COMMUNITY CATCH

Guidance for Self-Assessment

Section 6: Governance

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Introduction

This is a living document.

Some content in this document is presented in a yellow box to indicate normative language taken directly from the Community Catch Standard, including definitions and clarifications.
Text presented in a blue box represents additional guidance that is illustrative or discretionary, such as examples, further explanation, or types of acceptable evidence.

Section 6 of the Community Catch Standard outlines the governance requirements expected of fisheries participating in the initiative. It recognises that good governance is essential to sustainable fisheries management and that approaches must reflect the diversity of small-scale, community-based, and formal management systems. The section sets out expectations for effective management structures, inclusive decision-making, conflict resolution, compliance, and monitoring. The goal is to ensure that fisheries operate transparently, fairly, and in a way that promotes participation, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Community Catch is committed to supporting fishery management, which is participatory, transparent, equitable and inclusive. In producing this Standard, we also recognise the difficulties often faced by small-scale fisheries in obtaining information on management system operations and in influencing these systems.

Section 6: Governance

Fishery Management

Sub-section: 6.1 Fishery management organization

Guidance: The Community Catch Standard explains that the organisation or arrangement that manages the fishery may be part of relevant traditional, fisher or community approaches (such as self or co-management) relevant to the management of the Fisher group, provided their performance can be objectively verified. It is recognised that fisher co-management is an effective way to facilitate and improve management, governance participation and engagement in supply chains; however, in line with the definition of a Fisher Group, this is encouraged but not required.

6.1.1 Fishery Management (MINIMUM REQUIREMENT)

There is a fishery management organization or arrangement that manages the fishery.

Question: 6.1.1.1 What best describes the fishery management system? (Check all that apply)

Guidance: The Fishery Client reports any formal or informal organization(s) or arrangement(s) managing the fishery. This may be a government body, co-management group (such as a mix of representatives from the Fishery, Government Agencies, NGOs), fisher association, or customary governance. For example, a local fisher group working with government officials to set seasonal closures. A Regional body can be a RFMO or the EU.

☐ No organisation or arrangement managing this fishery
☐ Fishers independently adjust practices based on catch
☐ Customary laws
☐ Co-management arrangement
☐ Managed by a local fishery management organisation
☐ Managed by a National fishery management organisation
☐ Managed by a Regional or International fishery management organisation
☐ Other (please describe)

6.1.2 Management Operates per Relevant Customary, Local, National, and International Laws

The fisheries management system operates in accordance with relevant and effective customary, local, national and international laws and regulations as applicable to the Fisher Group.

Question: **6.1.2.1 Does the fishery management system operate in accordance with relevant and effective customary, local, national and international laws and regulations?**

Guidance: The Fishery Client considers all applicable laws: customary, local, national, and international. The management system must comply with relevant rules and measures where the fishery operates. For example, if a fisher association manages the fishery, but national laws impose quotas or gear restrictions, the association must operate in line with those laws. In this example, compliance can be demonstrated through records like logbooks, monitoring systems, or enforcement evidence.

☐ Yes
☐ No

6.1.3 Transboundary Stocks Managed by Relevant Regional or Bilateral Fisheries Organization

Where the stock(s) fished by the Fisher Group are transboundary fish stock(s), straddling fish stock(s), highly migratory fish stock(s) or high seas fish stock(s), there shall be a bilateral, subregional or regional fisheries organization or arrangement, as appropriate, that is concerned with the management of the whole stock unit over its entire area of distribution. The Flag State(s) of the Fisher Group shall be members or participants in the relevant organisation or arrangement.

Question: **6.1.3.1 What best describes the stock(s) fished by the Fisher Group? (Check all that apply)**

Guidance: The Fishery Client identifies the type of stock: transboundary means across national borders; straddling spans multiple jurisdictions; highly migratory species travel great distances (e.g., tuna); high seas stocks occur beyond national waters. If none of these apply, the next two questions are skipped.

☐ Transboundary fish stock(s)
☐ Straddling fish stock(s)
☐ Highly migratory fish stock(s)
☐ High seas fish stock(s)
☐ None of the above

Question: **6.1.3.2 Is there a bilateral, subregional or regional fisheries organization or arrangement, as appropriate, that is concerned with the management of the whole stock unit over its entire area of distribution?**

Guidance: The Fishery Client checks and reports if there's an organization or arrangement managing the stock across its full range, especially for shared or migratory species.

