

Sophia Balod, global press and PR manager for the Aquaculture Stewardship Council, said:

“Fisheries Management Scotland has alleged that ASC’s revised approach represents a fivefold increase in the permissible threshold of lice and farmed fish and that ASC certification does not protect wild fish. This statement is a misinterpretation of the new ASC Salmon Standard v1.4 requirements and is therefore misleading.

“The previous ASC Salmon Standard (v1.3) emphasised the metric limit as the core driver of impact at farm level. In doing so, various equally important measures were either omitted or worked counter-effectively. This revised Standard has addressed all these concerns, based on recommendations of the expert Technical Group (TG).

“The previous limit of 0.1 mature female sea lice was based on Norwegian legislation in effect at the time of initial standard development and was proposed by the Salmon Dialogue as the global reference point. Interdependencies related to other factors such as geographic region, sea lice species and wild salmon species were not fully assessed at the time. The TG has reviewed the potential of a global limit over regional limits and concluded that too many factors vary significantly to determine a credible global limit. As a result, the recommendation was given to use existing metrics as set by the regulators in the understanding that these are based on available solid regional research and data. Several regions do not have metric limits set, for these regions the ASC Standard defines the limit.

“We believe that to effectively evaluate the robustness of a standard, one must look at the combination of the various requirements on a topic rather than judging a metric in isolation. The revised ASC Salmon Standard (v1.4) significantly improves the control mechanism once the metric limit is reached or exceeded. The TG recommended that, given the need for proper lice control, strict measures are applied in case farms do not reduce lice levels below the threshold limit within 21 days after exceedance. This timeline is far stricter compared to the regular non-compliance timeline, and if not achieved it requires the Conformity Assessment Body to cancel the certificate. This new requirement is the most severe action the ASC can require, and as such sends a strong message to the industry to manage lice levels in a responsible manner.

“We strongly believe that the combination of revised indicators will deliver improved practice enabling protection of wild salmonids. Furthermore, we are committed to a regular and informed threshold review process as stated in our Standard.”