

Enacted October 3, 2017  
Revised April 1, 2026

---

---

**Requirements for Certification Bodies**  
**Certifying the**  
**Chain of Custody (CoC) Standard**  
**Ver. 2.4**

---

---



**Marine Eco-Label Japan Council**

## **Preface**

This document stipulates requirements for Certification Bodies certifying the Marine Eco-Label Japan (hereinafter “MEL”) Certification Scheme, as provided in Section 6, “Operational Management of the Certification Scheme” in the Operational Management Regulations for the MEL Certification Scheme (hereinafter “OMR”), and in accordance with the MEL Chain of Custody (CoC) Standard (CoCS).

This document provides individual specific requirements regarding the MEL Certification Scheme in addition to those based on the International Standard for Certification Bodies (ISO/IEC 17065:2012).

## **1. Scope of Application**

### **1.1. Applicable Certification Bodies**

These requirements apply to all Certification Bodies conducting business services relating to the CoCS.

### **1.2. References**

- Marine Eco-Label Japan Chain of Custody (CoC) Standard
- Marine Eco-Label Japan Fisheries Management Standard
- Marine Eco-Label Japan Aquaculture Management Standard
- Marine Eco-Label Japan Guidelines for Auditors of the MEL Chain of Custody Standard
- Marine Eco-Label Japan Regulations for the Use and Management of Logo
- ISO/IEC 17000:2004 Conformity assessment -- Vocabulary and general principles
- 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
- ISO 19011:2018 Guidelines for auditing management systems
- ISO 9001:2015 Quality management systems -- Requirements
- IAF Mandatory Document (MD1) for the Certification of Multiple Sites based on Sampling
- ISO/IEC Guide 59:1994 Code of good practice for standardization
- FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries
- FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries (Revision 1)
- FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Inland Capture Fisheries
- FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification
- GSSI Global Benchmark Tool (Version 1)
- 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
- World Trade Organization (WTO) Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement Annex 3

Code of Good Practice for the Preparation, Adoption and Application of Standards

\*Refer to the latest version for ISO, ISO/IEC.

### **1.3. Terms and definitions**

The terms used in this document, in addition to those based on the CoCS, shall be defined as follows:

- **Site:** A place defined by one physical address where the certified seafood products are handled
  
- **Production-stage certification standard:** FMS and AMS of MEL
  
- **Non-conformity:** A situation where the audit team concludes there is insufficient information and evidence to demonstrate conformity of the applicant organization's CoC procedures with the requirements of the CoCS. When there is at least one non-conformity, CoC certification shall not be granted.
  
- **Conformity:** A situation where the audit team concludes there exists sufficient information and evidence indicating conformity with the requirements of the CoCS.

### **1.4. Requirements for Certification Bodies**

Certification Bodies shall satisfy the requirements provided in Article 6 of the OMR.

### **1.5. Applicants**

Applicants are entities applying for MEL CoC certification, or already certified entities.

The certification body shall verify that the entity operating the business subject to audit has obtained the permits or licenses required in the relevant country, or is conducting its business in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

### **1.6. Outsourcing of auditing activities by a Certification Body**

In case a Certification Body outsources a part of its auditing activities, the requirements for external resources provided in Section 6.2.2 of the ISO/IEC 17065 standard shall be satisfied. In this case, in judging the competence of the external outsourcing body, the Certification Body shall ensure that the external outsourcing body satisfies such requirements for auditors as the qualifications, training, and competencies provided in 4.1 of this document and that they are knowledgeable with respect to the other related requirements.

## **2. General Requirements**

### **2.1. Legal and contractual matters**

All the requirements provided in Section 4.1 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

### **2.2. Management of impartiality**

All the requirements provided in Section 4.2 of ISO/IEC 17065 and in Paragraphs 108 and 109 of the FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries (Revision 1), or provided in Paragraphs 129 and 130 of the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification, shall be applicable.

### **2.3. Liability and financing**

All the requirements provided in Section 4.3 of ISO/IEC 17065 and in Paragraph 113 of the FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries (Revision 1), or provided in Paragraph 135 of the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification, shall be applicable.

### **2.4. Non-discrimination**

All the requirements provided in Section 4.4 of ISO/IEC 17065 and in Paragraph 112 of the FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries (Revision 1) shall be applicable.

### **2.5. Confidentiality**

All the requirements provided in Section 4.5 of ISO/IEC 17065 and in Paragraphs 126 and 127 of the FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries (Revision 1), or provided in Paragraphs 146 and 147 of the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification, shall be applicable.

### **2.6. Publicly available information**

All the requirements provided in Section 4.6 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

## **3. Structural Requirements**

All the requirements provided in Section 5 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

## **4. Resource Requirements**

### **4.1 Personnel engaged in certification activities**

#### **4.1.1. General**

All the requirements provided in Section 6.1.1 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

#### **4.1.2. Personnel engaged in certification activities**

The Certification Body shall ensure that the personnel engaged in conducting certification audits, reviewing certification results, and deciding on certification shall have adequate knowledge and competence regarding these activities.

The personnel involved in certification activities are categorized into five roles as follows:

- **Assistant auditor**

A person satisfying the qualifications provided in 4.1.3.

- **Auditor**

A person who has participated as an assistant auditor in more than two certification audits of the CoCS (initial audit and renewal audit only, not including annual audit) under the direction of a designated instructor and who is able to conduct audits alone.

