

Status of MSC certificates

At SFG, 2024 began with the completion of the re-certification of the shrimp fishery in West Greenland. This is the second time the fishery has passed the requirements of the MSC standard since the original certification in 2013. For this very reason, SFG was also able to apply for funds from the MSC's so-called "re-certification assistance fund". Here, the MSC granted an amount of 30,000 GBP. to cover some of the costs in connection with the re-certification. There is still a challenge in closing the one condition associated with the MSC certificate, namely the issue regarding sharing the shrimp stock in the SFA1 area with Canada. This is an issue that has been ongoing for several years. The condition is to be closed in 2025, and the Greenlandic and Canadian MSC certificates are harmonized. If the condition is not closed, both certificates will be suspended.

In July 2024, SFG participated in a meeting between the Greenlandic and Canadian fisheries administrations in Iqaluit. It is still unknown whether there will be any specific agreement between Greenland and Canada in the fisheries area, but the discussions and negotiations between the two parties continue. It seems that a revision of the management plan for the shrimp fishery in West Greenland in 2025 could solve the problem regarding the condition, if it contains specific passages that correspond to the passages in the Canadian management plan for SFA1. However, this will likely require that the deadline for the condition be postponed to 2026, so that the work on the revision of the management plan is completed. If this is the case, a so-called variation request must be submitted to and approved by the MSC.



In 2024, SFG initiated the MSC re-certification of the Greenlandic fishery for cod, haddock and saithe in the Barents Sea. A work that will not be completed until 2025. Since the fisheries agreement between Greenland and Russia is temporarily suspended due to the war in Ukraine, it has been decided to remove the Russian part of the certification for geographical reasons. In order to avoid one or more conditions on the certificate due to lack of cooperation in terms of management. The certificate will therefore only cover the Norwegian part of the Barents Sea. When or if cooperation between Greenland and Russia resumes, the certificate can be extended to include Russian territory again.

Greenland halibut and lumpfish – Marine Beacon and BestLife 2030

The two MSC certificates for the lumpfish fishery and the offshore Greenland halibut fishery in West Greenland have both undergone MSC surveillance audits in 2024. All 5 conditions in connection with the lumpfish certification are "on target", and it is expected that the collaboration between SFG and the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources, which began in 2024 and deals with studies of bird bycatch in the fishery, will be sufficient to close the conditions by the deadline in 2027. The project is a so-called "BestLife 2030 project" that will run for 2 years. The project is supported by the EU with 100,000 Euros.

At the end of November 2024, the MSC certificate for the offshore halibut fishery underwent the annual MSC surveillance audit. The audit report is still awaiting publication, but it is



expected that one condition, which concerns bycatch of Greenland sharks on longlines, will be closed. The other condition, which concerns bycatch of Greenland sharks in the offshore fishery for Greenland halibut with trawls, is expected to be “on target” and could be closed by the deadline in 2026. To close the condition, SFG has entered into a collaboration with DTU-aqua regarding testing a grid in the Greenland halibut trawl to avoid bycatch of

Greenland sharks. The project is part of a larger international bycatch project called “Marine Beacon”, which is financially supported by EU funds. In autumn/winter 2024, the first tests with the grid section were carried out on the vessel “Sisimiut”. At the end of 2025, the plan is for the final tests with the grid to be carried out with a researcher on board the vessel, and for a scientific report to be prepared thereafter.

New MSC standard

In 2023, the new version 3.0 of the MSC’s fisheries standard was launched. However, the new standard met with harsh criticism from several stakeholders, including the certification agencies that assess the individual fisheries. The criticism led the MSC to revise certain parts of the standard and thus publish version 3.1 in 2024. The new standard sets higher requirements in a number of areas. Not least in relation to knowledge and documentation of the fisheries’ impact on the ecosystem (bycatch and seabed). No fisheries have yet been assessed according to version 3.1. Already certified fisheries have until November 2030 to transition to the new version. New, previously uncertified fisheries must use version 3.1 from July 2026.

Nordic cooperation

In 2024, SFG participated in two workshops or seminars in the so-called SufiNova cooperation, which began in 2023. Through funds from the Nordic Council of Ministers, MSC clients in the Nordic countries and researchers from the individual countries – who deal with habitats and organisms on the seabed – collaborate on questions and issues which the MSC standard operates with in relation to the habitat on the seabed, VMEs, etc. As mentioned, the new version of the MSC standard places higher demands on knowledge and documentation in relation to sensitive habitats. By bringing together researchers from the individual countries, an overview of the already available knowledge about the seabed is created. This in turn can be put in relation to the requirements in the MSC standard. The two meetings in 2024 were held in Torshavn and Bergen, respectively. In 2025, a final symposium will be held in Reykjavik.



Cooperation with stakeholders

In 2024, SFG has again had a very good and constructive cooperation with the fisheries authorities, the Institute of Natural Resources and organizations in Greenland. This applies not only to MSC certifications and audits, but also to the preparation of various management plans, etc.

We would like to thank all our partners for the past year.

Happy New Year.