan and shall include training on:

A) Relevant ASC Standard Requirements.

B) ASC Group Requirements.

[12] e.g. due to accessibility issues or illiteracy.

11. Adding and Removing Sites

Adding Sites

11.1 Before a site can be added to the Group, the GMB shall ensure:

A) An on-site internal audit has been conducted of the site against the applicable requirements of the relevant ASC Standard and following the requirements in **Section 3** of this document.

B) Sites that already hold valid ASC certification may be added to a Group without an internal or CAB audit if they meet the requirements described in 'Adding Certified Sites' section of the **ASC Farm and Feed CAR** (Certification and Accreditation Requirements).

11.2 To request to add sites to the Group, the GMB shall provide the CAB with the following:

A) An updated group site register with a formal request to add the site to the Group.

B) A copy of the reviewed internal audit report, indicating all non-conformities are closed.

C) If applicable, a copy of the contractual agreement between the Client and site.

11.3 Site addition requests shall be submitted to the CAB no later than **three months** from the date of the site's internal audit.

11.4 The GMB, starting from the initial certification date, may annually request to increase the number of sites.

11.5 If the GMB requests to add sites to the Group between routine CAB audits, the CAB shall determine whether the addition of these new sites increases the Group's total annual production volume by more than **10%** of the current annual production volume.

11.5.1 If adding the new sites increases the Group's total annual production volume by more than **10%,** the CAB shall conduct an on-site audit of a representative sample of the sites proposed for addition prior to adding the sites to the Group.

11.5.2 If adding the new sites increases the Group's total annual production volume by less than **10%,** a CAB audit is not required if the strictest condition below is also met[13]:

A) The requested increase to the number of sites does not exceed a total of **five** sites **OR**

B) The requested increase to the number of sites does not exceed more than **10%** of the total number of existing sites in the Group.

11.6 Sites shall only be eligible to identify product as ASC certified from the date they are added to the scope of certification following the approval of the CAB.

Removing Sites

11.7 The GMB may submit a formal request to the CAB to **cancel** (voluntarily withdraw) a site from the Group if the site:

A) Is not currently suspended.

B) Does not have any open CAB or internal major or critical non-conformities.

C) Does not have any open data requests from ASC or ASC's Integrity Services Provider.

11.7.1 The GMB shall formally notify the CAB of the decision to cancel a site's certification within **four days**.

11.8 Where the site does not meet **Requirement 11.7**, the GMB shall follow the requirements in **Section 12** to remove sites from the Group.

[13] i.e. the condition that results in the fewest number of sites that can be added without a CAB audit.

12. GMB Sanctions: Suspension and Withdrawal

12.1 The GMB shall have an effective process to manage sanctions.

12.2 The GMB shall **suspend** the Group or site within the Group if a critical non-conformity is detected during an internal site audit.

12.2.1 Refer to **Appendix 2, Table 2.3** for more information on required timeframes and actions for Group and Site non-conformities.

12.3 The GMB shall **withdraw** a site within the Group if the internal site critical non-conformity is not closed within the closure timeframes according to **Appendix 2, Table 2.3.**

12.4 The GMB shall have an effective process to ensure that product harvested from affected sites is not identified, dispatched or sold as ASC certified during the suspension period or from the date of withdrawal.

12.5 The GMB shall formally notify the CAB[14] of the suspension or withdrawal within **four days** of their issuance of a site or Group sanction.

12.6 The GMB shall within **four days** of the issuance of a site sanction:

12.6.1 Register the withdrawal, or suspension on the group site register, together with the date the site was permanently withdrawn or suspended from the Group.

13. CAB Sanctions

13.1 If the Group's certificate or site under the certificate is suspended, withdrawn, or cancelled by the CAB, the GMB shall ensure:

A) That for affected sites, product from the date of the CAB suspension, withdrawal or cancellation, is not identified, dispatched or sold as ASC certified or with the ASC label, trademark or claim.

B) To advise existing customers in writing within **four days** of CAB notification.

C) To provide ASC within **four days** of the notification, details of existing customers to Assurance@asc-aqua.org.

[14] The CAB is required to register the suspension or withdrawal of certificates or sites under the certificate on the ASC database within two working days of the notification.