Provided, however, that qualification as auditor shall be given also to a person who has participated in at least two audits using other certification schemes admitted by the MEL Council (certification in the fisheries/ aquaculture or CoC) and has completed training for existing auditors given by a training implementing body in accordance with the Training Manual for MEL Auditors provided in 4.1.4.2, or who as of February 1, 2018 is registered in a Certification Body as a MEL auditor (certification in the fisheries or CoC) and has completed training for existing auditors given by a training implementing body.

- **Designated instructor**

A person who has conducted certification audits of the MEL CoC Standard (initial audit and renewal audit only, not including annual audit) more than five times as an auditor, and who not only conducts audits alone but is also able to direct an assistant auditor.

- **Reviewer**

A person who has completed audit competency training based on ISO 9001 and is registered as an auditor in an ISO 9001-compliant Organization for Registration of Certificated Auditors that has obtained accreditation as provided in ISO/IEC 17024, and conducts reviews of the certification reports prepared by auditors or designated instructors.

- **Certification decision maker**

A person who has completed audit competence training based on ISO 9001 and is registered as an auditor in an ISO 9001-compliant Organization for Registration of Certificated Auditors that has obtained accreditation as provided in ISO/IEC 17024, and makes decisions based on the deliberation in the decision meeting concerning the results of certification reports prepared by auditors or designated instructors.

#### **4.1.3. Qualifications of assistant auditors**

The Certification Body shall ensure that an assistant auditor has worked for a minimum of three years as a full-time employee in a fisheries-related industry, or as a full-time employee in a fisheries-related public body.

A person with the above experience who has completed training in accordance with the Training Manual for MEL Auditors stipulated in 4.1.4.2 shall thereby be able to become an assistant auditor.

#### **4.1.4. Competence of auditors and designated instructors**

##### **4.1.4.1.**

The Certification Body shall document the process for ensuring that auditors and designated instructors have the personality, knowledge, and competence stipulated in Sections 7.1, 7.2.1, 7.2.2, 7.2.3.1, 7.2.3.2, and 7.2.3.4 of ISO 19011.

##### **4.1.4.2.**

The Certification Body shall conduct training in accordance with the Training Manual for MEL Auditors provided separately by the MEL Council, to ensure that auditors and designated instructors acquire the knowledge and competence necessary for a CoC certification audit. Moreover, the Certification Body shall ensure that its auditors and designated instructors have participated in such a training program within the past three years. The Certification Body shall further ensure that its auditors and designated instructors have completed training on the latest version of this scheme document before they conduct an audit.

##### **4.1.4.3.**

The Certification Body shall ensure that its auditors and designated instructors participate in activities such as gaining additional business experience, training, private study, coaching, attendance at meetings, seminars, conferences or other relevant activities (see Section 7.6 of ISO 19011) for their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to maintain the best and

latest techniques and knowledge for CoC.

**4.1.4.4.**

The Certification Body shall ensure that its auditors and designated instructors have completed training in auditing competence based on ISO 19011 without problem, to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and competence regarding auditing principles, procedures, and techniques, and that they have the competence for conducting audits in a consistent and systematic way.

**4.1.4.5.**

The Certification Body shall ensure that its auditors and designated instructors are individually competent to act suitably as a specialist.

**4.1.5. Audit team**

The audit team shall be composed of more than one auditor or designated instructor (including an audit team leader) who satisfy the competence requirements provided in 4.1.4. In some cases, a technical specialist with appropriate expertise may be added to supplement audit activities as necessary for a specific field.

**4.1.6. Competence management for assistant auditors, auditors, and designated instructors**

The requirements provided in Section 6.1.2 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

**4.1.6.1**

The Certification Body shall have an auditing system to ensure that assistant auditors, auditors, and designated instructors are qualified as per 4.1.3 and competent as per 4.1.4. The auditing method shall be as provided in Appendix A. The Certification Body shall issue documentation expressing that its auditors and designated instructors possess satisfactory knowledge and skill.

**4.1.7. Contract with auditors and designated instructors**

The requirements provided in Section 6.1.3 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

**4.1.8. Reviewer**

The reviewer of certification shall have knowledge regarding the CoC Standard, this scheme document, and the conformity assessment system for verifying the competence, sufficiency, and efficacy of assessment activities. The assessment result reviewer and certification

decision maker roles may be held by the same person concurrently. The Certification Body shall ensure that the reviewer of certification has completed the auditing skill training based on ISO 9001 and is registered as an auditor in an ISO 9001-compliant Organization for Registration of Certificated Auditors that has obtained accreditation as provided in ISO/IEC 17024.

#### **4.1.9. Certification decision maker**

The certification decision maker shall have knowledge regarding the CoC Standard, this scheme document, and the conformity assessment system for judging the appropriateness of the review result and for deciding certification. The certification result reviewer and certification decision maker roles may be held by the same person concurrently. The Certification Body shall ensure that the certification decision maker has completed the auditing skill training based on ISO 9001 and is registered as an auditor in an ISO 9001-compliant Organization for Registration of Certificated Auditors that has obtained accreditation as provided in ISO/IEC 17024.

#### **4.2. Resources for auditing**

The requirements provided in Section 6.2 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

### **5. Requirements for the CoC Certification Process**

#### **5.1. General**

The requirements provided in Section 7.1 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

#### **5.2. Fee system**

##### **5.2.1.**

The Certification Body shall provide a certification fee system adequate for carrying out appropriate auditing for the CoC Standard and make it accessible to users. Since there are various types of distributors and processors in Japan covered by the MEL certification scope, it is desirable for the Certification Body to provide a fee system in accordance with the business size and the number of employees of the applicant.

