

**Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) 4th Annual Surveillance
Audit**

Netherlands Blue Shell Mussel Fishery

On behalf of the Client

Dutch PO mussel culture

Prepared by the Conformity Assessment Body (CAB)

ME Certification Ltd

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Glossary

Acronym	Definition
CAB	Conformity Assessment Body
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
MEC	ME Certification Ltd
MEP	MacAlister Elliott & Partners Ltd
MZI	Mosselzaadinstallaties (seed mussel collectors)
UoC	Unit of Certification

1. General Information

Fishery name	Netherlands blue shell mussel		
Units of assessment	<p>Species – Blue shell mussel (<i>Mytilus edulis</i>)</p> <p>Geographical range of fishery operations - The Waddenzee and Zeeuwse delta of the Dutch coastal region</p> <p>Method of Capture - UoC1: Seed mussel collection by suspended ropes UoC2: Seed mussel collection by suspended nets UoC3: Seed mussel collection by dredging UoC4: Seeding mussel seed and half grown mussels on culture plots, collection of harvest size mussels from culture plots by dredging</p> <p>Stock – Blue shell mussel</p> <p>Management - The management system - both EU and national level - is subject to law, observes the legal and cultural rights of fishermen and includes transparent mechanisms for dispute resolution. Fishing plan for seed mussels is written by the Producers' Organisation (PO) for Mussel Culture.</p> <p>Client group - Vereniging Producentenorganisatie van de Nederlandse mosselcultuur (Dutch PO mussel culture)</p>		
Date certified	20 December 2013	Date of expiry	26 July 2016
Surveillance level and type	Surveillance level 4, On-site surveillance		
Date of surveillance audit	12 th October 2015		
Surveillance stage	1st Surveillance		
	2nd Surveillance		
	3rd Surveillance		
	4th Surveillance	X	
	Other (expedited etc.)		
Surveillance team	Lead assessor: Kat Collinson Assessors: Ulf Löwenberg, Chrissie Sieben		
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2. Background

This report outlines the process and outcome of the 4th Annual Surveillance audit for the MSC certified fishery “Netherlands Blue Shell Mussel Fishery, Bottom Culture”. The fishery is conducted by members of the Producentenorganisatie van de Nederlandse mosselcultuur (Dutch PO mussel culture). This PO is based in Yerseke, NL. It has 88 members whose main activity is mussel culture on culture plots in the Waddenzee en Oosterschelde.

A detailed background to the fishery is provided in the MEP [year 2 surveillance report](#). No changes in the following have occurred to those outlined in that report:

- Unit of Certification;
- Stock definition and information base;
- Operation of the fleet in the fishery;
- Management systems;
- Fishery regulations;
- Changes to how traceability is conducted within the fishery;
- The assessment team also confirms that the fishery under surveillance here is still within the scope of enhanced fisheries, as set out in Table 1 in the MSC Certification Requirements under 7.4.3.

Table 1. TAC and Catch Data

TAC	Year	N/A	Amount	N/A
UoA share of TAC	Year	N/A	Amount	N/A
UoC share of TAC	Year	N/A	Amount	N/A
Total green weight catch by UoC	Year (most recent)	2014/2015	Amount	579.320 mussel tonnes
	Year (second most recent)	2013/2014	Amount	376.383 mussel tonnes

Note: In Holland the volume of mussels is expressed in “mosseltonnen”, with one (1) mosselton equalizing 100 kg. In this document all volumes are expressed in metric tonnes (with one metric tonne being 1000 kg or 10 mosseltonnen).

Table 2. Summary of Assessment Conditions

Condition number	Performance indicator (PI)	Status	PI original score	PI revised score
1	1.2.3 (all)	Closed at Year 1	80	Not revised

Condition number	Performance indicator (PI)	Status	PI original score	PI revised score
2	1.2.4 (all)	Closed at Year 2	80	Not revised
3	1.2.6 (UoC 1 & 2)	Closed at Year 3	80	Not revised
4	1.2.6 (UoC 4)	Closed at Year 3	80	Not revised
5	2.5.3 (UoC 1, 2 & 4)	Closed at Year 3	80	Not revised
6	3.2.3	Closed at Year 3	80	Not revised

3. Assessment Process

This audit is the 4th Annual Surveillance audit for this fishery since certification – which was finalised in 26th July 2011. The audit was carried out in Yerseke, NL on the 12th October 2015 by the surveillance team consisting of Ulf Löwenberg, Chrissie Sieben and Kat Collinson (Team Leader). This site visit for the fishery’s reassessment was carried out on subsequent days after the site visit for this surveillance, as well as the surveillance for the Netherlands suspended culture mussel fishery.

