



## **GSSI and certification schemes complete pilot test, getting Global Benchmark Tool ready to go live**

The Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI) completed its pilot test of the Global Benchmark Tool for seafood certification schemes. The pilot, which ran from March to July, helped GSSI's Independent Experts assess the Tool in real life situations getting it ready to go live on 8 October 2015 at the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries in Vigo, Spain.

Eight seafood certification schemes from across 7 countries worldwide participated in the pilot, which was co-funded by IDH (The Sustainable Trade Initiative). Thanks to strong collaboration, GSSI's Tool has been further updated using lessons learned, now available in a report on [www.ourgssi.org](http://www.ourgssi.org).

Through its Global Benchmark Tool for seafood certification schemes GSSI is working towards building confidence in certified seafood. As part of the road-test, certification schemes worked closely with GSSI's Experts at offices in Iceland, Indonesia, the Netherlands, Thailand, Vietnam, the UK and USA. The pilot looked in detail at the benchmark process to test the Tool's ability to benchmark certification schemes, which is going to support improvement in the seafood sector.

Bill DiMento, Vice President of Quality Assurance, Sustainability, and Government Affairs, High Liner Foods states: *"The pilot was GSSI's moment of truth as it had to pressure test the GSSI Global Benchmark Tool against its open stakeholder-developed procedures and criteria. On behalf of the GSSI Steering Board I would like to express our sincere appreciation to all participating certification schemes for the effort that has been invested in the pilot test. Their continued support and detailed feedback has allowed GSSI to update its Global Benchmark Tool for public release in Vigo at the upcoming 20 years' anniversary of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries."*

Aldin Hilbrands, Director of Aquaculture, IDH (the Sustainable Trade Initiative) notes: *"The pilot test was a crucial step in developing the Global Benchmark Tool for GSSI. We have had strong collaboration with seafood certification schemes from across the world, helping to ensure global applicability of the Tool. Having been involved in GSSI's Expert Working Groups, it's clear how the findings from this road-test have been invaluable in finalizing the Tool. Warm thanks go to all participating schemes and the Independent Experts in helping us to develop a robust Global Benchmark Tool that is about building confidence in certified seafood."*

Susan Marks, Sustainability Director, Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI), comments: *"The GSSI pilot test provided ASMI an opportunity to better understand the draft GSSI Global Benchmark Tool and the proposed GSSI Benchmark Process and enabled us to give feedback on this. We appreciate the ongoing efforts of the GSSI Steering Board and Expert Working Groups to further refine the Global Benchmark Tool based on feedback received during the pilot phase, and ASMI looks forward to participating in the GSSI Benchmark."*



Chris Nannes, CEO, Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), states: *“The pilot phase has helped to further develop the GSSI’s independent Global Benchmark Tool, it has shown the applicability of the tool and its potential to strengthen confidence in certified seafood. Through working together we are helping seafood buyers identify the most credible certification programs and easily make a responsible choice. I look forward to seeing the Global Benchmark Tool go live.”*

Peter Redmond, Director of Market Place Development, Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA-BAP) comments: *“As one of the first certification schemes to have entered the GSSI pilot process, GAA is pleased to have participated in its evolution and eagerly awaits the final update of the GSSI Benchmarking Tool. GAA’s Best Aquaculture Practice (BAP) standards, governance and certification procedures have been aligned to the FAO Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification and the GSSI tool provides a valuable means of independent verification.”*

Indonesia Good Aquaculture Practices (IndoGAP) notes: *“As one of the largest seafood producers and exporters, Indonesia strongly supports the GSSI initiative and its contribution towards harmonized and cost-effective seafood ecolabel certification schemes. Participation of IndoGAP in this pilot test will greatly help Indonesia’s efforts to drive sustainable aquaculture development.”*

Dr. Hrefna Karlsdóttir, Project Manager, Iceland Responsible Fisheries Foundation (IRFF) states: *“The participation in the GSSI Pilot Test Program has been an interesting journey for us. It has given us the opportunity to look at our own certification program in a critical way, as well as we are certain that our participation has been a valuable input in the development of a useful tool, that honors internationally adopted principles and guidelines. We hope that the result will be a fair and objective tool that will level the playing field and promote order in the market for seafood.”*

Rupert Howes, Chief Executive of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) comments: *“The MSC appreciated the opportunity to participate in the pilot and validate the GSSI’s draft requirements and indicators. We believe the feedback and experience that GSSI gained from the pilot will contribute to improving the tool, and are pleased to have been able to contribute to this. We hope this initiative will result in impartial, consistent benchmarking of seafood certification and assurance mechanisms, helping buyers make informed choices and supporting thriving oceans for the future.”*

Dr. Waraporn Prompoj, Deputy Director General, Department of Fisheries, Thailand notes: *“Thailand Department of Fisheries sincerely appreciated GSSI’s kind invitation to include us in the Pilot Test Project. Benchmarking of seafood certification schemes using the GSSI Global Benchmark Tool grounded in FAO’s Conformity Assessment Criteria will be very useful for Thailand and help identify transparent and credible certification schemes. We hope that our participation in this exercise has assisted GSSI to further develop the Tool, ensuring accessibility to the process for all interested certification schemes. We also hope that GSSI’s recognition of credible certification schemes will help in strengthening the development of global seafood industries and also reduce unnecessary multiple certifications and ultimately reduce the costs for producers.”*



Dr. Pham Anh Tuan, Deputy Director General, Department of Fisheries, Vietnam (VietGAP) states: *“Sustainability is an important issue for the seafood industry in Vietnam. However, the many international standards operating in Vietnam today tend to cause confusion and duplication. Therefore, the Vietnamese government developed the Vietnam National standard on Good Aquaculture Practice (VietGAP) and certification system, based on the FAO Technical Guidelines for Aquaculture Certification and the CCRF. VietGAP supports the GSSI mission to build confidence in certified seafood through the GSSI Global Benchmark Tool, and participation in the GSSI Pilot Test has helped to further build understanding on the essential components for credible certification.”*

**Notes to Editors:**

GSSI is a global platform and partnership of seafood companies, NGOs, experts, governmental and intergovernmental organizations. The mission of GSSI is to ensure confidence in the supply and promotion of certified seafood as well as to promote improvement in seafood certification schemes.

GSSI is co-financed by GIZ on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) through its develoPPP.de program. GSSI has grown from 17 Funding Partner companies in 2013 to 32 in 2015 and welcomes new partners.

The seafood certification schemes that participated in the pilot for the Global Benchmark Tool are:

- Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI) [www.alaskaseafood.org](http://www.alaskaseafood.org)
- Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) [www.asc-aqua.org](http://www.asc-aqua.org)
- Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA-BAP) [www.gaalliance.org](http://www.gaalliance.org)
- Iceland Responsible Fisheries Foundation (IRFF) [www.responsiblefisheries.is](http://www.responsiblefisheries.is)
- Indonesia Good Aquaculture Practices (IndoGAP) [www.cbib.kkp.go.id](http://www.cbib.kkp.go.id)
- Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) [www.msc.org](http://www.msc.org)
- Thai Agricultural Standard : TAS 7401-2014 [www.acfs.go.th/eng](http://www.acfs.go.th/eng)
- Vietnam Good Aquaculture Practices (VietGAP) [www.vietgap.tongcucthuysan.gov.vn](http://www.vietgap.tongcucthuysan.gov.vn)

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