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

Question: **6.1.3.3 Is/Are the Flag State(s) of the Fisher Group member(s) or participant(s) in the relevant organisation or arrangement?**

Guidance: The Fishery Client confirms whether the countries linked to the Fisher Group (Flag State(s)) participate in the organisation or agreement managing

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

Sub-section: 6.2 Organisation and decision-making

6.2.1 Roles and Responsibilities Are Clearly Defined Within the Management System

Roles and responsibilities of organisations and individuals involved in the fishery management process are defined and understood within the management system.

Question: **6.2.1.1 Are the roles and responsibilities of organisations and individuals involved in the fishery management process defined and understood within the management system?**

Guidance: The Fishery Client confirms that all parties involved know who does what in managing the fishery. This applies to individuals, organisations, or groups. For example, roles and responsibilities could be clearly defined in a management plan, in a Code of Conduct, in contracts, etc. Demonstrating that it is well understood could be done via interviews, Fisher Voice Survey or other tools.

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

Sub-section: 6.3 Review of management measures

6.3.1 Management Measures Are Regularly Reviewed

The fishery management organisation or arrangement keeps management measures under continuing review.

Guidance: The Community Catch Standard explains that “continuing review” is at a level of periodicity appropriate to the management needs (scale and intensity) of the fishery.

Question: **6.3.1.1 Does the fishery management organisation or arrangement keep management measures under continuing review?**

Guidance: Compliance with this requirement can be demonstrated by the presence of a clear review protocol and/or the ability of the management system to respond to serious issues that arise in the management or operation of the fishery. Compliance with this requirement can also be demonstrated by performance against PI 4.2.2, 4.4.2 and, where appropriate, 5.3.1, 5.6.1 and/or 5.9.1 which can all show reaction of the management organisation to changes in the performance of the fishery. Where the Fisher Group is not the body responsible for conducting the review, the Fisher Group should demonstrated engagement, awareness, and responsiveness to the existing review processes (or their absence). For Fisher Groups that follow national, regional, or international measures, the expectation is that they review how these measures apply to their operations and how they affect the ability of the Group to meet the Community Catch Standard. For example, if the fishery follows national rules on quotas or seasonal closures, the Group should be able to show they understand these rules, monitor their impacts, and engage with review processes where possible.

☐ Management measures are regularly reviewed
☐ Management measures are reviewed on an occasional basis
☐ Management reviews are made when issues are raised directly with relevant people/organisations
☐ No management reviews are considered necessary
☐ Don't know

6.3.2 Reviews Use Best Scientific, Local, and Traditional Knowledge Where Relevant

Reviews of measures include use of the best scientific evidence available, and local and traditional knowledge from a diversity of perspectives, as available and relevant.

Question: **6.3.2.1 Do reviews include use of the best scientific evidence available, and local and traditional knowledge from a diversity of perspectives, as available and relevant?**

Guidance: Reviews should include scientific evidence and local or traditional knowledge. For example, involving elders with historical fishing knowledge alongside scientific stock assessments ensures diverse views are considered. Where relevant, the diversity of perspectives should include women, indigenous peoples and marginalised and vulnerable groups.

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

6.3.3 Review Responses Are Timely and Apply the Precautionary Approach Where Appropriate

Responses to reviews are implemented on defined and justifiable timescales and adopt the precautionary approach where appropriate.

Guidance: The Community Catch Standard explains that the precautionary approach is as defined in the Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1992. “Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.”

Question: 6.3.3.1 Are changes in management implemented on defined and justifiable timescales?

Guidance: The timescales over which any actions are implemented will depend on the nature and extent of consultations carried out, other testing/pilots, time associated with any regulatory requirements, etc. The Fisher Group should have a defined timescale for implementation and justification of this timescale. Adoption of the precautionary approach can be demonstrated by policy or practice - for example in fishery management (PI 4.2.3).

☐ Management measures are regularly changed
☐ Management measures are changed on an occasional basis
☐ Changes in management measures are made when issues are raised directly with relevant people/organisations
☐ No changes in management measures are considered necessary
☐ Don't know

Question: 6.3.3.2 Do changes in management adopt the precautionary approach where appropriate?