##### **5.2.2.**

The Certification Body shall present the certification fee system to the MEL Council to have it approved before commencing certification business.

##### **5.2.3.**

The Certification Body shall ensure fees are collected based on the fee system.

### **5.3. Application**

The requirements provided in Section 7.2 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

#### **5.3.1.**

The Certification Body shall request the applicant to present information necessary for auditing in accordance with the CoC Standard. The information shall include at least the following items.

1. Name, address, and legal status of the applicant, and relationship to the distributor or processor to be audited
2. List of certified seafood products that the applicant handles
3. List of suppliers of the seafood products in question (including the certification validity of the suppliers)
4. Flowchart of certified seafood products in question within the site of the applicant, or the movement/ handling outline from purchasing to shipment
5. If the applicant is a multi-site applicant, a list of sites, their contracts with the central office, and the address of the central office

### **5.4. Review of Applications**

The requirements provided in Section 7.3 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

#### **5.4.1.**

The Certification Body shall confirm at the time of receipt of application from the applicant whether or not CoC certification needs to be acquired. An applicant who is a business operator transporting, storing or selling packed certified seafood products without unpacking does not need to acquire certification except for transferring the ownership of seafood products.

#### **5.4.2.**

When the applicant is judged necessary to obtain CoC certification, the Certification Body shall confirm to which of the following categories the applicant belongs.

- Single-site applicant
- Type A multi-site applicant
- Type B multi-site applicant
- Type C multi-site applicant

(See Appendix 2 of the CoCS for details of the Type A, B, and C multi-site applicants)

#### 5.4.3.

The Certification Body shall determine the scope of CoC certification in consideration of the following matters.

1. List of certified seafood products that the applicant handles
2. Flowchart of certified seafood products in question within the site of the applicant, or the movement/ handling outline from purchasing to shipment
3. List of sites where the certified seafood products in question are handled, in case of multi-site applicant

#### 5.4.4.

The Certification Body shall determine the scope of CoC certification by the following:

1. Target species (MEL certified fishery/aquaculture only)
2. Classification of distribution and processing
  - \* Regarding 2, other than category as the examples shown below, detailed information may be added as well.

Classification of distribution stage

- Storage
- Packing / repacking
- Wholesale (with/ without ownership transfer, such as intermediate distribution)

Classification of processing stage

- **Primary processing:** from the whole fish  
e.g.) Gutting and scaling
- **Secondary processing:**  
e.g.) Fileting, slicing, Sashimi-processing, grinding, and forming into flakes
- **Higher processing:**  
e.g.) Adding seasoning, delicatessen, heating, smoking, freezing and canning
- **Final processing:**  
Processing in the kitchen of retailer and restaurants to make the final product to serve consumers

#### 5.4.5.

The Certification Body, upon receipt of audit application, after finishing the process to preceding 5.3.4, shall conclude an audit contract with the applicant. The Certification Body

shall also include an agreement with the applicant in the audit contract regarding the disclosure of the whole text of the certification report except for commercially sensitive matters.

**5.4.6.**

Certification Body shall confirm that the certified seafood products are traceable back from the supplier of the applicant through distribution and processing to the certified fisheries/aquaculture that produced the certified seafood products in question. On this occasion, the applicant shall ensure that the fisheries/aquaculture that produced the seafood products in question acquire and maintain fisheries/aquaculture management certification and that all the processors and distributors that physically handled the certified seafood products acquire and maintain CoC certification.

With respect to the handling of proxy bidders acting on behalf of the applicant when an applicant procures certified aquatic products from a landing market in which the applicant does not hold purchasing rights, the certification body may allow the involvement of a proxy bidder without CoC certification only when the traceability of the certified aquatic products from the production stage is ensured through the management systems of the proxy bidder and the landing market, as well as through actual transaction slips and related documentation.

**5.4.7.**

Certification Body shall conclude a certification contract with the applicant ensuring the matters provided in Section 4.1.2 of ISO/IEC 17065 after decision on certification. At the same time, the applicant shall conclude the Contract on the Use of Logo with MEL Council and can start using the MEL logo in accordance with the Regulations of the Use and Management of Logo. The Certification Body shall inform the applicant of above-mentioned matters in advance.

**5.4.8.**

The Certification Body shall, at the time of receipt of audit application, make a public announcement and have a consistent system in place by which interested stakeholders can provide input.

**5.5. Preparation of Audits**

The requirements provided in Section 7.3 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

**5.5.1.**

The Certification Body shall provide in advance a document describing procedures for selection and designation of an audit team including the team leader, and shall organize an audit team in accordance with this document.

**5.5.2.**

The Certification Body shall prepare in advance a document of procedures for ensuring a proper audit plan is drawn up (see Section 6.3.2 of ISO 19011).

**5.5.3.**

The audit team, for the purpose of drawing up the audit plan, shall review the documentation of the applicant prior to on-site audit in accordance with Section 6.3 of ISO 19011. The audit team shall in particular confirm whether sufficient evidence has been presented as stipulated in the audit manual, and in case of insufficiency, shall require the applicant to submit additional evidence.

**5.5.4.**

The Certification Body, for the purpose of deciding 5.4.5 and 5.4.7 below and drawing up the audit plan, shall require the applicant to present, to the extent possible, documentation describing the segregation of the organization of the applicant and the organization of the site, traceability, and the Regulations for the Use and Management of Logo, etc. If applicable, the Certification Body shall require the applicant, to the extent possible, to present its manual of internal auditing and internal audit reports.

