

S1 - BIM CQA Standards Development Process and Procedure

Introduction

In 1997 BIM decided to address the value chain's need to produce world-class farmed seafood and differentiate these products in the marketplace through quality assurance programs. This intent has resulted in the development of the Certified Quality Aquaculture standards for farms and processors that cover quality, organic and ecological requirements. In the past 20 years, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), was tasked with the development and revision of the current CQA set of standards. The TAC included representation by BIM, industry, research, management authorities and certification body expertise.

Recognizing the need to provide for a high level and regional assurance mechanism, BIM structured the standards for the quantitative evaluation of production and management practices throughout the aquaculture production and distribution process in Ireland. The CQA standards is intended for assurance of farms and processing plants involved in farming and processing of finfish and mussels and its main objectives are to ensure food safety, quality, organic nature and environmental responsibility, via verification testing and traceability criteria required to be in place within the type of operation each standard covers.

The standards are performance based and have specific objectives that include food safety, product traceability, biosecurity management, integrated pest management, nutrient impact reduction, sustainability of raw materials, nature and conservation, and environmental management, among others, with thresholds and documented evidence in collected in the CQA audit reports.

The CQA standards and certification procedures strive to be consistent with relevant national EU, Irish and Internationally Agreed regulations, Conventions and Guidelines (see Master 1 - BIM CQA QMS Governance & Control Manual for details). Compliance with the CQA standards is determined by auditors supplied by independent certification bodies with training in the standards. The auditors must have relevant knowledge, experience and credentials in the aquaculture industry. Copies of the CQA standards and guidelines, copyrighted by BIM, are currently available free of charge in electronic format on the BIM website.

During standard revision, BIM will make an announcement on the website and send an email blast to all the stakeholders signed up to its mailing list announcing the start of the 60 day public comment period. All relevant stakeholder comments that are in line with the Standard Development Terms of Reference are taken into consideration towards the standard development/revision process. Responses to each comment will be made available on the website after the 60 day public comment period, following TAC's review, consideration and application, as is most relevant and appropriate. Comments received are non attributable to the party of origin to ensure confidentiality.

BIM Framework in Ireland

The management of the seafood sector in Ireland is carried out on behalf of the State by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) as well as three non-commercial semi-state bodies: Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), The Marine Institute (MI), and The Sea-Protection Authority (SFPA).

BORD IASCAIGH MHARA

BIM was established under the Sea Act 1952 as the state agency with primary responsibility for developing the Irish sea fishing and aquaculture industries. BIM's mission is "to lead the sustainable development of a competitive, market-led, innovative and quality driven Irish seafood industry, thereby maximising the returns to industry stakeholders and the socio-economic contribution to communities in coastal regions and Ireland as a whole." BIM is focused on expanding the volume, quality and value of output from the Irish seafood industry. It provides a range of advisory, financial, technical and training services to all sectors on the Irish seafood industry.

BIM Structure relative to the CQA Scheme

BIM Board of Directors

The Board of BIM comprises six directors, including a Chairman appointed by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Board determines BIM's programmes in the context of EU and national policies and oversees their implementation.

BIM CEO

The BIM Chief Executive Officer connects the Board of Directors and the CQA Oversight Committee and reports to the Board. The CEO offers specific Assurance expertise and strategic guidance and may collaborate with the Chair of the CQA Oversight Committee (a BIM Employee) to ensure the BIM vision and remit are carried out at every level of the organisation and reflected in the CQA Scheme.

CQA Oversight Committee

To promote a stakeholder involvement within Ireland and abroad, the CQA Oversight Committee is composed by members from BIM, industry, management and research agencies. The Oversight Committee holds primary guidance and oversight for the standard development process that the TAC carries out, whose members represent industry, nongovernmental conservation, and academic/regulatory interests. The CQA OC directs the drafting of all standards by the TAC. The CQA OC can recommend adjustments in the standards development process and set overarching goals for CQA certification, such as including more performance metrics or clearer specifications for the Irish industry, for consideration by the TAC.

