



Ministry of  
**Fisheries**  
Te Tautiaki i nga tini a Tangaroa

## Environmental Certification Fund: Guide for Applicants



**Application process, guidelines and criteria for  
applicant fisheries and aquaculture interests**

## environmental certification fund objective

The objective of the Environmental Certification Fund is to promote environmental certification and other independent assessment as a tool to:

- Enable the New Zealand seafood industry to respond to growing pressure for environmental sustainability
- Promote and improve the management and environmental performance of New Zealand fishing and aquaculture, including impacts of fishing and aquaculture on the aquatic environment
- Build public confidence in the management of New Zealand fishing and aquaculture
- Raise the profile of New Zealand's seafood sector

The fund does this by providing grants to assist the Seafood industry with up to 75% of the fees for certifying or assessing their fishery or aquaculture activity.

## who can apply?

Any individual, organisation or group of organisations may apply for a grant from the Environmental Certification Fund to assist with the costs of seeking environmental certification or assessment of:

- A fishery within New Zealand fisheries waters, where fishing is undertaken using New Zealand registered fishing vessels; or
- An aquaculture activity within New Zealand fishery waters; or
- A High Seas Fishery, where fishing is undertaken pursuant to the relevant international convention, agreement or arrangement to which New Zealand is a party (such as CCAMLR) by New Zealand flagged vessels with a current High Seas fishing permit.

Applicants should have a sufficient degree of influence in the fishery or aquaculture activity to be able to undertake the certification or assessment process.

Applicants who are already part way through a certification or assessment process may also apply to the fund for assistance with their remaining costs. However, funding will not be granted retrospectively for completed certification or assessments.

Applicants can apply for assistance with the initial certification or assessment or re-certification or assessment.

### **"New Zealand Fisheries waters"** means:

- All waters in the exclusive economic zone of New Zealand;
- All waters of the territorial sea of New Zealand;
- All internal waters of New Zealand;
- All other fresh or estuarine waters within New Zealand where fish, aquatic life, or seaweed that are indigenous to or acclimatised in New Zealand are found.

## what certifications or assessments are eligible for funding?

The certification or assessment must relate to environmental or wider sustainability issues associated with seafood production.

This includes assessments relating to:

- The sustainability of the target stock
- The ecological impacts (e.g. fish and non-fish by-catch, effects of fishing or aquaculture on the environment)
- Pollution associated with the seafood sector
- Waste management
- Energy conservation
- Climate change issues associated with seafood harvest, production and transport (e.g. fuel consumption and green house gas emissions, carbon foot printing)
- Organic issues and labelling

Certification or assessments that relate primarily to the following issues will not be eligible for funding:

- Health and safety
- Food safety
- Labour/employment
- Animal welfare

Some environmental certification or assessment schemes look at these issues as components of a broader assessment. As long as these issues are not the primary or sole focus, funding would be considered e.g. food safety as a component of broader aquaculture sustainability assessments.

**Certification or assessments involving unsustainable or environmentally damaging practices or that are inconsistent with Fisheries Act 1996 will not be eligible for funding**

### The Certification or Assessment scheme

The certification or assessment scheme must be independent and robust enough to promote the environmental sustainability objective of the fund.

The Environmental Certification Fund assessment panel will decide whether the scheme is appropriate to fund based on the following factors:

- Extent to which it complies with international best practice such as FAO Guidelines for the Eco-Labeling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries (for wild capture fisheries), ISEAL Code of Good Practice for setting Social and Environmental Standards
- Independence of the scheme (ie. who runs the scheme and whether the applicant has any financial interest in the scheme?)

- Transparency of the assessment (the standards development process & methodology used to assess sustainability should be clear)
- Inclusiveness of the assessment process (ability for broader stakeholder participation or gathering of information from a variety of sources)
- Nature of the standards used in assessment (meaningful and verifiable standards)
- Breadth of recognition for the assessment or certification scheme and any resulting label
- Whether there is accreditation of the certifier by an accredited third party.
- Commitment to continuous improvement (Whether and how assessment processes and standards are reviewed and updated over time)

Applicants are expected to submit sufficient information about the scheme to enable this judgement to be made. Applicants should be able to obtain this information from the certification or assessment provider.

MFish will develop a list of certification or assessment schemes that have previously been considered and accepted. An applicant seeking certification or assessment from schemes on the list would not need to provide information about the scheme in their application. The list of accepted schemes can be found at [www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/commercial/ecf.htm](http://www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/commercial/ecf.htm).

