

Marine Stewardship Council

# MSC Chain of Custody Standard: Consumer-Facing Organisation (CFO) Version

Version 1.0, 20 February, 2015



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## About the Marine Stewardship Council

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*The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is a global organisation that sets standards for sustainable fisheries and supply chain traceability (Chain of Custody).*

### **Vision**

The MSC's vision is of the world's oceans teeming with life, and seafood supplies safeguarded for this and future generations.

### **Mission**

The MSC's mission is to use our ecolabel and fishery certification program to contribute to the health of the world's oceans by recognising and rewarding sustainable fishing practices, influencing the choices people make when buying seafood, and working with our partners to transform the seafood market to a sustainable basis.

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The official language of this standard is English. The definitive version is maintained on the MSC's website [www.msc.org](http://www.msc.org). Any discrepancy between copies, versions or translations shall be resolved by reference to the definitive English version.

The MSC prohibits any modification of part or all of the contents in any form.

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# Introduction

## A. Responsibility for this standard

Responsibility for this standard is held by the Marine Stewardship Council. Readers should verify that they are using the latest copy of this (and other related documents). The definitive version of the standard is maintained on the MSC's website at [www.msc.org](http://www.msc.org).

## Versions issued

Version No.	Date	Description of amendment
1.0	20 February 2015	First publication

## B. About this document

This document contains mandatory requirements for Consumer-Facing Organisations seeking MSC Chain of Custody (CoC) certification. Non-mandatory guidance has been developed to help interpret and apply the requirements in this standard.

## C. General introduction

### Chain of Custody certification

CoC certification provides credible assurance that products sold with the MSC ecolabel or trademarks originated from a certified fishery and can be traced throughout the supply chain to a certified source.

Companies certified against the MSC CoC Standard are audited by a third-party accredited certification body and are subject to periodic surveillance audits over the three year period of a CoC certificate.

### Use of MSC's Chain of Custody by other standard setting-organisations

The MSC CoC Standard is made available for use by selected organisations that operate certification schemes. At the time this standard was issued, the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) has elected to use the MSC CoC Standard for all certified seafood products originating from ASC-certified farms. This allows supply chain companies to handle both MSC-certified and ASC-certified seafood with a single CoC audit, although separate CoC certificates are issued, and each standard has distinct trademarks. If other certification schemes choose to also use the MSC CoC Standard in the future, this information will be published on the [MSC website](http://www.msc.org).

## D. Scope and options for Chain of Custody certification

Any organisation trading or handling products from a certified fishery or farm is eligible to have Chain of Custody (CoC) certification. CoC certification is a requirement for each organisation in the supply chain taking legal ownership of certified products that wishes to make a claim on the certified source, up until the point where products are packed into consumer-ready-tamper-proof-packaging. The MSC has one Default Chain of Custody Standard and two variants: one for Group organisations and one for Consumer-Facing Organisations (CFOs). Further information on eligibility for each version can be found in the **MSC CoC Certification Requirements (section 6.2)** and in the introduction to each document.

### CoC Standard: Default Version

This standard is applicable to any organisation that has a site (physical location) handling or trading certified products. The Default CoC Standard is also applicable to any organisation that has numerous sites handling certified products, but where each site is individually audited against the CoC Standard. In this case, a single certificate and CoC code is issued, and is called a multi-site certificate. Examples of companies that might be certified against the Default CoC Standard include a trading company operating out of one office, or a processor with several factory locations.

Some clauses of the standard (such as purchasing from certified suppliers) may not apply where the organisation is a farm or a fishery.

### CoC Standard: Group Version

The Group version of the CoC Standard applies to any organisation handling certified products at many sites, where each site is not individually audited by the certifier. This can be more efficient than multi-site certification for organisations with many sites, or groups of organisations that join together. The organisation designates a central office function that establishes internal controls and is responsible for making sure every site complies with the CoC Standard. The certifier audits the central office and a sample of sites, rather than auditing every site. A single CoC code and certificate are shared across the group. Examples of organisations that might be certified against the Group CoC Standard might

## Introduction *continued*

include a large wholesaler with several dozen warehouse locations, or a restaurant chain (having decided not to be certified against the CFO Standard).

