

An Assessment of Seafood Quality Certification Systems for World-Best-Practice Sustainable Production in Australia



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Executive Summary

The Australian Seafood Industry faces the challenge of overcoming the lack of competitive edge for local products. Although the domestic market for seafood is expanding, it is predicted that Australian seafood producers will continue to face aggressive competition from imports.¹ Furthermore, supermarket chains such as Woolworths and Coles are placing increasing demands on seafood producers to show proof of sustainable production methods. Export market growth is being hindered by increased costs of production and a high Australian dollar.

Certification of product against a number of domestic and international standards is an important means by which Australian seafood producers can compete more effectively in domestic and export markets. In order to achieve this, however, current skill and knowledge deficiencies regarding certification processes need to be rectified. These deficiencies encompass areas such as:

- Food Safety/Hazard Analysis Critical Control points (HACCP)
- Traceability
- Supply Chain Assurance
- Environmental Management
- Biosecurity
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Eco-labelling
- Organic Produce
- Animal Welfare.

An overseas research program enabled the Fellow to gain new skills and insights to achieve more effective standards and processes for Australian seafood quality certification. The Fellow completed training and practical work for a number of international third-party seafood certification systems. Detailed discussions were also held with government and industry stakeholders involved in the seafood product quality certification process.

Certification must become an accepted cost of production for the Australian Seafood Industry. In the medium to long term, however, the adoption of credible certification systems will result in improved product quality and better financial returns.

The Australian Seafood Industry now has a new set of skills and insights available to it through the Fellow to advance its capacity to develop, implement and market seafood products under internationally recognised certification schemes. Progress is already being made. One such scheme is an 'Australian Made/Australian Grown' brand and logo being developed by Seafood Services Australia (SSA), Seafood Experience Australia (SEA) and the Australian Made/Australian Grown Campaign (AMAGC) for use by the Australian seafood producers (wild harvest and aquaculture), processors, distributors, retailers and exporters. The plan is to publicise the 'world leading' Environmental Management Practices of the Australian Seafood Industry.²

¹ Since 2003-04 the real value of Australian fisheries imports has risen by \$153 million (12 per cent), being mostly driven by greater imports of fresh, chilled and frozen prawns and frozen fish fillets (ABARE July 2009, 'Australian fisheries statistics 2008', Canberra).

² <http://www.seafood.net.au/page/?pid=1262&nid=465>

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