



# Responsible Seafood Sourcing Standard

A USER-FRIENDLY GUIDE ABOUT  
THE STANDARD AND ASSESSMENT

## Engaging markets to promote seafood sustainability

### Background

In recent years, market-based approaches to seafood sustainability have driven improvements in supply chains by promoting responsible fishing and sourcing practices. The rapid rise of seafood certifications, consumer guides, rating schemes, and fisheries improvement projects (FIPs) developed in Western markets, have aided the shift in consumer demand for more sustainable seafood options.

### Why do we need a Standard?

However, while this has been successful for some countries, these market tools remain largely inaccessible for many small-scale and data-deficient fisheries in the Global South. Due to the high costs of certification and implementation, economic actors are less likely to support local development and environmental stewardship.



# The Responsible Seafood Sourcing Standard

To reconcile the realities of small-scale fisheries with the emerging needs of the markets, the Responsible Seafood Sourcing (RSS) Standard has been developed to allow the identification of responsibly-sourced seafood products in the Philippines market. The RSS Standard provides a basis for responsible seafood sourcing and helps deter illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing by setting out criteria to assess current supply chain practices in fishing, sourcing, and trading of seafood and providing options to improve legal compliance and social and environmental responsibility.



## Development Process

The RSS Standard adopts principles of the 1995 UN FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and seeks to support the country in meeting the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, particularly SDG 12 (Responsible Production and Consumption), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). It promotes the sustainable management of fisheries and marine resources by reducing the entry of IUU fishing products into the Philippine's seafood supply chains and strengthening the livelihoods of small-scale fishers and fisheries-dependent communities.

## Scope of Assessment

This tool covers resource users and supply chain players engaged in the business of fishing, sourcing, manufacturing, and retail of wild-caught seafood harvested in the Philippine waters. It focuses on increasing compliance with legal requirements, and on improving social responsibility in the Philippine seafood supply chains. It is not a certification and does not aim to replace certifications. The Standard encourages the participation of fisherfolk associations and organizations as a business unit that has the capacity to consolidate responsibly-sourced seafood products and transact business with a buyer.



# Benefits of RSS

	Producers and Suppliers	Buyers and Markets
<b>Sustainability</b>	Selective or preferential sourcing of raw materials or products of local origins and/or coming from fisher communities with improvement efforts in place.	Assurance of supply allows buyers to consistently provide seafood products while ensuring the health of oceans and supporting the livelihoods of local fishing communities.
<b>Legal Compliance</b>	Increased registration and licensing help curb IUU fishing and facilitate compliance monitoring to catch regulations.	Production and manufacturing processes adhere to local and national regulations.
<b>Traceability</b>	Fish catch data help provide managers and authorities with options for resource management.	Critical info on raw materials and products are retained e.g., source fisheries. Markets are able to tell the "story" of the product.
<b>Transparency</b>	Producers have better access to market information. Equitable access to benefits.	Products are labeled accurately. Consumers have better access to product information.
<b>Social responsibility</b>	Producers and workers (including women and other marginalized groups) are protected, welfare and human rights are upheld.	Due diligence mechanisms are in place to ensure ethical production and manufacturing. Increases in brand value and reputational risks are mitigated.



## Future Steps

To develop and finalize the tool, major steps are currently being undertaken. These include, but are not limited to:



Formation of a national governing or managing committee



Formation of a consultative body



Continuous development of working drafts subject to regular revisions



Pilot testing of criteria for thresholds setting



Expert consultations



Development of a operations manual



Learn more about the Standard here:



Better Seafood Philippines (BSP) is the interim owner of the Standard. Any modification in the contents of this Standard without prior written consent from the owner and its duly-authorized persons is strictly prohibited. The development of this tool was made possible by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Fish Right Program.