Some clauses of the standard (such as purchasing from certified suppliers) may not apply where the organisation is a farm or a fishery.

### CoC Standard: Consumer-Facing Organisation (CFO) Version

The CFO version of the CoC Standard applies to any organisation that serves or sells seafood to the final consumer (retail or foodservice) and meets other specific eligibility criteria. Consumer-Facing Organisations (CFOs) can be single sites or have numerous locations, and one CoC code is issued for all sites under the organisation's management system that handle or trade certified products. Similarly to Group CoC, the certifier audits a sample of the total number of sites in the certificate. Examples of CFOs include restaurants, restaurant chains, fishmongers, retailers with fish counters, and caterers.

### E. Eligibility for CoC Standard: Consumer-Facing Organisation (CFO) Version

Organisations are eligible to be certified against the CFO version of the CoC Standard only if all the following applicable criteria are met:

1. The organisation sells and/or serves certified seafood exclusively or primarily to final consumers.
2. Any sites that carry out processing or repacking of certified seafood do so exclusively on behalf of the organisation.
3. If the organisation uses contract processors or repackers, these organisations have their own CoC certification.
4. If the applicant has more than one site handling certified seafood:
  - a. All sites are under the control of a common management system maintained by the organisation's central office; and
  - b. The central office has an ownership or franchise relationship with each site, or a temporary right to manage all sites

and staff where certified seafood is handled; and

- c. Purchases of certified seafood are controlled by the central office, with controls to ensure that all sites can only order certified seafood from certified suppliers.

**Note:** Some organisations will be eligible to use the Default version, Group version and/or CFO version of the CoC Standard. Organisations are advised to check their eligibility against all CoC certification options (i.e., Default, Group, CFO) available in section **6.2 of the CoC Certification Requirements** before discussing the best option with their certifier.

### F. Effective date

The effective date for version 1.0 of the CFO CoC Standard is 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015. All CoC audits carried out from this date against the CFO CoC Standard must use this version of the standard.

### G. Review date

The next planned review of this standard will commence in 2017. The CoC Standard review is conducted in accordance with the ISEAL Standard Setting Code.

The MSC welcomes comments on the CoC Standard at any time and input will be incorporated into the next review process. Please submit comments by mail or **email** to the contact details provided in this document.

More information about the MSC policy development process and MSC Standard Setting Procedure can be found on the **MSC Policy web site** and **MSC website**.

### H. Normative documents

Concepts, terms and phrases are defined in the MSC & MSCI Vocabulary.

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# Principle 1

## Certified products are purchased from certified suppliers

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- 1.1 The organisation shall have a process in place to ensure that all certified products are purchased from certified suppliers.

### Guidance 1.1

Certified products refer to any seafood that originates from certified fisheries or farms and is identified as certified.

This excludes seafood products in ‘consumer-ready tamper-proof’ packaging (i.e., sealed and labelled products that will be sold to final consumers in the same form, such as individual cans of tuna). For a full definition of consumer-ready tamper-proof, refer to section **6.1 of the Chain of Custody Certification Requirements**.

A certified supplier can be a certified fishery or farm, or a supplier with a valid Chain of Custody (CoC) certificate.

- 1.2 Organisations handling physical products shall have a process in place to confirm the certified status of products upon receipt.

### Guidance 1.2

Documentation received with certified products needs to clearly identify the product as certified. This could include delivery notes, invoices, bills of lading, or electronic information from the supplier. This is to help ensure that if a supplier replaces certified seafood with non-certified seafood (e.g., if stock runs out), this will be detected by the receiving company.

If a supplier uses an internal system (such as barcodes or product codes) to uniquely identify certified products on documents, the receiving company needs to understand the supplier’s description in order to confirm the product is certified.

If associated records do not clearly identify products as certified, it is not sufficient to rely only on physical product labelling (e.g., an MSC ecolabel on a box) to confirm the certified status.

