
Fish Meal and Fish Oil Certification Standard

Version 1.0



MEL Council
2026

Introduction

This document, based on the standard and certification scheme established by the Marine Eco-Label Japan Council (hereinafter referred to as the "Council"), sets out the necessary requirements as a standard for the purpose of promoting the spread of responsible and sustainable production activities of fishmeal and fish oil for fish feed, which play an important role in supporting responsible and sustainable aquaculture production that has earned the trust of consumers, including the protection of natural resources, conservation of the environment, animal health and welfare, and food safety. In order to obtain fishmeal and fish oil certification issued by the Council, products must satisfy the requirements set out in this standard.

This standard and certification scheme are based on the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (adopted in 1995), Requirements for Technical Guidelines for Aquaculture Certification (adopted in 2011, hereafter referred to as the "Aquaculture Certification Guidelines"), and Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries - Aquaculture Development 1-10 (issued 2001-2025) and comply with the Feed Safety Act and other feed-related laws and regulations. They also reflect the requirements for producing safe feed as specified in GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices for Feeds, etc.), the history of research and development into fishmeal and fish oil for fish farming, and the characteristics of Japan's production system.

The certification scheme is transparent, objective and reliable, adhering to the basic principles set out in Article 17 of the FAO Aquaculture Certification Guidelines.

The basic requirements of this standard shall be governed by the following principles 1 to 4.

Principle 1. Social responsibility in fish meal and fish oil production activities for fish feed

Principle 2. Ensuring safety and considering the environment

Principle 3: Ensuring nutritional value and approving ingredients

Principle 4. Ensuring the sustainability and traceability of raw material sources of the matters specified in this standard should be based on scientific evidence, but even if there is insufficient scientific evidence that the production of fish meal and fish oil for fish feed poses a hazard to healthy social activities, food safety, animal nutrition, or the environment, or if the social and economic systems for taking the necessary measures have not been established, the necessary preventative measures should be implemented in any way possible, as long as those measures do not have a significant impact on sustainable and safe production activities. In addition, while this standard is intended to be applied to the production of all fish meal and fish oil for fish feed, if there are specific requirements such as production methods or handling of special raw materials, they should be specified as individual standards.

Certification standards and inspection system

Certification based on this standard is carried out by an independent third-party organization (certification body) that is certified as conforming to the ISO standard (latest edition of ISO/IEC17065) that defines the capabilities and competence of certification bodies, and the certification of such organizations is carried out by member organizations of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF).

This standard is equally authentic in both Japanese and English. Furthermore, to maintain its relevance and effectiveness, it will be reviewed at least once every five years and revised as necessary. Furthermore, when related international standards and guidelines, such as the FAO Aquaculture Certification Guidelines and the GSSI Benchmarking Tool, or related Japanese government laws and regulations, are revised, this standard will also be reviewed and revised as necessary.

MEL Fishmeal and Fish Oil Standard Ver. 1.0 goes into effect

the MEL fish meal and fish oil standards coming into effect, we would like to clarify two points regarding our thinking.

The first is to work to link domestic fisheries, feed, and aquaculture into a sustainable supply chain. Fisheries that use marine resources sustainably and consider the environment and ecosystems will provide raw seafood ingredients to fishmeal and fish oil producers who are also making similar efforts. These fishmeal and fish oil ingredients will then be supplied to compound feed producers who are also making similar efforts. These compound feeds will then be supplied to aquaculture producers who are sustainable, considerate of the environment and ecosystems, and committed to co-prosperity with local communities and industry. Finally, consumers will be able to safely consume the farmed fish produced by these producers. Obtaining certification for each of these (fisheries, fishmeal/fish oil, compound feed, aquaculture) will contribute to the development of a fisheries industry that is trusted by society and consumers.

The Fisheries Basic Plan, which came into effect in 2022, calls for the recovery of fisheries resources through the steady promotion of resource management, the expansion of TACs, and the introduction of IQs. The Pacific stock of sardines, where TACs were introduced first, has seen a remarkable recovery in stocks, and accordingly, fishmeal and fish oil production has increased. One of the "forms" we aim for is for producers of these fishmeal and fish oil to obtain certification together with fishery producers and compound feed producers, building a new value chain and expanding it.

The second issue is the handling of fishery processing residues. Increasing the production of safe and secure feed and improving productivity are essential for the development and expansion of aquaculture.

On the other hand, there are concerns about the stable procurement of imported fish meal and fish oil due to factors such as the increasing global demand for fish meal, movements to protect resources of abundant pelagic fish, and unstable exchange rate fluctuations. Although progress is being made in the development of alternative proteins and low-fish meal feed, plant-based ingredients face competition from food, livestock, and fuel, and the carnivorous migratory fish (bluefin tuna and amberjack) that are widely raised in Japan have high energy consumption and are said to be difficult to adapt to low fish meal.

target production volumes for yellowtail and red sea bream in 2030 at 240,000 tons and 110,000 tons, respectively, with production increases of 100,000 tons and 50,000 tons, respectively, necessitating the securing of

approximately ¹187,000 tons of fishmeal for feed, an amount equivalent to Japan's total fishmeal production. As for the Pacific sardine mentioned above, its use for food is also expected to increase, making it unrealistic to allocate all of the increased production volume for feed.

