

**Seafood Sustainability Certification Annotated Agenda**  
**MAFAC December 18-20, 2007**  
**St. Pete Beach, FL**

**1. Title of Discussion:** Certification of Seafood Sustainability

**2. Discussion Leader/Presenter:** Tom Billy, Commerce Subcommittee Chair/Mark Holliday, NMFS Office of Policy

**3. Objective/Purpose (e.g., brief statement of context and outcome being sought, e.g., information only; decision; action):** Several private and public sector efforts exist to promote seafood (both wild and aquaculture) sustainability standards and employ some form of certification or mark. Based on a review of existing programs and assessment of present and future demand for such a certification, MAFAC is asked to evaluate what role the US Government should pursue in the development of sustainability standards and marks for both wild caught and/or aquacultured fish and fishery products through a formal certification program. What would be the objectives to be sought by such as program? What are the pros and cons of different approaches? (e.g., private sector versus public sector managed, mandatory versus voluntary, industry versus third party, etc.)

**4. Background/Synopsis (brief executive summary of issue, include links to URL, other more detailed references):**

- There has been a plethora of natural resource and fisheries sustainability programs developed by various private sector entities that advocate a variety of environmental and human health “best practices” or standards, e.g., Governmental management of specific fisheries, “good” fishing practices related to bycatch or habitat interactions, animal welfare, social and economic responsibility, and seafood quality and safety.
- Although most Government agencies are supportive of the general goals of these sustainability programs, the specific requirements and boundaries defining sustainability differ widely among programs.
- In practice, some certification programs impose significant burdens on the applicants and they often require significant resources to provide information and submit to an audit. In some cases significant costs have fallen on NOAA Fisheries for information and analysis associated with certification approval or monitoring. The agency has issued a policy statement with respect to its involvement with supporting third-party seafood certification programs.
- NOAA Fisheries has publicly stated that the 10 National Standards for fishery conservation and management contained in the Magnuson Stevens Act constitute the nation’s benchmarks for sustainability (at least for wild caught species under MSA authority). Recent NOAA Fisheries efforts to promote consumer and public literacy on sustainability have taken place in the form of the launch of the *FishWatch* web site and production of seafood cards.

- Internationally, the US has agreed to adopt and promote the United Nation's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing.
- The Canadian fishing industry has developed their own version of a sustainable fisheries code of conduct.

### **Background documents:**

NMFS Policy Directive on private sector certification

UN Code of Conduct of Responsible Fishing

Canadian Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing Operations

Marine Stewardship Council background material

NOAA Fisheries Seafood cards

### **Trigger Questions:**

- **Is there a need for additional federal sustainability standards for seafood?**
- **If so, What form should they take – general guidance or specific standards?**
  - What would be the scope, e.g wild versus all seafood sources?**
  - Domestic production only or imports as well?**
  - What is the definitional boundary of “sustainable seafood?”**
  - Is a sustainable label or mark desired? Practical?**
  - What is the role of other federal agencies, industry, NGOs, consumer groups?**
- **If not, why not?**