- 1.3 Organisations with certified products in stock at the time of the initial certification audit shall be able to demonstrate that these products were purchased from a certified supplier and comply with all relevant sections of this standard before they can be sold as certified.

### Guidance 1.3

Certified product in inventory at the time of initial certification will need to be traceable back to a certified supplier or fishery / farm, as per **principle 4**. The organisation will also need to demonstrate that any certified product in inventory is identifiable and segregated as per **principles 2 and 3**.

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## Principle 2

### Certified products are identifiable

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- 2.1 Certified products shall be identified as certified at all stages of purchasing, receiving, storage, handling, labelling, display, and serving or selling.

#### Guidance 2.1

It is recommended that certified products are identifiable as certified on the physical product as well as on the accompanying traceability records. This can be done by placing a sign or label on the package, box, or bag.

Organisations can use a variety of methods to label or identify certified products, including acronyms (e.g., 'MSC'), the CoC code, or another internal system of identification.

Where it is impossible or impractical to label physical products (e.g., loose fish stored in a designated space in the freezer) the organisation will need to demonstrate how the product can be linked with associated traceability or inventory records that specify the certified status.

- 2.2 The organisation shall operate a system that ensures packaging, labels, menus and other materials identified as certified can only be used for certified products.
- 2.3 The organisation shall only promote products as certified or use the ecolabel, logo, or other trademark(s) if it has been granted approval to do so under the terms of the licence agreement ([ecolabel@msc.org](mailto:ecolabel@msc.org)).

#### Guidance 2.3

Use of the acronyms (e.g., 'MSC' or 'ASC') or the full name of the standard (e.g., Marine Stewardship Council) on products or traceability records that are not consumer-facing (e.g., only for identification purposes) is allowed without a license agreement.

Any other use of the ecolabel, logo, or other trademarks requires a license agreement with MSCI, the MSC's licensing function.

During an audit, the organisation may be asked to show evidence of approval to use trademarks. This can be done through showing the valid license agreement and /or evidence of approval emails received from MSCI.

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## Principle 3

### Certified products are segregated

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- 3.1 There shall be no substitution of certified products with non-certified products.
- 3.2 Certified and non-certified products shall not be mixed if the organisation intends to sell the products as certified or with trademarks, except as in **3.2.1**.
  - 3.2.1 If non-certified seafood is used as an ingredient in certified products, the organisation shall follow the MSCCI Certified Ingredient Percentage Rules, available on the **MSC website**.

#### Guidance 3.2.1

In some specific cases, non-certified seafood can be used as an ingredient in certified products. However, special restrictions apply, which are included in the MSCCI Certified Ingredient Percentage Rules.

- 3.3 Products certified against different recognised certification schemes that share MSC CoC shall not be mixed if the organisation wishes to sell the product as certified, unless:
  - 3.3.1 The organisation has specific permission from MSCCI, or
  - 3.3.2 The same product is certified against multiple recognised certification schemes that share MSC CoC.

#### Guidance 3.3, 3.3.1 and 3.3.2

This applies to any other standard, such as the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), which uses the MSC CoC Standard for supply chain traceability. MSC certified fish and ASC-certified fish cannot be mixed at any point in the supply chain if they are to be sold as certified.

Clause **3.3.1** refers to organisations that have specific permission from MSCCI to combine MSC and ASC-certified seafood in consumer-facing products with both trademarks. A current list of other recognised schemes sharing the MSC's CoC Standard can be found on the **MSC website**.



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## Principle 4

### Certified products are traceable and volumes are recorded

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- 4.1 Each site shall be able to demonstrate that certified products are traceable from the point of sale or serving back to a certified delivery.

#### Guidance 4.1

For example, the restaurant or retail site needs to be able to demonstrate that products labelled as certified on the menu or fish counter can be linked back to a certified input (delivery). This could be an invoice or delivery note from a supplier, or it could be an internal delivery note or transfer sheet demonstrating certified product was received from an internal distribution centre (operations site).