Guidance: The precautionary approach means taking preventive action even with incomplete information to avoid environmental harm. For example, reducing fishing effort if stock assessments show uncertainty about sustainability. Adoption of the precautionary approach can be demonstrated by policy or practice - for example in fishery management (PI 4.2.3).

☐ Precautionary approach is embedded within fishery management
☐ Precautionary approach is not specifically referenced but cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation are taken when necessary
☐ There is no precautionary approach
☐ Don't know

6.3.4 Decisions and Rationale Are Communicated to Relevant Stakeholders for Effective Management

Decisions, and the rationale behind decisions, are communicated to relevant stakeholders so as to enable effective management.

Guidance: The Community Catch Standard explains that information used to inform decision-making is made available automatically or on request, but respecting confidentiality where appropriate. Such information may include details of management measures, stock assessments, ecosystem effects and bycatch and discard data.

Question: **6.3.4.1 Are fishers and/or organisations relevant to the Fisher Group informed of management decisions?**

Guidance: Information on decisions can be made available routinely, through meetings, websites, bulletins, newsletters, radio announcements, or other suitable communication, it can also be communicated in writing or verbally to stakeholders in response to specific requests.

☐ Anytime reviews are underway, even if they don't result in any changes
☐ At regular intervals to provide updates
☐ Anytime a management change is made
☐ Irregularly, fishers and/or organisations are not always informed of reviews or management changes
☐ Never, fishers and/or organisations don't know when reviews are underway or when changes in management are made
☐ Don't know

Sub-section: 6.4 Conflict resolution

6.4.1 Conflicts Are Resolved Through Impartial and Effective Mechanisms

Effective systems for conflict resolution are provided through impartial and effective mechanisms.

Guidance: The Community Catch Standard explains that mechanisms may operate at the level of the Fisher Group or Association, co-management organisation, administrative bodies and/or judicial bodies. The requirement is that these mechanisms be appropriate to the nature of conflicts experienced in the Fisher Group. Note that individual grievances inside the Fisher Group are covered in Section 1. Labour Rights.

Question: **6.4.1.1 When disputes occur within the fishery, what are the mechanisms to resolve them?**

Guidance: Conflict mechanisms can include legal systems, customary practices, or management authorities. For example, disputes resolved by a community council, a fisheries committee, or through the court system.

☐ Disputes are resolved through legal systems/courts
☐ Disputes are resolved through fisheries management authority
☐ Disputes are resolved as part of customary systems
☐ No conflict resolution mechanism
☐ Other (please specify in comment box)
☐ Don't know

Question: **6.4.1.2 Are the mechanisms able to resolve the most significant issues appropriate to the context of the fishery?**

Guidance: Conflict resolution mechanisms should be fair, transparent, and trusted by those involved. We recognise that in community-based systems, impartiality is hard to demonstrate. It can be demonstrated for example through culturally appropriate practices, such as using neutral facilitators (e.g., elders, rotating leaders), ensuring all parties can express concerns, and applying clear, agreed-upon processes. Mechanisms must be capable of resolving significant issues meaning conflicts that affect resource access, relationships within the Fisher Group, or the ability to meet the Community Catch Standard.

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

Sub-section: 6.5 Subsidies

6.5.1 Fishery Client Reports Any Subsidies Within the Fisher Group

The Fishery Client shall report any subsidies within the Fisher Group.

Guidance: The Community Catch Standard explains that subsidies shall be identified, including identification of subsidies which may lead to overcapacity within the Fisher Group and wider industry.

Question: **6.5.1.1 Are there any subsidies within the Fisher Group?**

Guidance: The Fishery Client reports any financial or other subsidies that support the fishery, like fuel or gear subsidies.

☐ Fuel subsidies
☐ Fishing boats subsidies
☐ Fishing gear subsidies
☐ No subsidies
☐ Other (please specify in comment box)

Question: **6.5.1.2 Do any of these subsidies lead to overcapacity within the Fisher Group and/or wider fishing industry?**

Guidance: The Fishery Client identifies if subsidies cause overcapacity meaning too many boats, fishers, or gear for the fishery to remain sustainable.

☐ Yes within the Fisher Group
☐ Yes within the wider fishing industry
☐ No
☐ Don't know

Participation and decision-making

Sub-section: 6.6 Participatory management

6.6.1 Client and Fisher Group Commit to Participate and Share Data as Required (MINIMUM REQUIREMENT)

The Fishery Client and/or Fisher Group commits to participate in the fishery management system and to make data available to the fishery management organisation as required and to the extent that is possible.

