

Talking Points

ASC/GAA/GG Memorandum of Understanding

What

- 1. What is the intention of this Memorandum of Understanding?**
 - a. By working together we can achieve our mutual goal more efficiently – that is to support, recognize and promote a more sustainable aquaculture industry. The MOU is our starting point to identify our common interests better, and to evaluate certain areas where it makes sense to work collaboratively.

- 2. Who took the initiative to create the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA) and GLOBALG.A.P. (GG)?**
 - a. The seeds of this cooperation were first sown over three years ago when the Seafood Choices Alliance convened a meeting of seafood standard setters to find ways to collaborate. Informal discussions have continued since then and gained momentum over the last 12 months.

- 3. Will the certification programs of ASC, GAA and GG eventually merge?**
 - a. The parties are not discussing any current or future merger plans at this time. The MOU contemplates only limited collaboration between the organizations and explicitly recognizes the continued integrity of each program. The most important and overarching commitment is to find operational efficiencies to be gained with respect to certification programs.

- 4. Why do not the ASC, GAA and GG certification programs merge directly?**
 - a. Merging three separate organizations would be a complex and expensive task and we feel that our efforts are more effectively deployed at this point on finding the real and tangible benefits from collaborating in certain respects while retaining our independence.

- 5. What were the first challenges in the process of starting to work together?**
 - a. The first challenge was to identify the common ground between our three organizations. We then looked at how we could work together on those areas whilst retaining our independence to ensure best stakeholder value.

Why

1. Why have the three parties decided to cooperate?

- a. We have a mutual goal – to support, recognize and promote a more sustainable aquaculture industry. We believe that we can improve the value and efficiency of our certification programs by working together on the initiatives identified in the MOU. This will in turn enable the continued development of an aquaculture industry that contributes to food security and supports local communities without compromising environmental integrity.

2. Was the GSSI benchmark study one of the catalyzing factors behind the initiative of the MoU?

- a. No! As we mentioned, this process began three years ago before GSSI was conceived. However, we think that our work will complement their benchmarking process.

3. What will be the main outcomes and benefits of this MoU?

- a. We believe that this initiative will make certification more accessible and create greater value to an increasing number of farmers. It is our intention that the industry will benefit from this cohesive approach to complex issues and from finding efficiencies in audit processes.

4. What are the distinguishing features of your three programs?

- a. GAA has been operational for over 10 years with a strong position in the US and a growing global presence. Its standards cover feed, hatchery, farm and processing elements and cover environmental, social and food safety aspects. GAA has a consumer facing logo.
- b. GG has also been operational for over 10 years as part of a global food certification system for agricultural products. Its standards cover food safety, environmental, social and animal welfare requirements for feed, hatchery and farming operations. It operates as a business-to-business program and has a strong European base and a growing global presence. GG has a consumer facing traceability code.
- c. The ASC is the youngest of the three programs but has experienced rapid growth in the uptake of its consumer facing logo over the last 6 months, particularly in Europe. The ASC's farm standards include significant social requirements, a consumer facing logo and works in partnership with MSC on chain of custody and logo licensing.

5. What will be the first areas that you will work on together?

We will work on six defined areas:

- a. To reduce duplication of effort for farms that undertake certification by more than one of our certification programs;
- b. To develop common requirements related to feed;
- c. To explore common approaches to the management of certificate information potentially through shared IT platforms;
- d. To develop common approaches to auditor training;

- e. To develop shared approaches to chain of custody certification; and,
- f. To encourage accurate and objective messaging regarding the claims made for certified aquaculture products.

When

1. When do you expect the first concrete actions will start taking place? What is the timeline? This year already? And what do you expect will be the first action?

- a. We have begun discussion on implementation plans and will continue these through regular meetings to hammer out detail, monitor progress and to keep the dialogue moving. We are all committed to active participation. The parties will begin the preparation of the transparent cross-referencing process to develop audit checklists immediately. The Feed Dialogue will start with a stakeholder meeting in the autumn. The complex project that will look to create audit efficiencies will also start towards the end of this year, taking the cross-referencing results into account.

We look forward to sharing news as it emerges, but intend to issue formal 6 monthly updates on progress.