Public System Report – Impact Code V.2

1. Executive summary

ASC was officially founded in 2010 but not until late 2012 as it became operational with the first farms getting certified against two out of five standards that the ASC received from the WWF Aquaculture Dialogues at that time.

ASC became a full member of ISEAL in April 2015. In less than one year, in addition to its daily business ASC has been improving its system in all aspects and preparing for assurance and impacts peer reviews as well as the 2nd independent evaluation for its standards setting process.

If the standard setting and assurance areas of work are more or less imbedded in the operations from day one when the programme became operational (2012), and yet not without continuous improvements along the way, the M&E work stream started much latter. That is relatively logical given the phases of organisational development, whereby during the start-up phase programme promotion and system adjustments have been in focus. Now as the start up phase is more or less over with many lessons have been learnt to improve the programme with a relatively good number of farms certified, ASC starts working on its M&E system.

The M&E system is still in the making. The following has been done so far:

- Internal consultation was conducted in Jan – Feb 2015 to collect inputs from the team and respective stakeholders (Jan-Feb, 2015).
  - The M&E scope has been defined for the next 3 years, which is intended to cover all the environmental and social areas of the programme but limited to two most important (for the market) species namely Salmon and Shrimp. The scope will be gradually extended to cover other species over time.

- Based on the internal inputs, among others, the results chains have been worked out.

- List of indicators have been identified for each output and outcome of the result chains.

- An internal analysis on output and shorter-term outcome level has started in October 2015 and being finalised.

- A synthesis of farmer stories to better understand how certified farmers perceive the benefits of being certified against ASC standards.

- Introduced measures to check (100%) data in audit reports and implementing an IT solution to improve data quality and better manage data. First phase is nearly completed with some data migration from excel files into the solution.

The next steps for 2016 have been outlined during the team yearly planning meeting (Oct. 2015), which includes:

- Sharing the output and shorter-term analysis results with the team – end Jan. 2016
- Publish the synthesis of farmers stories (infographic) on website – end Jan. 2016
- Publish the analysis report on the website – Mar. 2016
- Creating necessary procedures as part of the M&E system (procedures for data management, for conducting internal analysis and (internal and external) evaluations, for engaging stakeholders, etc.) – Mar-Jun 2016
- Develop a TOR for an independent outcome/impact evaluation and call for proposal – Apr. 2016
- Independent outcome/impact evaluation implemented – towards the end of 2016
- Publish the evaluation report – early 2017.

2. Scope and Boundaries of the M&E System

In setting up the M&E system, ASC has defined that it wants to understand both social and environmental effects the programme intends to achieve. Since the programme covers seven different species (soon will be eight), it has also been decided that for an effective M&E system, two species (Salmon and Shrimp) are to be covered in the first phase of the M&E system. This phase is estimated to last for 3 years. Once the system is up and running and proven to be well functioning, it will be rolled out to cover the remaining species. So by 2018-2019, the M&E system should be covering all the species that have farms certified with the programme.

The M&E system covers major operations of ASC, their direct outputs, shorter-terms and longer outcomes. In matrix terms, the outputs and outcomes are divided into three areas called (i) system effectiveness and efficiency, (ii) farm social and environmental performance and (iii) market performance.
Since a lot of data of these three areas arrives to ASC on a daily basis, it is used for performance monitoring. Data related to the areas (i) and (ii) comes with audit reports (all stages – initial, yearly surveillance and 3-year re-certification). Area (iii) data about the market comes along as we implement our outreach and communications strategies.

One big advantage of the ASC system is that most of the standards requirements are performance based, whereby farm data can be collected by the auditors for both purposes, being compliance and M&E.

For outcome and impact evaluations, additional information will be identified as soon as the research questions for those evaluations are defined.

Last but not least, even though the unintended outcomes have been identified, it is decided that for this phase, the efforts to set up the M&E system would be focusing on the identified intended effects. Unintended effects would be included at the same time when the M&E system is rolled out for other species.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Since September 2015 ASC has got three persons working on M&E even though they do not make up one full time equivalent. Unlike well-established organisations, it is very important for new and small schemes to have a flexible team working on more than just one specialised area to effectively and swiftly deal with all types of situations arisen.