The original and first surveillance audits were undertaken by another CAB, SGS. The first surveillance was completed on the 14th February 2013. MEP (now MEC) has completed the subsequent surveillances, the 2nd and 3rd year audit reports being published on the 7th January 2014 and 29th January 2015 respectively.

This year, the assessment team witnessed an unloading of a mussel vessel, visited the auction where the MSC certified product is sold and one of the POs, which fish, purify and package the product for live export (Neeltje Jans in Veere, Netherlands).

Stakeholders were informed of the scheduled site visit, its time and location and the proposed audit team on 10th September November 2015. No comments or requests for interviews were received.

The fishery remains in conformance with the Scope Criteria relating to unilateral exemption and destructive fishing practices ([Certification Requirements v2.0](#), Section 7.4.1). The fishery was assessed this year using MSC Certification Requirements Version 2.0 for procedural stages; there was no need for any rescoring of Principle Indicators.

4. Results

4.1 Principle 1

The mussels stock of the Dutch coastal zone can be considered as one stock. The stock includes wild mussel beds (predominantly in the Wadden Sea), mussels on hard substrates like dykes and mussels on mussel culture plots, both in Wadden Sea and the Oosterschelde. A considerable part of the annual spatfall is harvested and transferred to the culture plots.

Wild stocks are surveyed on a scientific basis twice a year (in spring and autumn). The stock on bottom plots is known from a spring survey combined with seed quota, relaying and landing figures as collected by the Producer Organization (PO) and the Ministry of Economic Affairs (van Stralen 2015a).

The wild stock of mussels in the Wadden Sea (excluding culture plots) was assessed in autumn 2014. Conclusions from this survey were that virtually no spawning had occurred on in the summer of 2014 (van Stralen, 2015a). The 2015 spring survey was carried out between 16th March and 2nd April 2015. The data from the spring assessment report (van Stralen, 2015a) show that the total wild stock in the Western Wadden Sea was estimated at that point at 22,800 tonnes live weight, compared to the 36,500 tonnes in 2014 spring survey (van Stralen, 2014). Of this stock, 950 tonnes were seed mussels and 21,900 tonnes were half-grown or adult mussels. In order to estimate the quantity available to the fishery in May, these net estimates are increased by 20% for mussel growth between the survey date and the fishery, and also by a quantity for 'tarra'. Tarra is the mix of empty shells and other rubble that comes up with the mussels, and which is counted in to the fished quantity because the amount fished is estimated according to the volume load of the vessel. The increase for tarra is 40% for seed mussels and 25% for other mussels. These give the total gross estimates. There are also areas that are excluded from the fishery, such as intertidal areas, closed areas or areas not part of the fishing plan. The 2015 survey estimated that the total population of mussels in the unfished areas to be approximately 14,400 tonnes (van Stralen, 2015). Figure 1 shows the survey estimates of the spring wild stock biomass in the Western Wadden Sea from 1992 to 2015.