The choice of certification or assessment scheme is voluntary. MFish does not endorse any scheme over another.

## certification or assessment plan

Funding is provided by way of a conditional grant. The amount of the grant is agreed upfront but paid in instalments after key milestones in the certification or assessment process are reached and a progress report verifying completion is sent to and approved by MFish.

As the certification or assessment process may differ among different schemes, the applicant is expected to identify the key stages for the scheme they are using and how the completion of each stage will be verified. Applicants are also expected to estimate what percentage of their certification assessment fee will be incurred at each stage. This will be taken into account when determining what proportion of the grant will be paid at each stage.

An applicant would usually identify between two and four key milestones depending on the complexity and timeframe of the certification or assessment. The last milestone is the completion of the certification or assessment process for which funding has been granted.

### Example of certification milestone plan

#	Milestone Description	Milestone achieved/ Verification	Timeframe	% Costs
1	MSC pre-assessment of the fishery	Pre-assessment report received	October 08	20%
2	Fishery information provided to MSC and stakeholder consultation completed	Stakeholder consultation completed (verified by letter from certifier)	April 09	40%
3	MSC Full assessment of the fishery	Full Assessment final report received	August 09	40%

## eligible costs what costs does the fund contribute to?

The fund will contribute up to 75% of the certification or assessment fee for:

- Pre-assessments
- First time assessments
- Re-assessment or renewals

The fund will not contribute to costs relating to:

- Formal objections or appeals processes
- Annual audits
- Traceability certificates
- Logo licensing or other marketing fees
- Corrective actions required to meet certification or assessment standards
- Government fees
- Assessments already undertaken and paid for. (retrospective costs)
- In kind or indirect costs e.g. travel, staff time, accommodations costs.

Applicants will need to provide a quote from the certifier or assessor they are using. When full quotes are not available at the date of application, the applicant must provide an estimate from the certifier or assessor and provide the full quote once they receive it. Where an estimate is used MFish will fund up to 75% of the estimate or the quote once it is received, *whichever is lesser*.

## application process- how to apply

At the start of each funding round MFish will seek applications. The application form is available on the Ministry's website at [www.fish.govt.nz/ennz/commercial/ecf.htm](http://www.fish.govt.nz/ennz/commercial/ecf.htm). Timeframes for applying will be notified on the website each year.

Those interested in seeking funding from the Environmental Certification Fund in a future round may also register their interest at any time by emailing [certificationfund@fish.govt.nz](mailto:certificationfund@fish.govt.nz) and specifying what fishery or aquaculture activity they are seeking to certify or assess and likely timeframes for doing so. If there is sufficient interest between funding rounds and funding available, another funding round may be run.

Completed applications can be emailed to [certificationfund@fish.govt.nz](mailto:certificationfund@fish.govt.nz) or sent to **Certification Fund Applications, C/- Corporate Monitoring Unit Ministry of Fisheries, PO Box 1020, Wellington**. MFish will confirm it has received the application.

## assessment process

An Assessment Panel will be convened each year to assess applications and recommend to the Chief Executive of the Ministry of Fisheries which applications should be funded.

The Chief Executive is the final decision maker.

The Assessment Panel will assess and score the applications against set criteria. All applications must score over 50% in each criterion to receive funding.

Where the funding applied for is greater than the funding available applications will also be weighted based on fund priorities (see below). Then funding will be granted by order of overall scores until used.

Where remaining funds are less than the budgeted cost of the last project ranked within range the applicant for that project will be given the option of receiving partial funding.

### Fund Priorities

Where funds applied for exceed the funding available, grants will be weighted towards priority areas as follows:

1. Applications focussing on sustainable harvesting or farming and mitigating the impact of fishing and aquaculture on the aquatic environment – no applied weighting
2. Applications covering wider sustainability issues such as climate change, waste management, pollution – discount rate of 20% (score x 0.8)
3. Applications for assistance obtaining organic assessment and labelling – discount rate of 40% (score x 0.6)

### Assessment Criteria

Assessment will be made against the following criteria:

- **The contribution to the fund objective** – this criterion considers how the certification or assessment of the fishery or aquaculture activity would further the overarching objective of the certification fund (as stated on page 1 of this guide)
- **Cost effectiveness** – this criterion weighs up the benefits and opportunities of certification or assessment against the costs and risks
- **Ability to deliver** – this criterion considers whether the applicant has the ability, knowledge and commitment to complete the process and the level of engagement and support that exists from wider stakeholders for the assessment or certification process

Applicants will be asked to provide information relating to these criteria. The more specific the detail applicants can provide the better. Further guidance on each criteria and their weighting is provided below.