During an audit at a consumer-facing site, traceability will usually be checked for any products currently served or labelled as certified. If no certified products are being sold or served, the auditor may instead trace a certified product from storage back to a certified delivery.

- 4.2 If the organisation has multiple sites, and there are product transfers between sites, there shall be a traceability system that ensures certified products are traceable at every step of handling between initial purchase and delivery to a consumer-facing site.

#### Guidance 4.2

If certified products are moved between or within sites, the traceability system needs to ensure products are fully traceable at every step back to purchase. This includes for example shipment from a distribution centre to a restaurant, or handling within a processing site.

During an audit, the certifier may check historical traceability records for any period over the previous 18 months to verify conformity with this requirement.

- 4.3 The organisation shall maintain records showing quantities of certified seafood purchased and received over any given period.

- 4.3.1 If certified and non-certified products of the same (or similar) species are handled at the same time, the organisation shall maintain records of non-certified seafood purchases or deliveries for these similar species.

#### Guidance 4.3 and 4.3.1

Volumes of certified product sold do not need to be recorded to comply with this requirement. However, if the organisation has a system to carry out an input / output reconciliation (comparing total volumes of certified fish received and sold), this lowers the risk score and can affect the auditing activities.

Clause 4.3.1 is intended to help the certifier confirm that only certified products are identified or labelled as certified. Similar species refers to seafood products that are similar in visual appearance, such as different whitefish fillets.

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## Principle 4 *continued*

### Certified products are traceable and volumes are recorded

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4.4 Traceability and volume records shall be accurate, complete, and unaltered.

4.4.1 Where records are changed, these changes shall be clearly documented including the date and name or initials of the person making the changes.

#### **Guidance 4.4.1**

Where information or records provided by the organisation during audits or other requests is not consistent with information provided at a different point in time, the certifier may issue non-conformities. If records are altered by the organisation to reflect necessary adjustments (such as returned orders), these changes should be clearly recorded.

4.5 The organisation shall only sell as certified the products covered by its scope of certification.

#### **Guidance 4.5**

The requirements for changes to scope – that cover new species, activities or product certified against other recognised certification schemes that share MSC CoC – are given in **5.3.1.3**, **5.3.2.1** and **5.3.2.2**.

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## Principle 5

### The organisation has a management system

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#### 5.1 Management and site control

- 5.1.1 The organisation shall operate a management system that addresses all requirements in this standard.

##### Guidance 5.1.1

The management system includes the systems, policies and procedures used to ensure that the organisation complies with the CFO CoC Standard. The extent of documentation required for the management system may vary, depending on the size of the organisation, the type of activities, the complexity of processes, and the competency of personnel.

For very small or straightforward operations, no written documentation may be needed as long as the responsible staff understand and can implement procedures related to the CoC Standard.

- 5.1.2 The organisation shall appoint an individual (MSC contact person) who will be responsible for all contact with the certifier and for responding to any requests for documentation or information related to CoC conformity.

##### Guidance 5.1.2

The MSC contact person is responsible for communicating with the certifier and ensuring that the organisation responds to any requests for information or documentation. If the contact person changes, the certifier needs to be notified as per clause 5.3.1.1.

- 5.1.3 The organisation shall maintain records that demonstrate conformity with this standard for a minimum of 18 months.

##### Guidance 5.1.3

Records that demonstrate conformity with the CFO CoC Standard typically include purchase records of certified products, internal traceability records, internal staff procedures, and documentation of training completed.

- 5.1.4 If the organisation has multiple sites handling certified seafood, the organisation shall:
- 5.1.4.1 Designate a central office which is responsible for conformity of all sites with this standard.
  - 5.1.4.2 Have procedures in place to ensure that all sites handling certified seafood meet the requirements of this standard.
  - 5.1.4.3 Maintain an accurate list of these sites, which includes the address and contact details for each site, and distinguishes between consumer-facing and operations sites.