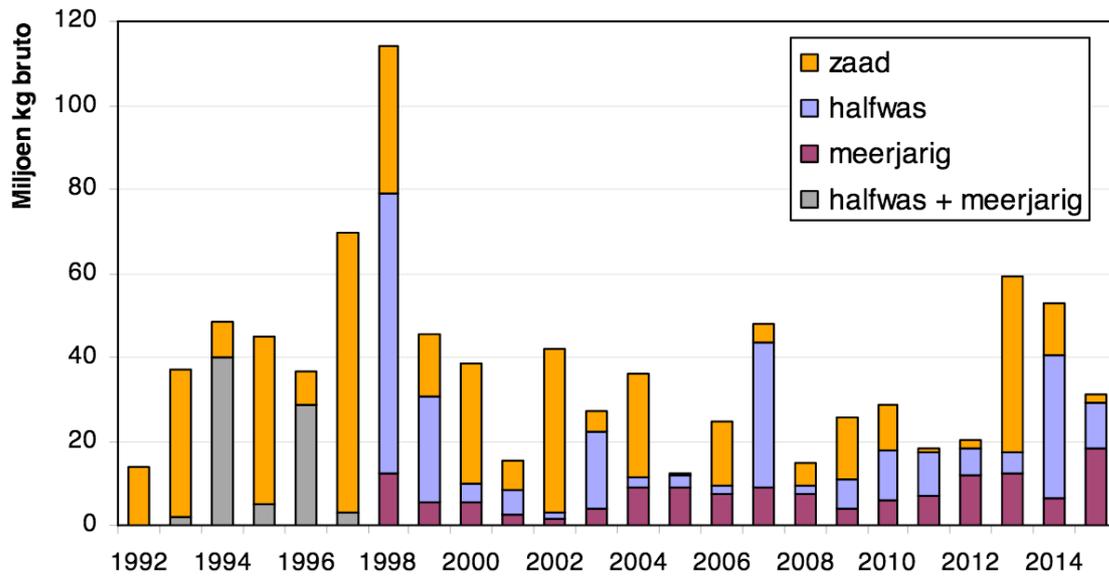


Figure 1. The spring survey estimates of wild mussel stock in the Western Wadden Sea, 1992-2015; zaad=seed, halfwas=half-grown, meerjarig=adult. (Source: van Stralen 2015a)

The stock on culture plots in the Western Wadden Sea was assessed in December 2014 (van Stralen 2015b). The results of these assessments are presented in **Figure 2** alongside previous assessments. The stock on culture plots in December 2014 was 58,700 tonnes net fresh weight. Of this stock 7,600 were seed mussels, and 21,000 tonnes adult mussels, the rest were half-grown, with shell lengths less than 45mm.

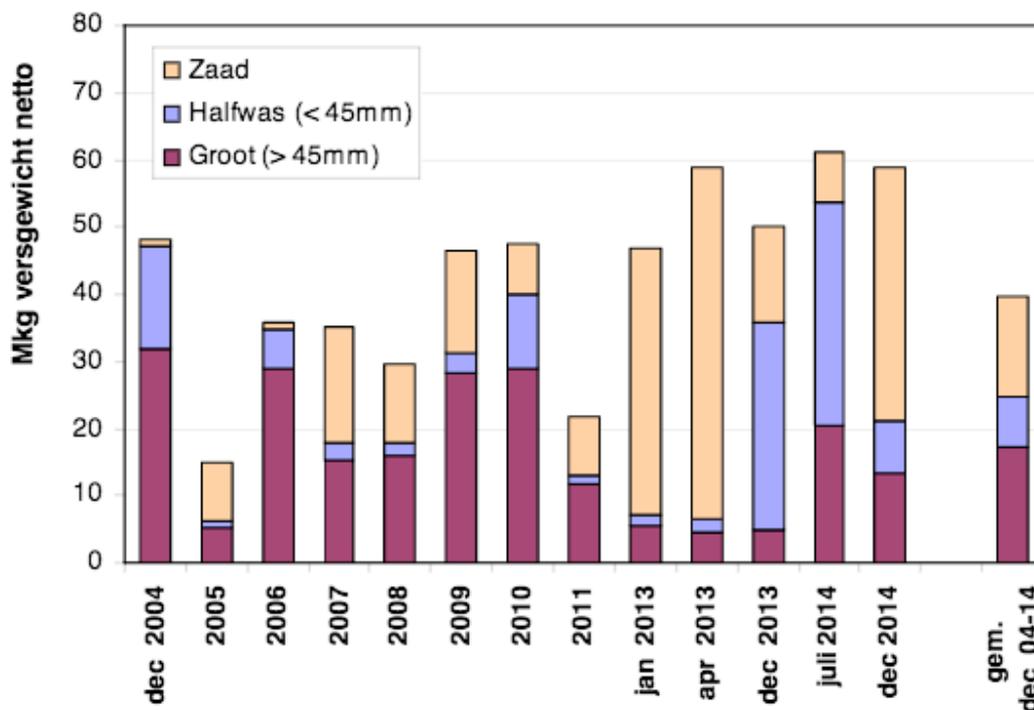


Figure 2. The mussel stock on culture plots in the Western Wadden Sea in net fresh weight at the start of the winter from 2004 to 2011, in the winter of 2012-2013 (January 2013), April 2013, July 2014 and December 2014. (Source: van Stralen 2015b).

The quantity of mussel culture that is cultured on MZIs is annually estimated through a survey of production figures of companies that produce mussel spat through mussel seed collectors. Van Stralen (2015c) has estimated that in 2014, 17,460 tonnes of mussel seed was produced (Figure 3). This was 18.7% more than the production in 2013.

