



Standard Development and Maintenance Procedure

Friend of the Sea strives for consensus decisions on the content of its standards, basically distinguished as seafood and non-seafood. Thus, all stakeholders, even if not members of the Technical Committee, can submit inputs (comments and/or suggestions) at any time on how standards are working and how to improve them. The full guidance is available in the [Stakeholder Input Procedure](#).

Friend of the Sea seafood standards have a consolidated certification or accreditation program, while non-seafood standards are considered pilot projects. Thus, seafood and non-seafood standards are conducted with different procedures.

The following procedure is applied only for seafood standards, which are developed and revised with the support of a balanced Technical Committee. The FOS Technical Committee is a technical body operating in total independence from Friend of the Sea, playing a key role in the development and revision of the seafood standards. An open and democratic exchange of opinions, within an appropriate timeframe for feedback, aims at reaching the widest consensus. Thereby, each member of the Technical Committee can add comments on and propose changes to the seafood standards, which are recommended by vote and subject to the approval of the Board of Directors. Detailed information regarding the Technical Committee is available in the [Terms of Reference \(ToR\) for the Technical Committee](#). Likewise, detailed information regarding the Board of Directors is available in the [Terms of Reference \(ToR\) for the Board of Directors](#).

Stakeholders can register procedural complaints online regarding a revision process. The full guidance is available in the [Complaints Procedure](#). Unsolved complaints shall be assessed during the subsequent revision process.

1. Terms of Reference (ToR) for seafood standard development or revision process:

1.1 FOS seafood standards must always have an international geographical application.

1.2 FOS seafood standards must always be in alignment with Friend of the Sea's Objectives (available in the [Scheme, Scope and Objectives](#)).

1.3 FOS seafood standards must include a rational explanation for:

- a.** A justification of the need for the standard, including an assessment of the most important environmental issues falling within the scope of the standard;
- b.** Whether the proposed standard will meet an expressed need;
- c.** Documentation of what other standards exist or are in the process of development which meet all or part of the expressed need;
- d.** A risk assessment in implementing the standards and how to mitigate them.

2. Content responsibilities

Seafood standards developed and revised are:

2.1 Defined, reviewed, revised, assessed and verified by the Technical and Scientific Department.

2.2 Reviewed, revised, assessed and verified by the Technical Committee.

2.3 Reviewed by the Advisory Board (compliance of changes).

2.4 Approved by the Board of Directors.

3. 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:

- 3.1** 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.
- 3.2** 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.
- 3.3** TC members are invited to vote on the standards, which is considered a recommendation for the Board of Directors.
- 3.4** The Advisory Board reviews the compliance of the changes suggested during the revision process.
- 3.5** The Board of Directors approves the standards.

4. Standard development and revision process

- 4.1** At least every 5 years, the Technical and Scientific Department analyses and evaluates whether to make changes to its standards. Thus, in order to achieve continued relevance and effectiveness in meeting its objectives, Friend of the Sea can propose new standards and new versions of its current standards to the members of the Technical Committee.
- 4.2** Revision proposals shall be approved only if the Advisory Board (detailed information available in the [Terms of Reference \(ToR\) for the Advisory Board](#)) deems that they comply with the following:
 - a.** FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries;
 - b.** They include clear, specific, objective and verifiable language;
 - c.** They are expressed in terms of process, management and/or performance criteria, rather than design or descriptive characteristics;
 - d.** They do not favour a particular technology, patented item or service provider and attribute or cite all original intellectual sources of content.

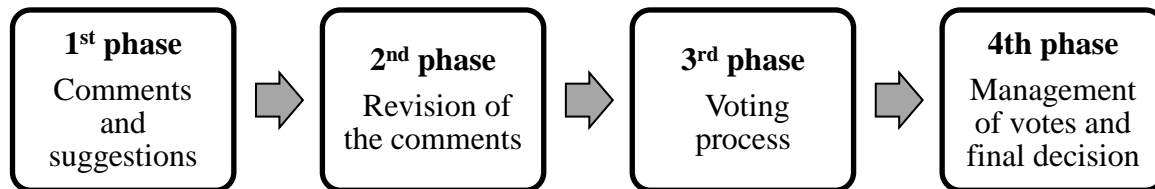
- 4.3** The Technical and Scientific Department requests the Certification Bodies to test the new standards during the appropriate audits and report on the feasibility (cost, time) and auditability (interpretation, consistency) of the requirements prior to finalization of the standards.
- 4.4** Approved standards of aquaculture and fisheries have, respectively, one and three years to come into compliance, as a transitional period. Likewise, approved standards of CoC have one year to come into compliance. After this, the standards are considered compulsory.
- 4.5** Certified companies shall be notified about all changes applied to the standards and informed that the certificates previously issued remain valid until their expiry date.