In this context, Japan has a system in place to produce fish meal and fish oil using fishery processing residues (fish guts and bones (fish offal)). The volume of urban processing residues (residues collected from fish markets and retail stores) handled is particularly large, and this unique Japanese system is attracting attention from the perspective of reducing food waste and recycling.

Unfortunately, traceability is an issue when using fishery processing residues, and it is difficult to gain understanding from the international community about the risks of IUU fishing, endangered species, and the contamination of raw materials from the same species and genus. In particular, urban residues are mixed with fish offal when collected, making it difficult to trace the fish specie

However, the SDGs call for the efficient use of natural resources and efforts to reduce waste, and the FAO report also calls for the use of fishery processing residues as feed. Furthermore, " ²The Future of Food from the Sea, " compiled by a group of world-renowned marine scientists, proposes that the aquaculture industry, as a supplier of fishery by-products and residues, could supply raw materials for fishmeal and other products, and could also be a consumer of that feed³.

The MEL Council, together with relevant parties, intends to not only build a sustainable supply chain within Japan, but also to continue to disseminate information and raise awareness among the international community in order to make circular feed production and supply systems an international trend.

¹ The calculation was based on the target values for each fish species in the Fisheries Agency's Aquaculture Growth Industry Strategy, using the weight gain coefficient (yellowtail 2.8, red sea bream 2.7) and a fish meal ratio of 40% . Fish oil was excluded.

² The State of World fisheries and Aquaculture 2022, Rome FAO

³ Nature 2020, The Future of Food from the Sea

Referenced Standards

In formulating this standard, the latest editions of the following norms and standards were referenced.

- FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries
- FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification
- FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries – Aquaculture Development – 1 to 10
- GSSI Global Benchmark Tool Version 2.0
- World Trade Organization (WTO) Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement Annex 3 Code of Good Practice for the Preparation, Adoption and Application of Standards
- ISO/IEC Guide 59:1994 Code of good practice for standardization
- ISO/IEC 17065:2012 Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services
- ISO/IEC 17067:2013 Conformity assessment - Fundamentals of product certification and guidelines for product certification schemes

Scope, units and subjects of certification

The scope of certification under this standard covers the manufacturing of fish meal and fish oil for fish feed that is conducted legally in accordance with Japanese feed-related laws and regulations, such as by receiving permission or a license from the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries or the prefectural governor of Japan.

The unit of certification is an organization that produces fish meal and fish oil for fish feed under a specified production method under the same management rules, and there are group certifications that include group certifications that manage and operate multiple sites, and group certifications that encompass external organizations that undertake manufacturing through contract manufacturing agreements, etc. (Note: Products produced by fish meal and fish oil businesses certified under this standard are subject to CoC certification, which is specified separately.)

The certification applies to production facilities for fish meal and fish oil for

fish feed and the fish meal and fish oil products manufactured at those facilities.

Definition of Terms

Aquaculture:	The act of actively promoting the development or growth of aquatic plants and animals through artificial means under human control, with the purpose of harvesting, in order to increase the number or quantity of those individuals.
Farmed fish:	Artificial breeding and rearing of fish.
Compound feed:	Feed is a nutritionally balanced feed containing a variety of ingredients to ensure the sufficient growth of farmed fish, and has a shape and physical properties suitable for consumption.
Feed additives:	These are quality preservatives and nutrients that are added or mixed into feed for the purposes of maintaining the quality of feed and providing nutritional supplements.
Live bait:	Raw or unprocessed fish fillets used for feeding.
Moist pellets:	This is a semi-solid feed made by mixing raw feed ingredients and powdered compound feed in a certain ratio and molding it into a desired particle size while retaining moisture.
Fish meal:	Fish that has been dried and crushed into a powder is called fish meal.
Fish oil:	This fatty oil is extracted from fish and is produced by boiling the fish and separating the fat from the broth. It is called fish oil.
GMP:	Good Manufacturing Practice, it is a management method that ensures product safety by thoroughly managing production and quality throughout the entire process, from the procurement of raw materials to manufacturing and shipping.
Residue:	Inedible parts of fish such as innards, bones, and skin that are generated at seafood processing plants, seafood markets, retail stores, etc. (Also called fish ilium (fish bones)). Residue generated at the seafood processing stage is sometimes classified as processing residue, and residue generated at the distribution stage as urban residue.
IUU fishing:	Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Endangered species: A species whose numbers are declining and which is at risk of extinction. The list of such species is called the "Red List" and is compiled by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and, in Japan, by the Ministry of the Environment. Depending on the level of risk, species are classified as Endangered (Category IA), Endangered (Category IB), Endangered (Category II), Near Threatened, etc.