Appendix 1 - Acronyms

Acronym	Term
AB	Accreditation Body
ASC	Aquaculture Stewardship Council
CAB	Conformity Assessment Body
CAR	Certification and Accreditation Requirements
GIS	Geographic Information System
GMB	Group Management Body
IAS	Ingredient Accounting System
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IEC	International Electrotechnical Commission
IMS	Internal Management System
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
NC	Non-Conformity
UoC	Unit of Certification
WHO	World Health Organisation
WGS	World Geodetic System

Appendix 2 - Internal Non-Conformities

Table 2.1: Definitions of Internal Site Non-Conformities

Grade	Definition
Site Critical	o Workers' lives are evidently at risk o Evidence of child or forced labour o Detection of the following in ASC identified product samples collected at a client's UoC by ASC, ASC's designated agent, ASC's Appointed Integrity Services Provider, the CAB or the GMB: • Banned substances • Antibiotics in crustaceans • For any ASC eligible species, detection of antimicrobials listed by the World Health Organization **(WHO)** as: o Authorised for use in Humans Only o Highest Priority Critically Important Antimicrobials (HPCIA) o Critically Important Antimicrobials (CIA) for Human Medicine. o Sales or dispatch of non-ASC certified product as ASC certified.
Site Major	o Where there is a substantial failure that is likely to have a significant impact on conformity to the requirements of the relevant ASC Standard o The failure results in the absence or total breakdown of a system or process and is highly likely to materially reduce the ability to assure the integrity of the certified product o The failure is persistent and recurs over time (may be due to non-closure or ineffective closure of previous non-conformities) o The failure is systemic and widespread (generally due to a failure or weakness in system)
Site Minor	o Where there is failure that does not have a significant impact on conformity to the requirements of the relevant ASC Standard o The failure does not result in the total breakdown of a system or process o The failure is isolated or due to a single observed lapse of conformity to a requirement o The impacts of the failure are limited in temporal and spatial scale.

Table 2.2: Definitions of Internal Group Non-Conformities

Grade	Definition
Group Critical	o The failure results in a breakdown of the Group's Central IMS controls that severely impacts conformity to the ASC Group Requirements for Farms. o The impact is **severe, confirmed, systemic and widespread**, affecting a large proportion of sites within the Group and resulting in widespread failure to conform to the relevant ASC Standard for Farms.
Group Major	o The failure results in ineffective implementation or breakdown of a central system or process within the IMS that compromises the effectiveness of the Group's Central IMS and its ability to ensure conformity to the ASC Group Requirements for Farms. o The impact is **significant or potentially systemic**, affecting or having a high likelihood of affecting, the conformity of multiple sites within the Group to the relevant ASC Standard for Farms.
Group Minor	o The failure does not significantly impact the effectiveness of the Group's Central IMS or the Group's conformity to the ASC Group Requirements for Farms, and control systems remain generally effective. o The impact is **limited in scope, contained, or low severity**, with no significant systemic or widespread effect on the conformity of sites within the Group to the relevant ASC Standard for Farms.

Table 2.3: Internal Non-Conformity Closure Timeframes, GMB and CAB actions

Non-conformity	NC Grade	Closure Timeframe *(from the NC Detection Date)*	Urgent Internal Auditor Actions	Urgent GMB Action	GMB Action if NC is not closed within closure timeframe	CAB Action
Site Non-conformity	***Critical***	**3 months**	Notify **GMB** within **24 hours** of detection.	o **Suspend** the **Site** from the Group within **48 hours** of detection. o **Notify the CAB** within **four days** of the Suspension.	o **Withdraw** the **Site** from the Group. o **Notify the CAB** within **four days** of the **Withdrawal.**	**Withdraw** the **Site** from the Group Certificate.
	Major		N/A	N/A	o **Suspend** the **Site** from the Group. o **Notify the CAB** within **four days** of the **Suspension.**	**Suspend** the **Site** from the Group Certificate.
	Minor		N/A	N/A		
Group Non-conformity	***Critical***	**3 months**	Notify **GMB** within **24 hours** of detection.	o **Suspend** the **Group** within **48 hours** of detection. o Notify the CAB within **four days** of the Suspension.	o **Notify the CAB** within **four days** of the exceeded NC closure deadline.	**Withdraw** the **Group Certificate.**
	Major		N/A	N/A		**Suspend** the **Group Certificate.**
	Minor		N/A	N/A		

Appendix 3 - Internal Auditor Competency Requirements

	Qualification/ Competency	Requirement:	Site Internal Auditor	Group Internal Auditor
1	**Formal Qualifications/ Industry Experience**	**A)** The individual shall have at least a post-high school diploma. **OR** **B)** At least **two years** of practical work experience in aquaculture operations.	✓	
2		**A)** The individual shall have at least a post-high school diploma. **OR** **B)** At least **two years** of practical experience in quality management systems, where they have gained general knowledge of management system standards (such as ISO 9001).		✓
3	**Specific Auditing Experience**	A minimum of **one** internal audit in the last **two years** against any certification scheme that has requirements for quality management systems.		✓
4a	**Qualifications/ Training**	Successful completion of an Internal Auditor training course based on ISO 19011 principles that has a minimum duration of **16 hours.** • The certificate shall specify the course content and duration. • Successful completion shall be indicated on the certificate.	✓	✓