**5.5.5.**

In case the applicant is a Type A or Type C multi-site applicant, the audit team shall be able to select sites through sampling and to conduct on-site audit only at the selected sites. The audit team shall select samples by the method described in Appendix B. In the process of sampling, a template shall be used and filled out.

**5.5.6.**

The audit team, in case the applicant is a Type B multi-site applicant, shall conduct the audit in all the sites. However, if one or more of the constituent sites have site(s) further inside and their nature is similar to A or C of multi-site, it is possible to subject the site to sampling assessment.

**5.5.7.**

The minimum number of processes for each site is as provided in Appendix C in accordance with the risk level of the applicant. The audit team can change the number of processes, in which case the audit team shall fully consider the CoC risk of the applicant and record the reason for the change.

**5.5.8.**

The audit team shall draw up an audit plan based on the results of a document review. The Certification Body shall record the allocated time of the audit prescribed in the audit plan and the reason for the amount of time.

**5.5.9.**

The audit team shall inform the applicant of the audit plan in advance, and obtain prior consent of the applicant regarding the audit schedule.

**5.6. Audit**

The requirements provided in Section 7.4 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

**5.6.1.**

The audit team shall conduct all the audits in accordance with the relevant guidance provided in Section 6.4 of ISO 19011.

**5.6.2.**

The audit team shall conduct all the audits on the site. The audit team shall, at the time of conducting on-site audit, collect evidence showing that the segregation, traceability, and management of logo use conform to the requirements of the CoC Standard at all the sites involved within the scope of certification in the organization of the applicant.

**5.6.3.**

The audit team shall take the following steps at the time of an on-site audit. The details of each step of the audit process are provided in Appendix D.

Step 1	The audit team shall hold an opening meeting with the applicant.
Step 2	The audit team holds an interview with the chief administrator, employees, and internal auditor of the organization if applicable.

Step 3	The audit team confirms that there is no possibility of mixture of certified seafood and non-certified seafood and that the certified seafood is identified at each site of the applicant.
Step 4	The audit team confirms that the systems for record management and traceability are in place.
Step 5	The audit team confirms that the logo is used and managed based on the Regulations for the Use and Management of Logo (except in an initial audit).
Step 6	The audit team holds a closing meeting with the applicant.

#### 5.6.4.

The audit team shall prepare an audit report. The following matters shall be specified in the audit report. The report shall be prepared along with the sample audit report attached to the Guidelines for Auditors provided separately. It is desirable that the audit team prepare the report in line with the requirements given in Section 6.5.1 of ISO 19011.

1. The basic information of the applicant (as specified in 5.3.1)
2. The date the audit was conducted
3. The audit team that conducted the audit
4. The scope of certification
5. The details of any non-conformities found at the time of the audit
6. The balance of purchased volume and shipped volume (mass balance) regarding certified seafood that falls within the scope of certification
7. The result of the audit
8. The basis of the audit result
9. The status of logo use and management (only in annual audits and renewal audits)

#### 5.6.5.

The audit team shall present its findings in relation to the requirements of the CoC Standard. The findings of the audit are categorized as either non-conformity or conformity.

#### 5.6.6.

In case any non-conformity is found in the CoC during the initial audit, the audit team shall request the applicant to take corrective measures and verify that the non-conformity has been corrected before deciding certification or re-certification. The audit team shall also conduct an on-site verification, if necessary.

#### 5.6.7.

The audit team shall record the following matters regarding a confirmed non-conformity.

- The date when the non-conformity was discovered
- The nature and cause of the non-conformity and solution for the problem
- The corrective actions for eliminating the cause
- The date for the corrective actions to be completed
- The date when the corrective measures were verified

#### **5.6.8.**

In case a non-conformity is found in one of the sites of a multi-site applicant, the Certification Body shall request the multi-site applicant to review the non-conformity to decide whether it indicates poor conditions along the CoC as a whole. In case the non-conformity affects all the sites, corrective measures shall be taken in all the sites and the completion of such corrective measures shall be verified by the Certification Body.

#### **5.6.9.**

In case the corrective measures required as per 5.5.7 could not be verified within three months after the closing meeting the audit team held with the applicant, the audit team shall terminate the certification audit.

#### **5.6.10.**

In case the applicant desires a renewal audit, the Certification Body shall conduct the renewal audit two months prior to the expiration date of the applicant's certification.

### **5.7. Review of the audit result**

The requirements provided in Section 7.5 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

### **5.8. Decision on certification**

The requirements provided in Section 7.6 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

#### **5.8.1.**

If even one non-conformity is found in assessment of the requirements of the CoC Standard, the Certification Body shall not certify the CoC.

### **5.9.**

#### **Certification documentation**

The requirements provided in Section 7.7 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

### 5.9.1.

The Certification Body shall include the following information in the certificate. It is desirable for the Certification Body to use the sample provided in Appendix E as reference.

- The name and address of the scheme owner and the accreditation body
- The name and address of the Certification Body
- The name and address of the organization to which the certificate is granted
- The date when the certificate comes into effect
- The applicable extent of certification: Target species and classification of distribution and processing
- The certification category and the members of the certification scope (list of sites)
- The applied CoC Standard (including its version)
- The term of validity and expiration date of certification
- The department name and position of the certificate issuer

### 5.9.2.

The certification shall remain valid for no longer than three years.

### 5.9.3.

The Certification Body shall notify the MEL Council on each occurrence of commencement, termination, or suspension of certification or reduction of certification scope. The Certification Body shall also inform the MEL Council of the general circumstances of certification in March each year.