All these three positions are within the Standards and Certification Team that is responsible for setting and maintaining the standards, setting requirements for accreditation and certification, cooperation with other organisations and initiatives on technical aspects, and M&E.

Those three positions and their respective responsibilities regarding M&E are:

- Senior Standards and Certification Coordinator (Thanh Van Cao). Van is in the lead for the organisation’s M&E system and also is the contact person for external parties (visible on the website). This entails:
  - Setting up the system with all necessary processes and procedures
  - Leading the internal and external consultation processes
  - Contracting and working with external agencies for independent outcome and impact evaluation
  - Being the contact point for external parties, including ISEAL, on M&E related issues
  - Producing reports where applicable
  - Keeping stakeholders up-to-date
  - Preparing for periodic M&E system review

- Standard and Certification Coordinator (Haruko Horii). The main task of Haruko is to support in all aspects of the M&E programme, but with special focus on data management and analysis. Haruko has been instrumental in working out together with Van and Maud the draft results chains and list of indicators.

- Standard and Certification Intern (Maud van den Haspel). Main focus of Maud is to support Van and Haruko with all the above. Maud’s terms at 4C is going to end in end of March.
  - It is planned to increase resource (time of Van and Haruko) for M&E by 30% in order to be able to accomplish the planned activities for 2016.

Besides the Standards and Certification (S&C) team being in the lead, all other teams within the organisations have a role to play in this M&E programme. Currently there are 4 other teams being Communications, Outreach, Business Development, and Management.

Their inputs have been solicited (already 2 rounds, one is for identifying key impacts areas of the organisation in Jan. 2015, and the other one is for the analysis of the audit reports). They will receive feedback from the S&C team. Indicators related to their areas of work will be communicated to them for monitoring and evaluations.

All teams will facilitate the public consultation with their respective stakeholder groups.

Management team will take part in reviewing the M&E system.

4. Cooperation and Coordination

ASC has been in discussion with WWF of different countries as well as IDH to explore areas for collaboration.

- WWF Chile: the first phase of identifying impacts indicators has been finished. The second phase is going to start soon and here is where WWF and ASC will have more rooms for collaboration in terms of fine-tuning the indicators and collecting required data. The project receives strong support from the salmon farms in Chile and scientists from a University in Chile.
5. Defining the Intended Change

The changes and strategies to bring about the changes are best presented in the results chains. They are divided into different phases, output, shorter-term and longer-term outcomes. Negative unintended changes are presented in black boxes.

Alongside with the negative unintended changes that are presented in the graph on the next page, the most significant positive unintended changes, including:

- **Cost reduction.** Strict requirements (e.g. on feed, use of chemicals, water quality) aiming to improve environmental performance of farming practices, create economic benefits for farms due to reduced amount of feed and chemicals to meet those requirements, as an example.

- **Opportunities for attracting investment and loan.** More likely that ASC certified farms, as opposed to uncertified ones, would have the advantage of asserting confidence for potential investors or banks when applying for loans or credits to improve or expand their business.

- **Enforcement of national laws and regulations.** In many countries where local regulatory framework is either lacking or ineffective in terms of enforcement, the ASC standards and assurance system are instrumental for local government in this regard.

ASC has also identified the following external factors that may have an influence on our achieving the desired changes:

- Increased awareness of nutritional values of seafood has led to steady growth of aquaculture due to the stable production of wild catch. The ASC programme can contribute to sustaining aquaculture in a responsible manner.

- Some large seafood consuming markets are not yet receptive to certified product making the uptake pace on the demand side mismatching with the supply speed.

- Policy may change on various levels, international or national, and the change could go either way, in or out of favour for the ASC programme.

- When disease breaks out, farmers may have to put off or aside certification to focus their resources on coping with the outbreak. Sometimes it takes time for farmers to recover from financial damage caused by the outbreak. It affects both supply and demand sides for certified product.