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## Principle 5 *continued*

### The organisation has a management system

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#### Guidance 5.1.4.3

A consumer-facing site is a discrete physical location that sells or serves certified seafood directly to a final consumer (such as a restaurant location or catering site).

An operations site is any site that is involved in processing, storage, distribution, packing or repacking of certified products.

A CFO CoC client may have operations and consumer-facing sites included in their CoC certification. In some cases a site can be considered both a consumer-facing and operations site (e.g., a supermarket with a small warehouse for storing frozen goods).

- 5.1.4.4 Provide a current and complete site list within 5 calendar days of receiving a written request from the MSC or the certifier.
- 5.1.4.5 Notify the certifier in writing in advance of increasing the number of sites by more than 50 % since the previous audit.

#### Guidance 5.1.4.5

For example, where an organisation has 100 sites, they would not need to contact the certifier beforehand if they add 50 sites or fewer between audits. If more than 50 sites are added since the previous audit, the certifier needs to be notified in writing and the certifier may decide to carry out additional audit activities.

- 5.1.4.6 Have a process to ensure that any sites that are no longer selling or serving certified seafood cannot continue to use the ecolabel, logo, or other trademarks.

#### Guidance 5.1.4.6

Clause 5.1.4.6 is intended to help make sure that sites cannot continue to use the ecolabel, logo, or other trademarks on non-certified product; for example if one restaurant stops receiving MSC or ASC seafood.

Where in contract catering an organisation loses one site, the organisation shall ensure relevant MSC/ASC materials are removed before another catering company takes over the site.

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## Principle 5 *continued*

### The organisation has a management system

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#### 5.2 Training

- 5.2.1 The organisation shall ensure that responsible personnel are competent to ensure conformity with this standard.

##### Guidance 5.2.1

Responsible personnel refers to individuals within an organisation who are responsible for making decisions or carrying out procedures related to the MSC CoC Standard. This might include staff working in the purchasing department, doing goods-in checks, and any individuals needing to identify, label, or select certified products.

Regular training is very important to ensure that personnel follow internal procedures to ensure conformity with the CoC Standard. Training on CFO requirements can be incorporated into existing training programs where practical. The certifier will interview staff during audits to assess their level of competency and knowledge of the CoC Standard.

- 5.2.2 The organisation shall provide training to responsible personnel:

- 5.2.2.1 Before the initial certification audit;
- 5.2.2.2 As part of induction to new personnel; and
- 5.2.2.3 At least annually after certification.

##### Guidance 5.2.2

After certification, training may need to be carried out more often than once a year to maintain competency; for example if staff turnover is very high. If the organisation is certified but there is a delay of several months before the ecolabel or logo will be used, it is recommended that additional training is provided to staff just before use of the ecolabel / logo on menus or product.

- 5.2.3 The organisation shall maintain records demonstrating that training has been carried out as per clause 5.2.2.

#### 5.3. Reporting changes

- 5.3.1 The organisation shall inform the certifier in writing or by email within 10 days of the following changes:
- 5.3.1.1 New MSC contact person within the organisation, as specified in 5.1.2.
  - 5.3.1.2 Certified products received from a new certified supplier.
  - 5.3.1.3 New certified species received.

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## Principle 5 *continued*

### The organisation has a management system

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#### Guidance 5.3.1

Notification by email or writing needs to be sent to the certifier within 10 days of receiving a new certified species or within 10 days of receiving the first delivery of certified products from a new supplier.

5.3.2 The organisation shall receive written approval from their certifier before making the following changes:

5.3.2.1 Undertaking a new activity with respect to certified products, which is not already included in the scope of certification.

#### Guidance 5.3.2.1

New activities include, for example, retail to consumer, repacking, or storage. A full list of activities can be found in Table 5 of the MSC **CoC Certification Requirements**.

5.3.2.2 Extending the scope of CoC to sell or handle products certified against different recognised certification schemes that share MSC CoC.

#### Guidance 5.3.2.2

For example, if the current CoC certificate covers only MSC-certified products, the organisation would need to receive approval from the certifier before selling ASC-certified products as certified.

