



17-07-2020

GSSI Management of Extraordinary Events Policy

1. Context

In response to the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic, Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI) recognized Scheme Owners have been working diligently to ensure the greatest possible level of assurance under these extraordinary circumstances. With the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic persisting, it has become clear that health risks and travel restrictions will continue to impact the ability to conduct on-site audits in the foreseeable future (at a minimum of 6-12 months).

The continued impacts of this global crisis may affect the ability of GSSI-recognized Scheme Owners to continue to align with the GSSI Essential Components for certification and auditing. GSSI has been working closely with its recognized Scheme Owners to provide a consistent policy and clear guidance for GSSI-recognized Scheme Owners who wish to continue their recognition status while managing the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic and any extraordinary events in the future.

GSSI continues to monitor the evolving COVID 19 outbreak and is committed to publishing timely updates and announcements when necessary. Please regularly check www.ourgssi.org for GSSI updates.

2. Decision

On June 23, 2020 the GSSI Steering Board has agreed that Scheme Owners who wish to continue their GSSI-recognition status while managing the impacts of an extraordinary event which affects their ability to continue to align with the GSSI Essential Components for certification and auditing, are required to follow the GSSI Management of Extraordinary Events Policy.

3. Management of Extraordinary Events Policy

Scheme Owners who wish to continue their GSSI-recognition status while managing the impacts of an extraordinary event which affects their ability to continue to align with the GSSI Essential Components for certification and auditing, are required to proceed as follows:

1. **Follow requirements** stipulated by applicable national regulations to manage the impacts of the extraordinary event and if those differ from the content of this position paper, regulatory requirements shall prevail.
2. **Publish policies** to address the possible impact of the extraordinary event on the certification status of certified organizations; and the impact of the extraordinary event on the ability of CBs to conduct audits. Scheme Owner shall ensure their policies to manage the impacts of extraordinary events meet the following requirements:
 - i. **Risk Assessment:** Scheme Owners shall ensure a risk assessment on the impact of the extraordinary event is conducted on the certification status of certified organizations.
Guidance: This risk assessment should be carried under guidelines from the Scheme Owner and the IAF ID3:2011 "Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting ABs, CABs and Certified Organizations" (see: www.iaf.nu; criteria for CBs and ABs respectively listed in Section 3 and Section 4). Based on background information and the current context, the goal of the risk assessment is to confirm that the certified organization is equipped to maintain the practices and processes guaranteed by their certificate.
The Scheme Owner shall establish a procedure to closely monitor the accreditation status of the Certification Body performing inspections/audits for their schemes.
 - ii. **Initial Audits:** Scheme Owners shall continue to require CBs to conduct an on-site visit. Scheme Owners may make an exception for applicants already managing certified organizations who are applying for certification of a new site. In such case, Scheme Owners shall require CBs to conduct a Remote Audit.
 - iii. **Surveillance Audits:** Scheme Owners may provide CBs with the option to postpone the surveillance audits for a maximum of 6 months. Scheme Owners are advised to encourage Remote Audits by CBs in the case on-site audits have been postponed. The goal of the Remote

Audit is to (1) ensure continuity of data collection and verification of certified entities, and (2) avoid multiplying the workload of auditors and to alleviate capacity issues once on-site audits are possible again.

- iv. **Re-certification Audits:** Scheme Owners may provide CBs with the option to extend the validity of the certificate for a maximum of 6 months. Scheme Owners are advised to encourage Remote Audits by CBs in the case on-site audits have been postponed. The goal of the Remote Audit is to (1) ensure continuity of data collection and verification of certified entities, and (2) avoid multiplying the workload of auditors and to alleviate capacity issues once on-site audits are possible again.
 - v. **Remote Audits:** Scheme Owner shall require Remote Audits:
 - a. follow the requirements of IAF MD4:2018: “The use of information and communication technology (ICT) for auditing/assessment purposes” (see www.iaf.nu).
 - b. to be combined with an on-site audit during the course of the certificate cycle to make up or complete any part of the regular audit/assessment not covered by the Remote Audit.
3. **Monitor** the implementation of its policies by Certification Bodies (CBs) and maintain documentation related to the implementation of above-mentioned policies.
4. **Share updates** with regards to their policies and implementation with GSSI as requested.