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Sent by email

Date: 13/07/2016

Subject: Request for variation to the MSC Certification Requirement v2.0 FCR-7.23.13.1 for ISF Norwegian & Icelandic herring trawl and seine

Dear Jason Combes,

I write with reference to your submission on 08/07/2016 of a request for variation to the MSC Certification Requirement (CR) to allow:

A variation against FCR-7.23.13.1.b.i

Acoura Marine have found the progress with a condition milestone is behind target for a second year. The assessment team now consider that the original condition milestones are not appropriate for the fishery. To specify remedial action & revised milestones at second instance of falling "behind target" The CR allows for remedial action & revised milestones to be set at the first instance of falling "behind target" (FCR v2.0 7.23.13.1.b.i). A variation is sought to allow these options at the second instance of falling behind target.

As you are aware, the CR procedures relating to v2.0 FCR-7.23.13.1 state:

The team shall audit conformity with, and progress and performance against, certification conditions using the narrative or metric form of the original conditions.

- a. The CAB shall document conformity with, and progress and performance against, certification conditions using the narrative or metric form of the original condition.
- b. The CAB shall document whether progress is 'on target', 'ahead of target' or 'behind target', as well as its rationale for such a judgement.
 - i. If progress against the measurable outcomes, expected results or (interim) milestones specified when setting the condition is judged to be behind target, the CAB shall specify the remedial action, and any revised milestones, that are required to bring process back on track within 12 months to achieve the original condition by the original deadline.
- c. To verify that conditions have been met and outcomes have been achieved, the CAB shall:
 - i. Examine relevant objective evidence, and following that examination,
 - ii. Re-score all relevant PISGs relating to that condition and only if the score is raised above 80 should the condition be closed out. In doing this:
 - A. The rationale for the re-scoring and closing out of the condition shall be documented in the Surveillance Report

These are integral to ensuring all MSC accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies operate in a consistent and transparent manner. The MSC intends that these requirements be met across all fisheries and CoC certificate holders, except in exceptional, well-justified circumstances, as part of the MSC programme.

MSC notes the factors presented supporting your request, including:

- The off-site surveillance audit for this fishery took place on the 24th June 2016. Two team members met with the client in Iceland (taking advantage of their presence in Iceland), and the third team member took part off-site. This was the second surveillance audit for this fishery.
- Whilst auditing progress with the first condition of certification, it became clear that progress with the Year 1 milestone for Condition 1 remained behind target, having been found to be behind target at the first surveillance

audit. Condition 1 addresses the lack of a formal management plan for the Icelandic Summer Spawning herring stock UoC under PI 1.2.2.

- The Year 1 milestone required that a report reviewing different management options for this stock should be presented to ICES, and in Year 2 there should be consultation on these options.
- During discussions of these milestones at the surveillance audit with the client it became clear that the original milestones were inappropriate. The key reasons for this are to do with the biology of the target species and also the management regime.
- The Icelandic Summer Spawning Herring stock is confined to Icelandic waters and is only fished by Icelandic vessels. ICES have identified reference points for the stock biomass and also Fmsy. The client and Icelandic Government should therefore follow a different, and more effective, course of action to that set out in the milestones in order to achieve the goal of the condition by Year 4.
- The variations requested would allow Acoura Marine to revise the milestones at this surveillance audit so that they are more appropriate for the fish stock and management regime.
- The assessment team consider that the original goal of having a formal management plan in place for this fishery by Year 4 of the certification remains appropriate. The change to the milestones will not alter the overall outcome of the condition.
- The assessment team also note that the stock is presently above its target reference point and that fishing mortality is compatible with Fmsy. The variation will not affect stock status.
- Acoura Marine confirms that the request does not alter the conformity of the certificate holder with the relevant MSC standard.

Given the rationale provided, the MSC is willing to grant a variation to the CR in this case subject to the following conditions:

- Stakeholders are informed.

If you have any questions regarding this response, please do not hesitate to contact the relevant Fisheries Assessment Manager for this fishery.

Marine Stewardship Council

cc: Accreditation Services International