## 5.10. **List of certified seafood products**

The requirements provided in Section 7.8 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

### 5.10.1.

The Certification Body shall disclose the status of certification and outline of the certification report by electronic medium. The Certification Body shall, based upon an agreement with the applicant, disclose the whole text of certification report by electronic medium or upon request.

## 5.11. **Monitoring (annual audit, emergency audit, and unscheduled audit)**

The requirements provided in Section 7.9 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

### 5.11.1.

The Certification Body shall decide the frequency of annual audits and conduct them in accordance with the CoC risk of the applicant. The Risk Evaluation Methods and Frequency of Annual Audit are stipulated in the Appendix C.

**5.11.2.**

If it is determined that there is a possibility of non-compliance with the requirements of the CoC Standard or that there is a serious risk to the credibility of the scheme, the certification body must conduct an emergency audit of the certification applicant. Information on this risk must be verified and, if the Council wishes, shared.

If the information indicating a significant risk to the credibility of the scheme originates from a reliable public authority, the certification body may suspend the certification without following the procedure stipulated in 5.11.4, provided that the non-conformity with the certification requirements is substantiated. When taking this action, the certification body shall notify the operator concerned in writing, clearly stating the reasons for the suspension.

**5.11.3.**

It is desirable for the Certification Body to conduct an unscheduled audit without informing the audit timing to the applicant.

**5.11.4.**

In case any non-conformity is confirmed in an annual audit, emergency audit, or unscheduled audit, the Certification Body shall instruct the applicant to take corrective measures. The period and timing between the correction of non-conformities and the completion of verification by the Certification Body shall be no longer than two months after the audit team holds the closing meeting with the applicant. Provided, however, that if the Certification Body acknowledges a valid reason, the period until the completion of verification of corrective measures may be extended. The Certification Body shall inform these matters to the MEL Council on each such occasion.

**5.11.5.**

Regarding the non-conformity confirmed in 5.11.4, the Certification Body shall verify the completion of the corrective measures in accordance with the procedures provided in 5.6.6 and 5.6.7.

**5.11.6.**

In case it is not possible to verify the corrective measures against the non-conformity

confirmed as per 5.11.4 within the given time, the Certification Body shall take necessary steps for the suspension or termination of the certification or reduction of scope of certification in accordance with the procedures provided in 5.13.

**5.11.7.**

In case the applicant offers termination of the certification as a matter of convenience on the part of the applicant, the Certification Body shall be able to terminate the CoC certification.

**5.12. Change affecting the certification**

The requirements provided in Section 7.10 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

**5.12.1.**

The Certification Body, on receipt of information from the MEL Council of changes in the certification scheme documents shall inform the applicant within thirty days the details of changes and whether it is necessary to reissue a certificate (to conduct a re-audit) and the transition period, etc. in case the changes are seen as possibly affecting the applicant.

**5.13. Suspension, termination, or reduction of scope of certification**

The requirements provided in Section 7.11 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

**5.13.1.**

In case a non-conformity in the segregation of the applicant, traceability, or logo management system is found in an annual audit, emergency audit, or unscheduled audit, and the corrective measures are not verified within the given time, the Certification Body shall take necessary steps to suspend, to reduce the scope of, or to terminate the certification in accordance with the following procedures.

<b>Step 1</b>	The Certification Body shall inform the applicant in writing of the possibility that some measure will be taken to terminate the certification or to reduce the scope of certification, together with the reason.
<b>Step 2</b>	In case the applicant refuses an additional audit or fails to present additional evidence sufficient to prove conformity with the requirements, the Certification Body shall suspend the certification.
<b>Step 3</b>	The applicant shall present new information and evidence proving conformity with the requirements within thirty days after suspension of the certification. In case the applicant refuses to present additional information or evidence, the Certification

	Body shall inform the applicant of the termination of certification.
<b>Step 4</b>	In case the Certification Body conducts an audit based on additional information and evidence presented by the applicant and decides that the CoC non-conformity has not been resolved, the Certification Body shall inform the applicant that the certification will be terminated or the scope of certification reduced, with a grace period of thirty days.
<b>Step 5</b>	In case the applicant, within thirty days after receipt of information as per Step 4, fails to present additional information and evidence proving the CoC conforms to the requirements, the Certification Body shall withdraw the certification or reduce the scope of certification, deeming the CoC non-conformity as not resolved.

**5.14. Records**

The requirements provided in Section 7.12 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

**5.15. Complaints and appeals**

The requirements provided in Section 7.13 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

**5.16. Agreement for certification**

The requirements provided in Section 4.1.2 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

**5.17. Use of logo**

The requirements provided in Section 4.1.3 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

**5.17.1.**

The Certification Body shall confirm in the annual audit or unscheduled audit whether the logo is being used appropriately as prescribed separately in the Regulations on the Use and Management of Logo and the Contract for the Use of Logo.

**6. Requirements for Management Systems**

The requirements provided in Section 8 of ISO/IEC 17065 shall be applicable.