Question: **6.6.1.1 Is the client willing to commit to participate in the fishery management system and to make data available to the extent that is possible?**

Guidance: The Fishery Client and/or Fisher Group should actively participate in the fishery management system to the extent that is possible, recognising that participation helps ensure the system reflects the realities and needs of fishers. Participation may include attending meetings, contributing to management discussions, or providing information and data relevant to fishery operations. The level of participation expected should be reasonable, considering the capacity and resources of the Fisher Group.

☐ Yes
☐ No

6.6.2 Governance and Management System Is Documented, Participatory, and Transparent

The governance and fisheries management system under which the Fisher Group operates is documented and is managed in a manner which is both participatory and transparent.

Guidance: The Community Catch Standard explains that where multiple fishers comprise the Fisher Group, the operation of the Fisher Group (notably any associations or organisations) shall also be participatory and transparent.

Question: **6.6.2.1 Is the fishery management system (previously identified in 6.1.1.1) documented?**

Guidance: The governance and management system should be clearly documented so that fishers and stakeholders understand the rules, responsibilities, and decision-making processes that apply to them. Documentation may include formal laws, regulations, customary practices, agreements, or codes of conduct. Where possible, information should be made available in accessible formats and languages to fishers or their representatives. For example, there are document in a fishery management plan that is publicly available.

☐ Relevant laws and regulations (both formal and informal) are documented and available to fishers/representatives
☐ Laws and regulations (both formal and informal) are documented but are not made available fishers/representatives
☐ Regulations may not be documented
☐ Don't know

Question: **6.6.2.2 Is the fishery management system participatory?**

Guidance: A participatory management system ensures that fishers, and other relevant stakeholders, have opportunities to engage in decision-making in a meaningful way. Participation means more than consultation, it requires stakeholders being given enough information, time, and opportunity to contribute, and that their input is considered in decisions. Demonstrating that a management system is participatory could include the fact that diverse voices (e.g., women, Indigenous Peoples, marginalized groups) are included, that fishers and other relevant stakeholders have the opportunity to engage meaningfully and whether there is evidence that stakeholder input has influenced decisions or outcomes. Participatory mechanisms are reported in the next set of questions.

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

Sub-section: 6.7 Participatory reporting

6.7.1 Client Reports on Stakeholder Participation Mechanisms in the Management System

The Fishery Client shall report on mechanisms in place within the management system to facilitate stakeholder participation in decision-making processes.

Question: **6.7.1.1 How are fishers included on the operation/management of the fishery?**

Guidance: The Fishery Client reports on the mechanisms used to facilitate stakeholder participation, including for fishers, their representatives, and other relevant groups. Mechanisms should promote meaningful participation, not only provide opportunities to be consulted. Mechanisms may include formal or informal processes such as regular meetings or assemblies, representation of fishers in decision-making bodies, established communication channels for feedback, community-agreed processes for consultation.

☐ There is an established process for fisher representatives to discuss issues with fishery managers
☐ Fishers and/or fisher representatives are consulted directly by fishery managers on a regular basis and before any changes are made
☐ Fishers and/or fisher representatives are consulted directly by fishery managers before any major changes are made
☐ Fishers and/or fisher representatives are consulted by fishery managers before the most important changes are made
☐ Fishers and/or fisher representatives make representations to fishery managers through a clear communication channel
☐ There is an established process for fisher representatives to discuss issues with fishery managers
☐ There is no process for fisher representatives to discuss issues with fishery managers

6.7.2 Client Reports on Inclusion of Women, Indigenous, and Vulnerable Groups

The Fishery Client shall report on how opportunities for women, indigenous peoples, marginalized and vulnerable groups are promoted at different levels (fishers, management, etc.).