Individuals are appointed to the Oversight Committee as representatives of BIM, companies, organizations, or other entities based on their experience. They serve until the completion of their appointed terms (2 years) and may only be replaced upon mutual agreement between the BIM

Aquaculture Development Director and the organizations they represent. Companies or organizations can be represented in successive terms, but may not have more than one representative on the oversight committee at any given time. Participation can be requested by contacting the BIM Aquaculture Development Director. Potential participants are then evaluated based on their motivation to join and experience in the industry segment they represent. The opportunity to join is then communicated every two years from the start of the term or when new members are required in the oversight committee.

Members of the Oversight Committee shall carry themselves professionally, act objectively on behalf of the industry they represent and disclose any potential conflict of interest that they may have when taking part in this group, as instructed by the Chair.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

The CQA Technical Committee develops standards for specific species and reflecting the development and need in the Irish aquaculture industry. Each set of CQA standards is reviewed, revised, and voted upon by a Technical Committee composed of technical experts and representatives of those groups interested in or affected by the standards. The CQA standards drafted by the TAC committee are forwarded to the Oversight Committee for final approval. The Oversight Committee also approves TAC committee membership, insuring that the TAC represents a balance of stakeholders (e.g. industry, research, management, oversight, NGO). TAC chairpersons are evaluated by the CQA Programme Lead and approved by the Oversight Committee based on their technical expertise, leadership experience, and communication skills. Chairpersons are required to act impartially in maintaining the orderly conduct of committee meetings and processing committee input. TAC members shall disclose any potential conflict of interest that they may have when taking part in this group.

The CQA Programme Lead works with the TAC chairpersons in recruiting TAC members to participate in the standards development process. Nominations from the Oversight Committee are also welcome. TAC members serve an initial term of three years or until the work of the TAC is completed, as determined by the CQA Programme Lead in concert with the Oversight Committee. TAC members may be re-appointed for two additional terms. Participation can be requested by contacting the CQA Programme Lead. Potential participants are then evaluated based on their motivation to join and experience in the industry segment they represent. The opportunity to join is then communicated every three years from the start of the term or when new members are required in the TAC.

CQA Programme Lead

The CQA Programme Lead reports to the CQA Oversight Committee and committee chairpersons to carry out the general administration of the CQA scheme. The Lead who is BIM employee guides the TAC Process, advises on general standards policies, and coordinates scheme activities. The Program Lead also helps prepare draft standards and related documents as needed and is responsible for assuring that all records remain on file for at least one full standards revision period.

CQA Programme Support Team

The CQA Programme Lead and Programme Team Support will constitute the QMS Review Committee. This committee will conduct an annual QMS review to ensure the continuing suitability, adequacy, and effectiveness of the organization. This includes the Quality Policy, annual quality objectives, performance and the need for any changes to the QMS or related documents. The CQA Support Team also supports the organisation and facilitating of TAC meetings.

CQA Scheme Standard Development Process

- a. The CQA Oversight Committee requests standard changes from the TAC.
1. The CQA Programme Lead (i.e. Vera Flynn) coordinates with the Oversight Committee Chairperson to call upon the TAC for setting, reviewing, revising and assessing standards.
2. The TAC meets and carries out standard development work prior to returning a revised committee draft to the Oversight Committee for initial review.
3. Following this initial review, the CQA Programme Lead formalises the draft Standard/s and releases the document for a 60 day Public Comment and Review period.
4. The comments and input received are considered and addressed by the TAC based on their Terms of Reference and applicability to wider standard development objectives and remit.
5. The TAC revises the standard/s draft and completes final draft.
6. The final Standard draft is forwarded to the Oversight Committee for review, voting and acceptance. At least 75% of the Oversight Committee must vote to confirm acceptance.
7. If changes or revisions are needed the Oversight Committee can cycle back to the TAC for another round of revision and step 6 is repeated again.
8. Standard is approved by the Oversight Committee and the changes are communicated to the BIM CEO and BIM Board.
9. The CQA Oversight Committee forwards the Standard/s to CQA Program Lead for implementation.
10. The Standard will be submitted to the Accreditation Boards and Certification Bodies for adaptation and implementation.
11. The Certification body notifies all the certified parties of the changes in standard's requirements and that they are given 1 year to become compliant with the most current standard requirements.