**Assessment Method for Qualifications and Competence of Assistant Auditor, Auditor, and Designated Instructor**

This Appendix A covers the confirmation method and reference documentation for assessing the qualifications and competence of assistant auditors, auditors, and designated instructors. The Certification Body shall keep the reference documents and records of the examination conducted.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Qualifications (requirements provided in 4.1.3)</li> </ul>
<p>Confirmation method:</p> <p>The Certification Body shall confirm all the reference documents listed below and ensure that the qualifications of assistant auditors, auditors, and designated instructors conform to the requirements provided in 4.1.3.</p> <p>References:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Personal history</li> <li>● As academic background, diploma or certificate of degree</li> <li>● As occupational career, letter of recommendation or proof of employment from the latest workplace</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Knowledge and skills necessary for the CoC certification audit (requirements provided in 4.1.4.2)</li> </ul>
<p>Confirmation method:</p> <p>The Certification Body shall confirm all the reference documents listed below and ensure that the competence of the auditors and designated instructors conform to the requirements provided in 4.1.4.2. Specifically, regarding the certificate for training participation, the Certification Body shall ensure that the auditors and designated instructors participated in training based on the latest scheme documents and moreover that they participated in the training within the last three years.</p> <p>References:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Certificate of training participation</li> <li>● Report prepared by the designated instructor who conducted the guidance</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Competence (requirements provided in 4.1.4.3)</li> </ul>

Confirmation method:

The Certification Body shall prepare a record of additional business experience, training, personal study, guidance, meetings, seminars, conferences, or participation in other activities to ensure that the auditors and designated instructors have strived for ability development based on the requirements provided in 4.1.4.3. Moreover, the Certification Body shall require the auditors and designated instructors to report the items learned as well as the contents and their contributions to the certification services. In case a certificate of participation in a meeting, seminar, or conference was issued, it is desirable to present a copy.

- Knowledge and skill on the principles, procedures and techniques of auditing and competence to conduct audits in a consistent and systematic manner (requirements provided in 4.1.4.4)

Confirmation method:

The Certification Body shall require the auditors and designated instructors to present either of the documents described below to ensure that their competence conforms to the requirements provided in 4.1.4.4.

References:

- In case of participation in training regarding ISO 19011 implemented by an organization other than the Certification Body, a record verifying participation in the training for more than six hours. (In case of participation in training regarding ISO 19011 implemented by an organization other than the Certification Body, the Certification Body shall confirm whether the training conforms to the requirements provided in ISO 19011.)
- In case of participation in training regarding ISO 19011 implemented by the Certification Body, the details of the training conducted and the completion certificate issued by the Certification Body.

- Personal competence for appropriate behavior as an expert (requirements provided in 4.1.4.5)

Confirmation method:

The Certification Body shall confirm the documents below for auditors and designated instructors to ensure that their competence conforms to the requirements provided in 4.1.4.5.

Reference:

- The report prepared by the designated instructor who conducted guidance when the auditor or designated instructor was an assistant auditor.

### Sampling Method

This Appendix B provides conditions for the use of sampling by the Certification Body, the sampling method, and the minimum sample size.

#### 1. General principle of sampling

In case it is not realistic nor cost-effective to inspect all available information during the audit, the Certification Body can use sampling to select less than one hundred percent of the target sample from within all available data (population parameter). The Certification Body shall conduct sampling in accordance with the requirements provided in Annex A.6 of ISO 19011. When sampling is used, the Certification Body shall extract samples in full consideration of the possibility that the sample may not represent the full population.

#### 2. Conditions for use of sampling and the number of samples in a CoC certification audit

In case a Type A or Type C multi-site applicant has more than five sites, the auditors shall be able to use sampling in auditing sites. The minimum number of samples must be calculated by using the following formula.

$$\text{Minimum number of samples} = \sqrt{\text{population parameter}} \quad (\text{round down})$$

Moreover, in accordance with the risk level of the applicant, the Certification Body shall conduct on-site audits at least in the number of sites obtained by multiplying the minimum number by the following coefficient.

Risk level of the applicant	Coefficient
Low risk	0.7
Medium risk	1.0
High risk	1.5

The Certification Body, when the numbers of all purchasing slips, shipping slips, or batches (lots), etc. are population parameters for all applicants, shall be able to extract the number of samples indicated below and use them as samples in accordance with the evaluation risk of every applicant. Provided that this shall be the number of samples for one site.

Risk level of the applicant	Minimum number of samples
Low risk	2
Medium risk	4
High risk	6

## Report of Sampling (Template)

<b>· The requirements to apply sampling:</b>
<b>· The reasons to apply sampling:</b>
<b>Examples:</b> <b>1. It is impossible to investigate all the information during the on-site audit.</b> <b>2. The investigation of all the information during the on-site audit is not cost-effective.</b> <b>3. Other reasons</b>
<b>· The objective of sampling:</b>
<b>· The scope and structure of sampling</b>
<b>· The risk analysis:</b>
<b>· The reasons to set the sample size:</b>
<b>· The contents of sampling activities:</b>

### Risk Evaluation Methods

This Appendix C provides risk evaluation methods that the Certification Body shall utilize, and the minimum number of processes for one site based on that risk evaluation and the frequency of annual audits.

Table 1 Questions and Scores for Risk Evaluation

No	Question	Points	Score
1	At one site, the number of fish species handled simultaneously, or the certified fishery/aquaculture where they originate is one.		
	Two or more kinds	3	
	No more than one kind	1	
2	At one site, non-certified seafood products of the same fish species or of the same appearance as certified seafood are handled.		
	Yes	4	
	No	1	
3	At the site of the applicant, more than one non-conformity was found in the latest audit.		
	Yes	5	
	No	1	
4	The organization of the applicant handles certified seafood product at three or more separate sites.		
	Yes	3	
	No	1	
5	The organization of the applicant discriminates the certified seafood product from the non-certified seafood product by means of labels or signs in the site of the applicant (in case Section 3.2 of the CoC Standard is satisfied).		
	Yes	-1	
	No	3	
6	(Applicable only to a multi-site applicant)		

	The organization of the applicant possesses an electronic system to manage and control all the purchased and shipped volume of certified seafood products.		
	Yes	-2	
	No	1	
7	(Applicable only to a single-site applicant) The organization of the applicant conducts internal audits in accordance with the procedure in Appendix 1 of the CoC Standard.		
	Yes	-2	
	No	1	
	<b>Total Score</b>		

Table 2. Frequency of Risk Level, Minimum Number of Processes, and Annual Audit

<b>Score of Applicant</b>	<b>Level of Risks</b>	<b>Minimum Length of Processes at One Site</b>	<b>Frequency of Annual Audit</b>
1-6	Low risk	0.7 days (5 hours)	Once in 18 months
7-14	Medium risk	1 day	Once in 12 months
15-20	High risk	1.3 days (10 hours)	Once in 8 months

**Details of Each Stage of Certification**

This Appendix C provides the matters to be performed by the Certification Body at each stage in a site audit.