Question: 6.7.2.1 Describe the ways in which opportunities for women, indigenous peoples, marginalized and vulnerable groups are promoted at different levels of the fishery management system:

Guidance: Describe how opportunities for women, Indigenous Peoples, marginalized, and vulnerable groups are promoted at all levels of the fishery management system, including among fishers, within the management structure, and in decision-making processes. Reporting could describe both existing opportunities for these groups to participate and influence decisions and actions taken to identify and reduce barriers to participation, especially where gaps exist. For example, efforts to promote inclusive participation (e.g., accessible meeting times, targeted outreach), to reduce barriers (e.g., addressing language, cultural, or logistical challenges including providing childcare to enable participation), to create leadership opportunities (e.g., reserved seats on committees for women or Indigenous People, promoting female leadership), to build capacity for meaningful engagement (e.g., training or mentoring programs).
The intent is to promote inclusive and equitable governance, in line with the broader goals of the Community Catch Standard. Simply documenting opportunities is not sufficient; efforts to actively support participation and address structural barriers are expected.

Compliance and Surveillance

Sub-section: 6.8 Monitoring, control and surveillance system

6.8.1 Management System Ensures Monitoring, Control, and Enforcement of Applicable Regulations

The management system provides effective and suitable monitoring, surveillance, control and enforcement of Fishery Management regulations applicable to the Fisher Group.

Guidance: The Community Catch Standard explains that evaluation of the effectiveness of monitoring, control and surveillance systems should give due consideration to the availability of data in small-scale fisheries and the fact that management systems can differ substantially for different types and scales of fisheries. This may include community-based management systems. Note that a past record of good management performance could be considered as supporting evidence of the adequacy of the management measures and the management system.

Question: 6.8.1.1 Which statement(s) best summarize the fishery's situation in regards to monitoring, surveillance, control and enforcement of regulations applicable to the Fisher Group? (Check all that apply)

Guidance: The management system should ensure that appropriate monitoring, control, surveillance, and enforcement (MCS) is in place to support compliance with fishery management regulations. The type of MCS will depend on the scale and context of the fishery. For example, in certain traditional fisheries, this may include community surveillance, informal reporting, peer accountability, or engagement with authorities. In more formal contexts, MCS may involve inspections, electronic monitoring, or official patrols. Effectiveness is demonstrated by showing that MCS efforts contribute to improved compliance, reduced infractions, or adaptive management responses.

☐ Fishers monitor the fishery and agree any modifications needed
☐ A fishery co-management arrangement monitors and manages the Fisher Group
☐ Information is collected on fishing activity and catches
☐ There are official inspections of vessels
☐ There are official inspections of fishing operations on the water
☐ There are on-shore inspections/monitoring of gear and/or landings
☐ There is remote monitoring of vessels (e.g. VMS, cameras)
☐ None of these

Sub-section: 6.9 Compliance

6.9.1 Client and Fisher Group Support and Comply With Monitoring and Enforcement Systems

The Fishery Client and/or Fisher Group supports the monitoring, control, and surveillance and enforcement systems and provides, as far as is practicable, compliance and monitoring information requested by the relevant authorities.

Guidance: The Community Catch Standard explains that the intent is that activities of the Fisher Group be carried out in accordance with all relevant laws and regulations, including reporting requirements.

Question: **6.9.1.1 Do fishers comply with management requirements/regulations?**

Guidance: Supporting the MCS system would include an absence of systematic non-compliance within the Fisher Group and/or prior effective measures within the Fisher Group to identify and eliminate systematic non-compliances. Systematic non-compliance would involve a continuing system, method, or plan to avoid or disrupt management controls. Support in this context, in accordance with footnote, can be demonstrated by no evidence of systematic (organised) or systemic (widespread or universal) non-compliance of the Fisher Group with relevant laws and regulations. Suitable sources of evidence would include national or regional Monitoring, Control and Surveillance programmes, community or co-management bodies and/or NGOs. It is expected that information required by relevant authorities will be provided as required. However, in cases where general information requirements of the wider fishing industry cannot be practicably met in a specific small-scale fishing situation, the reasons behind this should be made clear. Deficiencies in data provision are allowable as long as these do not compromise the management goals of the relevant authorities.

☐ Fishery management regulations/requirements are fully complied with by the Fisher Group
☐ Fishery management regulations/requirements are mostly complied with by the Fisher Group, some minor non-compliances occur
☐ Compliance with fishery management regulations/requirements is variable, some are followed at times
☐ Fishery management regulations/requirements are mostly NOT complied with - either many fishers do not follow, or only at some times

Question: **6.9.1.2 When required by relevant authorities, is information on MCS and compliance provided to them when requested?**

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know