	Qualification/ Competency	Requirement:	Site Internal Auditor	Group Internal Auditor
4b	**Qualifications/ Training**	**A)** successful completion of a training course for auditing social requirements provided by a professional training institution specialised in social auditing. **OR** **B)** Successful completion of ASC social internal auditor training	✓	
5	**Programme Specific Training**	Successful completion of: • The relevant ASC Standard training. • Applicable ASC internal auditor training courses. • ASC update training for new requirements within the deadlines specified by ASC.	✓	✓
6	**Witnessed Audit Requirements (Onboarding)**	Completion of at least **one** audit in the last **two years** against any aquaculture scheme as an acting site auditor, witnessed and approved by a qualified site internal auditor.	✓	
7	**Language Skills**	Working language skills in the primary local language of the site being audited. This shall include knowledge of the technical terminology used in this language. • If this is not the case, the auditor shall be accompanied by an independent interpreter.	✓	✓

Appendix 4 - Group Site Register

The GMB may develop their own Group Site Register template. The template shall contain as a minimum the following information[15]:

- Site Code (ASC generated code available after initial certification)
- Site Name
- Site Status (Certified/Suspended/ Withdrawn/Cancelled)
- Site - Certificate Holder relationship (Site owned by Client/Contracted-site/ Contract Farmer)
- Site – Name of Site Owner, where site is not owned by the Client
- Primary culture species
- Production system
- Latitude (N, S) (00.000000)
- Longitude (E,W) (000.000000)
- Last Internal Audit Date
- Date site added to Group
- Date site removed from Group
- Reason for removal
- Number of employees
- Production area (ha)
- Production volumes in metric tonnes:
- Total volume harvested for the previous full calendar year
- Volume harvested as ASC certified
- Volume harvested as Non-ASC certified
- Volume sold as ASC certified
- Volume sold as Non-ASC certified
- Estimated production volume for the current year
- Maximum production capacity

[15] The majority of this information may have been provided directly to ASC in accordance with the ASC Data Submission Procedure

Appendix 5 - Farming Agreements

A. General Farming Agreement

1. There shall be a written, legally enforceable and signed General Farming Agreement (hereinafter referred to as 'the agreement') between the GMB and each contracted site included in the Group's UoC.

2. The agreement shall, as a minimum, include the terms outlined in this Appendix and the applicable terms (relevant to the contracted site) detailed In the Certification Agreement section of the CAR (Certification and Accreditation Requirements).

3. The agreement shall specify that the inclusion in the Group UoC is voluntary and that the farmer may terminate the contract at any time.

4. The agreement shall specify that any changes to the agreement initiated by either party involved shall be agreed upon by both parties and a new agreement shall be signed. Any interim changes agreed upon shall be clearly communicated between both parties.

5. The farmer shall be permitted to seek legal advice on the agreement prior to signing.

6. The agreement shall:

    a. Identify the parties involved including the names of key contacts and contact details.

    b. Include a start date, contract duration, renewal date, termination date and review frequency.

    c. Specify the location and size of the contracted site(s)

    d. Specify the products the contracted site will produce for the GMB and production method.

    e. Clearly state the obligations of both parties involved and specify what sanctions apply if the provisions of the agreement are breached.

    f. Indicate the consequences for both parties of major failures to uphold commitments, such as non-delivery of product and non-payment for received product, 'acts of God[16]' or bankruptcy.

[16] An instance of uncontrollable natural forces, event outside of human control or activity, such as a natural disaster like a flood or an earthquake.

g. The agreement shall specify the dispute resolution process between the parties.

7. The Farmer shall agree to:

a. Only be a member of one ASC Group UoC at any given time.

b. Ensure the site(s) conform(s) to the applicable requirements of the relevant ASC Standard.

c. The GMB conducting, as a minimum, routine annual on-site audits against the applicable requirements of the relevant ASC Standard.

d. The GMB's CAB conducting audits against the applicable requirements of the relevant ASC Standard.

e. Grant access to the site for unannounced GMB and CAB audits.

f. The GMB, CAB, ASC's Integrity Services Provider and ASC having the right to visit the farmer's site(s) and any associated facilities within the scope of certification. This includes visits without prior notice to verify conformity to ASC Requirements.

g. To provide the GMB, CAB, ASC's Integrity Services Provider and ASC with access to relevant documentation and records. Also, upon request, provide relevant documentation and records for up to 12 months after leaving the Group UoC. This shall be regardless of the reason for leaving the Group UoC (e.g. withdrawn or cancelled).

B. Contract Farming Agreement

When aquaculture production is conducted under a contract farming arrangement between a Contract Farmer and the GMB. The GMB shall use the 'FAO Model Agreement' as a guide to develop the terms of their Contract Farming Agreement. This agreement shall also include the terms specified **Part A** of this Appendix.