<p><b>Step 1. Opening meeting</b></p> <p>The audit team shall explain and confirm the following matters to the applicant at the opening meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scope of certification (Target species and classification of distribution and processing)</li> <li>• The CoC Standard used for the audit (including the version)</li> <li>• Type of CoC certification (single-site, multi-site A, B or C)</li> <li>• Objectives of on-site audit</li> <li>• Schedule of audit</li> <li>• Need for access to necessary sites and to the records and documents kept at the site</li> <li>• Scope of audit</li> </ul> <p>The audit team shall confirm the following up-to-date information on the applicant at the opening meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of suppliers</li> <li>• List of sites and contract details</li> <li>• Documentation of segregation at headquarters and each site and documentation of traceability</li> <li>• Documentation of the logo management system at headquarters and each site</li> </ul> <p>In case there is any difference between the documentation presented at the time of application and the above information, the audit team shall conduct a review and modify the schedule and scope of the audit, if necessary. The audit team shall reach an agreement with the applicant regarding this modification.</p>
<p><b>Step 2. Interview with administrative manager and internal auditor</b></p> <p>The audit team shall interview the administrative manager and the internal auditor (if applicable) and confirm that they fully understand the CoC Standard.</p>
<p><b>Step 3. On-site confirmation of segregation and discrimination of certified seafood product from non-certified seafood product</b></p>

The audit team shall confirm the following matters at the site where the certified seafood is handled.

- Specific measures taken to discriminate the certified seafood from non-certified seafood (e.g., affixing a label on the certified seafood)
- The method and measures taken to separate the certified seafood from non-certified seafood
  - Temporal separation
  - Physical separation

In the case of a Type A or Type C multi-site applicant, the above two points must be confirmed at the sites extracted through sampling. In the case of a Type B multi-site applicant, the above two points must be confirmed at all sites.

The audit team shall confirm whether there is any discrepancy between the facts obtained through on-site confirmation and the segregation procedure documented by the applicant. In the case of a multi-site applicant, the audit team shall confirm whether a separation system common to all the sites is used.

#### **Step 4. Inspection of records and traceability system**

The audit team shall confirm through the following inspections that records of certified seafood are maintained, and that traceability is established.

- Inspection concerning traceability within the organization of the applicant:  
Samples are extracted at random from among the batches of certified seafood products, and testing is conducted as to whether the certified seafood product is traceable back from the shipment slip to the purchase slip.
- Checking of the certified seafood product purchased and shipped:  
Samples are extracted at random from among the batches of certified seafood products, and the mass balance of purchased volume and shipped volume is checked and it is confirmed whether it can be explained reasonably.
- Inspection concerning traceability on the supply chain:  
In case the applicant sells the certified seafood products to end consumers with the logo affixed, samples are extracted from among the batches of certified seafood products and traceability is tested within the organization of the applicant, as well as traceability back to the preceding supplier.

The audit team shall extract the number of samples indicated below from one kind of the certified

seafood product before shipment, in accordance with the risk level of the applicant, and shall conduct the three kinds of inspections noted above.

<b>Risk level of applicant</b>	<b>Minimum number of samples</b>
Low risk	2
Medium risk	4
High risk	6

**Step 5. Check of logo use management**

The audit team shall confirm through checking of the matters provided below that the applicant maintains a logo management system.

- Confirmation whether the design of the logo affixed conforms to the “Regulations for the Use and Management of Logo.”
- In case the applicant manufactures certified seafood products together with non-certified seafood products, the audit team shall confirm that both products are manufactured in accordance with the “Detailed Regulations for Mixture of Certified Marine Products and Uncertified Ingredients” provided separately.

The audit team shall extract the number of samples indicated below from one kind of the certified seafood product before shipment, in accordance with the risk level of the applicant, and shall conduct the two kinds of inspections noted above.

<b>Risk level of the applicant</b>	<b>Minimum number of samples</b>
Low risk	2
Medium risk	4
High risk	6


**Step 6. Closing meeting**

The audit team shall hold a closing meeting with the applicant to explain, confirm, and reach an agreement on the following matters.

- Findings of audit (conformity or non-conformity to each requirement)

- The applicant shall not be able to sell or distribute the seafood products as certified seafood products until the certification contract is concluded and certification becomes effective.
- The applicant shall conclude the Contract on the Use of Logo with the MEL Council, when certified. Then the certified entity is able to use the MEL logo.
- Concerning non-conformities found in the audit, the corrective measures shall be verified by the Certification Body by the time certification is determined.
- In case the applicant in future modifies the items provided in Section 2.2.1 of the MEL CoC Standard, notification of modification should be made to the Certification Body. The items provided in 2.2.2 shall be approved by the Certification Body prior to modification.
- Scope of certification (target species and classification of distribution and processing) and list of sites (if a multi-site applicant)
- Frequency of annual audits and renewal audits
- Possibility of and procedures for suspension, termination, and reduction of scope of certification
- Procedures for appeals and complaints

Sample of Certificate



**Marine Eco-Label Japan**  
**Chain of Custody (CoC) Certificate**  
**Certification Number: XXXXX**

This is to certify that the following entity conforms to the Marine Eco-Label Japan Chain of Custody (CoC) Standard Ver. 2.0.