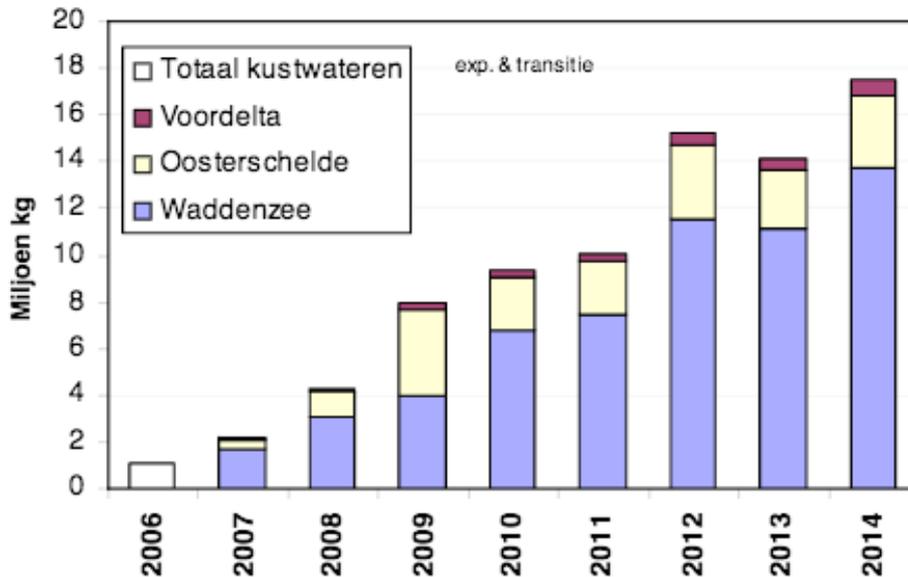


Figure 3. Annual harvest of seed mussels in mln kg wet weight from MZIs from Wadden Sea, Oosterschelde and Voordelta (Source: van Stralen 2015c)

Considering the data provided above it can be concluded that there are no signs that the stock status has changed significantly since the certification in 2011 and has showed signs of improvement since the last audit.

4.2 Principle 2

The situation in relation to Principle 2 has not changed since assessment – the fishery is very clean, with no discernable impacts on non-target species, ETP species, habitats or the ecosystem. The fishery does not monitor bycatch species, such as crabs and starfish. No significant impacts to those species are perceived due to the small area that is harvested, compared to the areas closed to fishing.

Vessels are also required to keep 1200 metres away from seals to prevent disturbance, however this is difficult in practice, as seals often approach operations to investigate.

During the initial certification assessment, conditions were raised in relation to habitat and ecosystem impacts. These were all closed by the year 3 surveillance audit in January 2015.

4.3 Principle 3

Since certification there have been no relevant changes in the management system. The fishery is subject to EU and national legislation. The basis is the Common Fisheries Policy

(CFP), a set of rules for managing European fishing fleets and for conserving fish stocks in order to ensure that fishing is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable. Since mussels are a non-quota species under the CFP, there is a number of regulations dealing with nature protection, production areas and water quality that do apply (e.g. Habitat Directive, Birds Directive, Natura 2000, etc.). On national level the fishery management is the responsibility of the Ministry of Economic Affairs (Ministerie van Economisch Zaken). A number of national legislation regulates the fishery (e.g. Visserijwet, Reglement Zee- en Kustvisserij, Structuurnota Zee- en Kustvisserij, etc.).

The activities of the Dutch Fisheries Product Board (Productschap Vis), a former central body in the Dutch fisheries, have been phased out since January 2014. Its tasks have been divided among different governmental and private organisations.

4.4 Tracking and tracing of fishery products

No changes in the traceability systems in the fishery since the last surveillance. For PO mussels, two thirds are sold through the auction on site in Yerseke and the other third sold directly by the traders.

Note that separate arrangements have been made with the client on the issue of translocation from other MSC certified fisheries into the Oosterschelde. The full assessment of the possible impact of translocations of MSC certified mussels to the Oosterschelde in 2015 is nearly completed by the end of the year. Progress on this assessment can be followed on the [MSC website](#).

5. Conclusion

There have been no significant changes to the fishery since the assessment team's last visit in January 2015. Mussel spat collection has been 18% higher in the 2014 survey compared to 2013 (van Stralen, 2015c). All the previously named conditions remain closed.

The assessment team's recommendation is that the fishery should remain certified for another year.

6. References

EC. 2009. Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009 establishing a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy, amending Regulations (EC) No 847/96, (EC) No 2371/2002, (EC) No 811/2004, (EC) No 768/2005, (EC) No 2115/2005, (EC) No 2166/2005, (EC) No 388/2006, (EC) No 509/2007, (EC) No 676/2007, (EC) No 1098/2007, (EC) No 1300/2008, (EC) No 1342/2008 and repealing Regulations (EEC) No 2847/93, (EC) No 1627/94 and (EC) No 1966/2006.

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