It is important to highlight that this results chains graph is of this stage of the M&E system development. This may change as the results of the planned activities outlined in section 1 of this report that includes internal and external consultation.

6. Performance Monitoring

Most of the data that needs to be collected to monitor the progress of all defined indicators is collected on a daily basis. The data is related to all three areas mentioned in Section 2 – Scope and Boundaries of the M&E system, namely system effectiveness and efficiency, farmer performance and market performance.

Data collected on daily basis is analysed and reported with two frequencies:

- **Monthly update:** the focus is for ASC to know and to update the public on the supply and market sides of ASC products. As such the update is produced and published on a monthly basis. The update include information such as number of certified farm/species and production volume per species; number of farms lining up for audit; number of ASC products approved for using the ASC logo, countries where ASC labelled products are offered, number of CoC certified facilities and number of ASC logo licensees. ASC approved/labelled products are also presented in percentage per species.
This monthly update is very relevant to monitor a couple of identified indicators with regard to increased number of certified farms (shorter-term outcome 5.1) and increased market share of certified seafood products (shorter-term outcome 7.2), and also linked to market longer-term indicators.

- **Yearly analysis**: The first yearly analysis is being implemented. It started in October 2015 but due to constraints of being a new organisation with a simple excel-based database and no structured data definition, the data collection from existing audit reports required an extreme amount of time. Nonetheless, the intention is to have a snapshot of the system and also of the farms within the scope (salmon and shrimp) and draw learning from there.

The yearly analysis will be using all the collected data by ASC over the year. As such progress against all related indicators, be it output or outcome, system or farm and market performance is going to be monitored and adjusted, if needed. This yearly analysis primarily serves internal learning and system improvement. However, the analysis report will also be published for transparency purposes.

7. **Data Management**

Data management is still very rudimentary at the moment. Most of the system related data is constantly collected in an excel file. Some market data (approved products, markets, volumes, etc.) is more properly managed with e-cert solution and database. Farm performance data is still in pdf audit reports; although ¾ of them have been more or less converted into excel as well. Farm performance data from audit reports poses another challenge in terms of having too much data for compliance purposes, while for M&E only a handful of them would suffice. And yet, data presented in the report is currently inconsistent, some reports provide clear data while many others don’t. This is not a new challenge; ASC has identified it and improved it with providing an audit report template to all auditors for improving consistency and quality of data.

An IT solution with an accompanied proper database for both compliance and M&E purposes are underway. If all works out well, by the end of the year 2016, data of salmon and shrimp farms must be properly stored in the database and the analysis will also be much more smooth and effortless.

Besides, it is planned to have a procedure in place to better manage the data.

8. **Outcome and impact evaluation**

ASC has not conducted or commissioned any outcome or impact evaluation as yet. It is planned though for this year that ASC would commission an external agency to carry out an outcome evaluation.

It is also foreseen that for outcome evaluations, depending on the research questions, ASC may decide to carry that out by own staff or commission the study to an outside agency. As for impact evaluations, ASC will rather work with an external institution. If outcome evaluations are going to be implemented on a yearly basis, impact evaluations will only be implemented once every five years. The first impact evaluation is expected to take place earliest in 2020, while the preparation work (TOR) will already start in 2019.

For each outcome evaluation, Terms of reference (TOR) will be published. The public will be invited to provide input and feedback on the TOR for each impact evaluations.

Reports of both outcome and impacts evaluation will be published on ASC website.

9. **Improving the Effectiveness of the M&E system**

The M&E programme sets out that it needs to be reviewed on a periodic basis. As soon as the yearly outcome evaluation is finalised, a review meeting will be held with the ASC management to draw lessons for the M&E system itself but also for the entire programme to further improve it and to adjust the M&E system as needed. Summary of lessons and decisions will be published.

10. **Publicly Available Information about the M&E System**

Except the contact point for M&E related questions and feedback, ASC still does not have any further information made publicly available.

And the information will be published as soon as the M&E programme is up and running.

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