Certification principles, certification standards and criteria

Applicable to: All fish meal and fish oil manufacturers for fish feed

Principle 1. Social responsibility in fish meal and fish oil production activities for fish feed

Certification Criterion 1.1 When producing fish meal and fish oil for fish feed, all applicable laws and regulations, as well as local ordinances established by the local government where the fish meal and fish oil manufacturing plant is located, must be complied with.

Indicators for determining compliance with the criterion

- 1.1.1 Producers are required to follow instructions and properly implement the requirements of the Act on Ensuring Safety and Improving Quality of Feed (Act No. 35 of 1953), the Act on Ensuring Quality, Efficacy and Safety of Pharmaceuticals, Medical Devices, etc. (Act No. 145 of 1960), the Water Pollution Control Act (Act No. 138 of 1970), and other local ordinances established by local governments where fish meal and fish oil production plants for fish feed are located, which are likely to apply to the production of fish meal and fish oil for fish feed.
- 1.1.2 The business is legally engaged in the manufacture of fish meal and fish oil for fish feed in accordance with the necessary licenses or permits, and the factory and products produced are consistent with the contents of the licenses, etc.
- 1.1.3 Employees engaged in the production of fish meal and fish oil for fish feed are provided with wages, benefits, and working conditions in accordance with relevant laws and regulations, and appropriate health management is implemented and an appropriate working environment is ensured.
- 1.1.4 There is no illegal labor, such as child labor.
- 1.1.5 Working to preserve the living environment of the local community.

Certification Criterion 1.2 Ability to provide necessary information to fish feed manufacturers.

Indicators for determining compliance with the criterion

- 1.2.1 A system exists to provide fish feed manufacturers with the information necessary for producers to receive MEL certification.

Principle 2. Ensuring safety and considering the environment

Certification Criterion 2.1 The possibility of contamination of fish meal, fish oil and their raw materials with substances harmful to human health is minimized.

Indicators for determining compliance with the criterion

- 2.1.1 Appropriate locations for fish meal and fish oil production plants for fish feed use are selected based on an appropriate assessment of the risk of contamination of the fish meal and fish oil production plants and their surrounding environments.
- 2.1.2 Appropriate monitoring is conducted to check for the possibility that the fish meal and fish oil produced may accumulate above acceptable levels of substances that have a significant impact on human health.

Certification Criterion 2.2 The risk of contamination by harmful chemicals derived from fish meal, fish oil, and other raw materials for fish feed is understood, and appropriate production and shipping management of fish meal and fish oil for fish feed is carried out.

Indicators for determining compliance with the criterion

- 2.2.1 Fish meal and fish oil products are produced under appropriate controls.
- 2.2.2 Are fish meal and fish oil products shipped under appropriate management?

Certification Criterion 2.3: The risk of contamination by harmful substances originating from the manufacturing environment, equipment, and materials for fish meal and fish oil for fish feed is understood, and appropriate manufacturing management of fish meal and fish oil for fish feed is carried out.

Indicators for determining compliance with the criterion

Products are manufactured with due consideration of the risk of contamination within the factory.

Certification Standard 2.4 Understand the risk of pollution to the surrounding environment caused by the production of fish meal and fish oil for fish feed, and strive to minimize the impact.

Indicators for determining compliance with the criterion

2.4.1 Production activities for fish meal and fish oil for fish feed are carried out with consideration for the environment around the factory.

Principle 3: Ensuring nutritional value and approving ingredients

Certification Criterion 3.1 Fish meal and fish oil contain nutrients that meet the nutritional requirements of fish.

Indicators for determining compliance with the criterion

3.1.1 The nutrient content or guaranteed value of fish meal and fish oil can meet the nutritional requirements of fish.

Principle 4. Ensuring the sustainability and traceability of raw material sources

Certification Criterion 4.1 The marine fish-derived ingredients used in fish meal and fish oil for fish feed are designed to minimize the

impact on natural resources.

Indicators for determining compliance with the criterion

- 4.1.1 **The traceability of raw materials** for fish meal and fish oil is ensured, and the fish species used for fish meal and fish oil are identified to ensure that they do not contain endangered species or products derived from IUU (illegal, unregulated, and unreported) fishing.

Certification Criterion 4.2 Procedures are established to ensure traceability throughout all processes from production to shipping, and verifiable records are kept.

Indicators for determining compliance with the criterion

- 4.2.1 The production volume, shipping destination, etc. of each production batch are confirmed and recorded. In addition, a method for identifying products is established, and measures are taken to properly transmit the identification code to the shipping destination.

Additional notes

Date of establishment: The date of establishment of this standard is June 17, 2026.

Effective Date: The effective date of this standard is December 1, 2026.

In the event of discrepancies due to translations into languages other than Japanese, please refer to the original Japanese document.
You must comply with that.