## **Contribution to the Fund Objective (Weighting 40%)**

Scoring of this criterion will be divided as follows:

**1. Contribution of the certification or assessment as a tool to enable the seafood industry to respond to growing pressure for environmental sustainability** (Weighting 15%).

### **Factors for assessment include:**

- What the drivers for demonstrating and/or improving environmental performance of this fishery or aquaculture activity are? For example, drivers could relate to the regulatory, market or international environment
- How strong/compelling are those drivers?
- How will the certification/assessment sought assist the fishery or aquaculture activity to respond to those drivers?

**2. Contribution of the certification or assessment as a tool to promote and improve the management and environmental performance of New Zealand fishing and aquaculture, including impacts of fishing and aquaculture on the aquatic environment** (Weighting 15%)

### **Factors for assessment include:**

- How will the certification/assessment sought demonstrate and/or improve the environmental performance in this fishery in the short and longer term?
- What future actions are planned (if any) to continue to improve the environmental performance of the fishery through the certification/assessment process and beyond?

**3. Contribution of the certification or assessment as a tool to build public confidence in the management of New Zealand fishing and aquaculture and raise the profile of the seafood sector** (Weighting 10%).

### **Factors for assessment include:**

- What the intended end use of the certification or assessment is?
- How well recognised the certification or assessment scheme is?
- How broad an assessment of sustainability is given by the scheme?
- How the results of the certification or assessment will be communicated?

## **Cost Effectiveness (Weighting 30%)**

This criterion weighs up the benefits and opportunities of certification or assessment against the costs and risks.

### **Factors for assessment include:**

- The expected benefits (qualitative and quantitative) of undertaking the certification or assessment process

- Information about the fishery or aquaculture activity being certified or assessed e.g. the size, value, profile of the fishery or aquaculture activity and whether it's being certified or assessed for the first time
- Chance of success at gaining positive certification or assessment
- Key obstacles to successful certification or assessment and management of these
- The costs of the certification or assessment process

### **Ability to deliver (Weighting 30%)**

#### **Factors for assessment include:**

- Commitment of applicant to fund their share of certification or assessment costs and any ongoing costs of certification or assessment
- Whether applicant has the ability, knowledge and experience to complete the certification or assessment process including addressing any concerns raised in the certification or assessment
- Level of engagement with and support from other stakeholders with an interest in the fishery or aquaculture activity for undertaking the certification or assessment process

### **important things to note**

- By applying, the applicant undertakes that the information provided is true, correct and complete
- The applicant is also acknowledging that the assessment process is both relative and subjective, and therefore agrees to accept MFish's authority as final decision maker
- Funding in any one year does not guarantee any further funding in any other year e.g. for re-certification
- The application form will be the primary basis for assessment. However, the assessment panel may also seek & use other information relevant to the application held by MFish

### **confidentiality**

Applicants provide information in confidence to MFish for the purpose of the funding assessment. All information is held in confidence subject to MFish's obligations under the Official Information Act 1982 and the Privacy Act 1993. Applicants should clearly mark any commercially sensitive information.

## what happens if the application is successful?

### **Notification**

MFish will notify successful and unsuccessful applicants using the contact name and details provided on the application form. Successful applicant will also be notified on the MFish website after the grant contract is signed.

### **Grant Contract**

Successful applicants will be required to sign a grant contract. A copy of the contract is available on MFish's website.

### **Payment**

Payment of the grant will be made in instalments tied to certification or assessment process milestones identified by the applicant and MFish.

### **Progress reports**

Grant recipients will be expected to provide progress reports through the certification or assessment process at the agreed payment milestones. The purpose of the progress report is to check that the grant recipient is undertaking the certification or assessment process that they received funding for. Verification that the milestone has been reached is also required. Progress reports can be emailed to [certificationfund@fish.govt.nz](mailto:certificationfund@fish.govt.nz).

**Agreed grant instalments will be paid when the progress report is received.**

### **Subsequent withdrawal from process**

Where a recipient of a grant withdraws part way through a certification or assessment process, MFish will not pay any amount of the grant remaining.