

Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Technical Committee

The Technical Committee (TC) is a technical body with a key role in the development and revision of the seafood standards. Operating in total independence from Friend of the Sea, the Technical Committee collaborates by sending comments and voting on the content of the seafood standards. An open and democratic exchange of opinions, within an appropriate timeframe for feedback, aims at reaching the widest consensus.

1. Content responsibilities of seafood standards

Seafood standards developed and revised are:

- 1.1 Defined, reviewed, revised, assessed and verified by the Technical and Scientific Department.
- 1.2 Reviewed, revised, assessed and verified by the Technical Committee.
- 1.3 Reviewed by the Advisory Board (compliance of changes).
- 1.4 Approved by the Board of Directors.

2. Decision-making thresholds

In summary, using a consensus principle, the content of the seafood standards developed or revised by the Technical and Scientific Department is decided as follows:

- 2.1 At the beginning of a public consultation period, TC members and relevant stakeholders are invited to submit their comments on the standards. Likewise, announcements are made so that all stakeholder can participate by sending their comments.
- 2.2 Based on the comments received, the Technical and Scientific Department can apply changes to the standards. In the case of changes, inputs integrated into the standards shall be clearly identified.
- 2.3 TC members are invited to vote on the standards, which is considered a recommendation for the Board of Directors.



2.4 The Advisory Board reviews the compliance of changes suggested during the revision process.

2.5 The Board of Directors approves the standards.

3. Confidentiality

All comments and votes from the Technical Committee members are made publicly available on the Friend of the Sea website, in an anonymous way.

4. Composition

Friend of the Sea strives for a diverse and democratic composition, as well as geographically representative. The Technical Committee shall have from 14 to 21 members. All of them are voluntary, appointed in a personal capacity, serve a 3-year term and can be renamed. In order to ensure a representative balance of interests, the Technical and Scientific Department manages the selection process to include representatives from all continents and 2–3 members of each area of activity:

- Seafood Industry (Fisheries, Aquaculture, Fishmeal and Fish oil industry);
- Distribution, Retail;
- Government;
- Certification Bodies;
- NGOs;
- Educational;
- Media.

5. How to become a member

5.1 Stakeholders interested in becoming members of the TC can apply by sending an updated CV to the following email: info@friendofthesea.org.

5.2 The Technical and Scientific Department can approach stakeholders asking for updated CVs for consideration.

5.3 All CVs received, spontaneously or upon request, are analysed during the subsequent selection process.

5.4 Every three years, the Technical and Scientific Department conducts a selection process in which the Advisory Board analyses all the CVs received and elects, by vote, the TC members of the subsequent term.

5.5 The Scientific and Technical Department shall inform all those who have had their CVs analysed about the result of the selection process in writing and make publicly available the names of the elected members at their discretion.

6. Criteria for approval

6.1 TC members must have at least one year of experience in their respective fields of activity.

6.2 The Advisory Board elects the TC members based on a range of experiences and skills, respecting the criteria of geographical representation and balanced participation.

7. Participation

7.1 At the beginning of a standard revision process, the Technical and Scientific Department notifies the TC members, inviting them to send their comments using a specific file elaborated for the respective revision process.

7.2 Outside of a revision process period, TC members can also send comments regarding the Standards using the “Stakeholder Input Form”. In this case, the input will be considered during the subsequent revision process.

7.3 In order to keep an updated database and respect the balanced participation criteria, TC members shall report circumstantial changes to info@friendofthesea.org. In this case, the Technical and Scientific Department shall assess whether members remain in compliance with the approval criteria and notify them, in writing, within 20 working days from receipt. If necessary, new members can be elected by the Advisory Board to replace non-conforming members.

Summary of a process for revising seafood standards*

First phase – Comments and suggestions
From the submission of a revision process, TC members have 60 days for comments.
Second phase – Revision of the comments
At the end of the 60 days, the Technical and Scientific Department has 7 days to review the comments and, if necessary, apply changes to the standards. In the case of changes, the Technical and Scientific Department has to inform all entities involved.
Third phase – Voting process
At the end of the 7 days, TC members have up to 30 days to vote. During the voting period, additional comments are appreciated. However, these will be taken into account in the subsequent revision process.
Fourth phase – Management of votes
Once all the TC members have voted, the Technical and Scientific Department has to count the votes and work on the decision. If a TC member does not vote, this abstention is considered as a null vote. In the case of a tie in voting, the voting process restarts. Nonetheless, before restarting it, the Technical and Scientific Department has to provide to all entities involved a list of all comments received during the entire process in an anonymous way. The TC members have 15 days to analyse the list of comments and then the voting process restarts.

* Detailed information is available in the Standard Development and Maintenance Procedure.