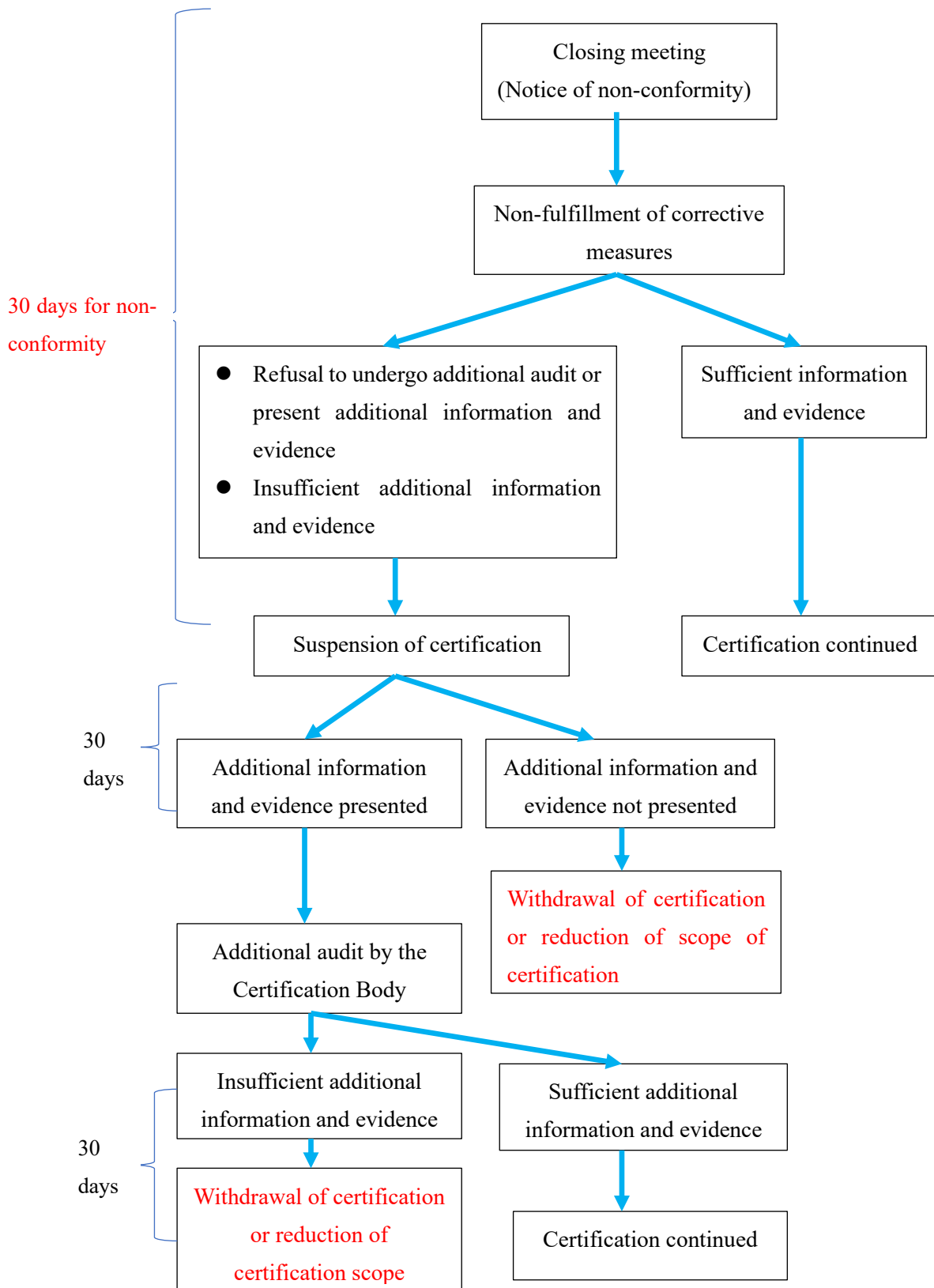
Name of certified entity:	XXXX
Address of certified entity:	XXXX
Fish species (MEL Certified):	XXXX
Details of distribution/processing:	XXXX
Validity of certification:	From: mm dd yyyy To: mm dd yyyy
Effective date:	mm dd yyyy
Issue date:	mm dd yyyy

Scheme owner:  
 Marine Eco-Label Japan Council  
 1-9-13 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo, 107-0052 Japan

Accreditation body:  
 XXXX (Name)  
 XXXX (Address)

Certification body:  
 XXXX (Name)  
 XXXX (Address)  
 XXXX (Name of issuer and seal)

**Fig. 1 Process for suspension, termination, or reduction of scope of certification**



Additional Notes

Version History:

Ver. 2.0	October 3, 2017	Enacted
Ver. 2.1	August 1, 2018	Revised
	March 22, 2019	Revised
	June 21, 2019	Revised
	April 1, 2022	Revised
	November 16, 2023	Revised
	June 1, 20224	Revised
Ver. 2.2	June 25, 2025	Revised
Ver. 2.3	November 25, 2025	Revised
Ver. 2.4	April 1, 2026	Revised