5. General responsibilities of a revision process

<p>Technical and Scientific Department</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting, reviewing, revising, assessing and verifying the standards.
<p>Marketing Department</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Announcements about the progress of the revision process.
<p>Technical Committee members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reviewing, revising, assessing, and verifying the standards.
<p>Advisory Board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reviewing compliance of changes suggested during the revision process.
<p>Certification Bodies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conducting an assessment of the feasibility and auditability of the requirements prior to the finalization of the standards.
<p>Board of Directors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring the progress of the revision processes, being able to comment at any time; - Approving the standards.



6. Work plan of a revision process



Friend of the Sea must keep informed all parties involved throughout the revision process, including the result of the entire process. The procedure must comply with the following steps:

6.1 First phase – Comments and suggestions (60 days)

- a. The Technical and Scientific Department sends the revision proposal by email to all members of the Technical Committee and uploads the draft version onto the official website for public consultation;
- b. The Marketing Department states on the official website that the revision proposal is open for comments and suggestions;
- c. The Technical and Scientific Department notifies Relevant Stakeholders by email that the revision proposal is open for comments and suggestions, including: FAO; Certification and Accreditation Bodies; All FOS certified companies; Consumer associations; Major environmental groups, including those involved in the environmental issue related to the specifically proposed standard revision. If related to the specifically proposed standard revision, the following stakeholders must also be notified: RFMOs; Aquaculture management authorities; Fish workers authorities; Feed / fishmeal / fish oil providers and industry associations.
- d. From the date of revision proposal submission, the members of the Technical Committee and the stakeholders have 60 days for comments and suggestions.

6.2 Second phase – Revision of the comments (7 days)

- a. At the end of the 60 days reserved for sending comments and suggestions, the Technical and Scientific Department has 7 days to review the inputs and, if necessary, to adjust the draft version of the standards.
- b. In the case of changes, inputs integrated into the standard shall be clearly identified. The Technical and Scientific Department shall upload the revised version onto the official website and inform all parties involved in the process about the revised version and the beginning of the voting process. Likewise, the Marketing Department shall state on the official website that a revised version is available and mention the beginning of the voting process.

6.3. Third phase – Voting process (maximum of 30 days)

- a. At the end of the 7 days reserved for the revision of the comments, the members of the Technical Committee have up to 30 days to vote on the approval of the revised version as a recommendation. The duration of the voting process is variable, since it depends on the participation of the members. The maximum deadline for voting is 30 days. However, once all members of the Technical Committee have voted, the revision process can move forward to the next phase.
- b. During the voting process, additional comments are appreciated. Nonetheless, these comments will be taken into account in the subsequent revision process.

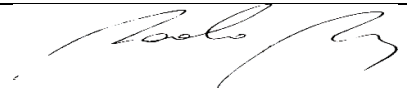
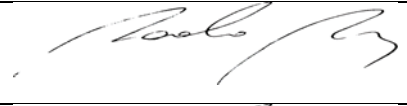
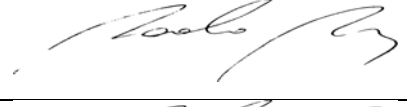
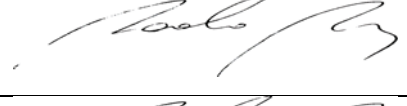
6.4 Fourth phase – Management of votes and final decision

- a. At the end of the voting process, the Technical and Scientific Department shall count the votes and work on the decision. If a member of the Technical Committee does not vote, this abstention is considered as a null vote.
- b. In the case of majority of the votes, the revision process is ended with a unique voting process.

- c.** In the case of a tie in voting, the voting process restarts. Nonetheless, before restarting it, the Technical and Scientific Department shall provide a list of all comments received during the entire process, in an anonymous way, for all parties involved in the revision process. From the date of receipt, the members of the Technical Committee have 15 days to review the list of comments. At the end of these 15 days of review, the third and fourth phases need to be repeated.
- d.** Once a consensual decision on the new standard has been taken, the Board of Directors shall request the Certification Bodies to carry out within 15 working days an assessment of feasibility and auditability. New standards can only be approved after a favourable assessment of at least two Certification Bodies.
- e.** Once the Certification Bodies' assessments are available, if favourable, the Board of Directors shall approve the new versions within 5 working days. If the assessments do not reach a favourable consensus on the feasibility and auditability of the new version, the revision process needs to be restarted.
- f.** The Technical and Scientific Department shall upload the approved version onto the official website and inform all parties involved, providing instructions on the transition period. Likewise, the Marketing Department shall state on the official website that Friend of the Sea has an approved version available.
- g.** At the end of the revision process, a summary of the process describing how comments have been managed by Friend of the Sea is made publicly available and all parties involved throughout the revision process are informed. All the [comments](#) received during the public comment period are made publicly available without attribution or identifier.



Table 1. Versions of the present document adopted in the preceding period.

Date of revision	Revision Number	Reviewer	Role of the reviewer	Director's approval
01/02/2016	1	Paolo Bray	Director	
22/02/2016	2	Paolo Bray	Director	
22/02/2017	3	Paolo Bray	Director	
28/11/2018	4	Paolo Bray	Director	
12/03/2019	5	Paolo Bray	Director	