5.3.2.3 Using a new subcontractor that does contract processing or packing/ repacking for certified products.

#### Guidance 5.3.2.3

If the organisation wishes to add a new storage subcontractor, this will need to be updated on the record of subcontractors as per **5.4.2**, but the certifier can be notified at the next audit (no prior approval is needed).

## 5.4. Subcontractors

5.4.1 The organisation shall be able to demonstrate that all subcontractors handling certified product comply with the relevant requirements of this standard.

5.4.2 The organisation shall maintain an up-to-date record of the names and addresses of all subcontractors handling certified products, excluding transport companies.

5.4.3 The organisation shall only use subcontractors that process or repack certified products if the subcontractor has a valid CoC certificate.

5.4.4 If subcontracted storage facilities are used, the organisation shall have the ability to request certified product records from subcontractor storage facilities and to allow certifiers access to certified products at any point in time.

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## Principle 5 *continued*

### The organisation has a management system

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#### Guidance 5.4.4

A signed agreement is not needed for storage subcontractors, provided the organisation has the ability to request records (i.e., receipt and dispatch records) from the subcontracted storage facility.

The organisation needs to also be able to grant the certifier access to the physical certified product at any point in time, even if it is currently being held in offsite third-party storage. If access to the storage site is restricted for any reason, the certified product may need to be taken offsite to be inspected by the certifier if there are product integrity concerns.

## 5.5 Non-conforming product

#### Guidance 5.5

Non-conforming product relates to any product that is identified as certified or labelled with trademarks, but which cannot be proven to come from a certified source. Non-conforming product could be discovered internally by staff, by the supplier, or in some cases could be detected based on information received from the certifier, the MSC, or other parties.

Where a certified product is ordered but the supplier delivers non-certified product, if this is discovered on receipt and the product is returned, the non-conforming process is not applicable.

- 5.5.1 The organisation shall have a process for managing non-conforming product that includes the following requirements:
- 5.5.1.1 Immediately cease to sell any non-conforming product as certified, until the certified status has been verified in writing by the certifier.
  - 5.5.1.2 Notify the certifier within 2 days of detecting the non-conforming product and provide the certifier with all necessary information to verify the origin of the non-conforming product.
  - 5.5.1.3 Identify the reason the product is non-conforming and implement measures to prevent re-occurrence where necessary.
  - 5.5.1.4 For any non-conforming product which cannot be verified as coming from a certified source, re-label or repack this product to ensure it is not sold as certified.

#### Guidance 5.5.1.4

If the product cannot be verified as coming from a certified fishery or certified farm, it cannot be sold as certified or with trademarks.

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## Principle 5 *continued*

### The organisation has a management system

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#### 5.6. Requests for traceability and supply chain assurance

5.6.1 The organisation shall cooperate with all MSC and certifier requests for traceability documents or sales and purchase records for certified products.

5.6.1.1 Documents shall be provided within 10 days of request.

##### **Guidance 5.6.1.1**

Financial details may be removed but records need to be otherwise unaltered. Records are to be submitted in English if so requested by the MSC.

If an extension is required, a request can be made in writing to the MSC, and if it is not approved, the original 10 day deadline must be met. If data is not submitted to the MSC within specified timeframes, the MSC may request that action be taken by the certifier, including issuing of non-conformities.

5.6.2 Organisations shall allow the MSC, the certifier or a representative from the accreditation body to collect samples of certified products for the purposes of DNA or other product authentication testing.

5.6.2.1 Where a product authentication test identifies the product as a different species or as originating from a different catch area than as identified, the organisation shall:

- a. Investigate the potential source of the issue.
- b. Present the certifier with findings from this investigation and, where non-conformities are found, a corrective action plan to address these.
- c. Cooperate with further sampling and investigation.



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Find out more about the changes  
to the Chain of Custody Program:  
**[www.msc.org/chainofcustody](http://www.msc.org/chainofcustody)**

Further queries, please contact:  
**[standards@msc.org](mailto:standards@msc.org)**