Friend of the Sea Standard

FOS - Wild Welfare Standard for Pots and Traps Fisheries

www.friendofthesea.org

REV	DATE	REASON	VALIDATION	APPROVAL
1	11/10/2023	Pilot Project	Paolo Bray	
2	29/10/2026	Alignment with the revised checklist: decapod requirements, new section 5 – On land, training renumbered to 6	Paolo Bray	

Foreword

Friend of the Sea has been established in 2008. Its objective is safeguarding the marine environment and its resources, encouraging a market and implementing specific conservation projects.

The Friend of the Sea certification program allows for the assessment of fisheries and aquaculture products according to criteria and requirements. The certification, granted following an audit by independent certification bodies, ensures that a product complies with the requirements.

This standard shall be considered a pilot project with the purpose of checking the applicability and feasibility of the requirements in fisheries.

Requirements are classified as Essential, or Recommended, according to their level of importance.

Essential Requirements: The unit of certification shall be 100% compliant with essential requirements to be recommended for certification by the Certification Body (CB). Failure to comply with essential requirements is a major non-conformity. To achieve certification, corrective actions shall be implemented within three months from the date of assessment of non-conformities.

Recommended: It is not compulsory for the unit of certification to comply with recommendations to achieve certification. Nonetheless, compliance with recommendations shall be verified during the audit and any non-conformities shall be highlighted in the audit report as a "recommendation". The unit of certification shall inform the CB, during the following audit, regarding any corrective measures implemented.

Requirements that are not applicable to the audited unit of certification will be marked with "N.A."

Care fish/Catch project

The welfare of wild-caught fish has been overlooked in practice, research, advocacy, and policy. The Carefish/catch project (https://carefish.net/catch/) aims to promote better fishing standards, by addressing 5 main goals:

1. assess global animal welfare impacts in fisheries,
2. identify the potential of reducing animal suffering in various fishing methods and species,
3. analyse the economic and social feasibility of the improvements suggested,
4. raise problem and solution awareness in general and specific audiences,
5. implement welfare guidelines into the Friend of the Sea fisheries certification scheme.

The international consortium responsible for this project is formed by:

- Fair-fish international,
- FishEthoGroup,
- Friend of the Sea,
- Centre of Marine Sciences (CCMAR),
- DeMoS Institute.

The funding is awarded through a grant from **Open Philanthropy**.

This project is an absolutely pioneering approach to a highly complex field, integrating both animal, social, economic and policy perspectives, and the outcomes will impact the way we look into fisheries.

Animal Welfare

Animal welfare is an emerging issue in aquaculture and fisheries, relating to ethics, animal health and product quality. A growing number of researchers, decision-makers and advocacy groups have been pushing for fish welfare to be thoroughly researched and integrated into the conversation about the future of seafood standards. In scientific and technical terms, welfare is defined as the state of the animal as it copes with its environment. The welfare of fish throughout the catching process can therefore be monitored.

Following these lines, the Carefish/catch project aims to promote better fishing standards, by assessing animal welfare impacts in fisheries and improving fishing practices.

One important objective of the project is to identify key points of welfare hazards and suggest improvements to reduce the suffering of individuals in specific fishing methods. This would enable the establishment of welfare standards in the fisheries sector through a series of recommendations and guidelines to be implemented into the fisheries certification program Friend of the Sea.

Definitions and Abbreviations

(2) **Bycatch**: Part of a catch of a fishing unit taken incidentally in addition to the target species towards which fishing effort is directed. Some or all of it may be returned to the sea as discards, usually dead or dying.

(1) **Endangered** (threatened with extinction):
1 - Endangered Species is used as an Element within the GSSI Benchmark Tool and is explained below. The related term "Threatened" appears in the text of two Indicators as an example of bycatch species that are particularly vulnerable. The phrase "threatened…with serious risk of extinction" appears in the FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries (paragraph 31.1).
2 - Endangered: Taxa in danger of extinction and whose survival is unlikely if causal factors continue operating. Included are taxa whose numbers have been drastically reduced to a critical level or whose habitats have been so drastically impaired that they are deemed to be in immediate danger of extinction. Also included are those that possibly are already extinct, in so far as they definitely have not been seen in the wild in the past 50 years.
3 - Threatened with extinction: A category of organisms listed in CITES Annex 1. The vulnerability of a species to threats of extinction depends on its population demographics, biological characteristics, such as body size, trophic level, life cycle, breeding structure or social structure requirements for successful reproduction, and vulnerability due to aggregating habits, natural fluctuations in population size (dimensions of time and magnitude), residency/migratory patterns. This makes it impossible to give numerical values for population size or area of distribution that are applicable to all taxa.
"Protected" refers generally to any plant or animal that a government declares by law to warrant protection; most protected species are considered either threatened or endangered. A species that is recognized by national legislation, affording it legal protection due to its population decline in the wild. The decline could be as a result of human or other causes.

(2) **Fishery:** A unit determined by an authority or other entity that is engaged in raising and/or harvesting fish. Typically, the unit is defined in terms of some or all of the following: people involved, species or type of fish, area of water or seabed, method of fishing, class of boats, and purpose of the activities.

Unit of Certification (UoC): a vessel, fleet, or individual operator using a certain gear type, fishing on a particular target stock that is undergoing audit.

References:
(1) GSSI Glossary https://www.ourgssi.org/assets/GSSI-Benchmarking-Tool/GSSI-Global-Benchmark-Tool-V.1-October-2015.pdf
(2) FAO Term Portal http://www.fao.org/faoterm/en/?defaultCollId=21

Pots and traps Fisheries

Pots and traps (hereafter named traps for streamlining reasons) are fishing gears commonly used in both small-scale and industrial fisheries around the world. While they account for a relatively small proportion of global fish landings, certain target species can bring in significant revenue for the sector, as reported by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Trap enclosures or devices typically have rigid structures and employ bait or the appearance of refuge to lure fish, crustaceans, or molluscs inside, from which escape is difficult. Most traps are deployed on the seabed or riverbed, targeting primarily benthic species at depths ranging from a few meters to 700 meters, and a haul-in line is used to check and rebait the traps.
Compared to other demersal fishing gears like bottom trawling, most traps have a lesser impact on the habitat, although there is still evidence of seabed impact during trap fishing operations, especially on rocky bottoms. Benthic habitats can be interfered with or even destroyed when the main and secondary fines are hauled aboard, or when lost traps continue to catch fish (known as ghost fishing). Although there are legal limits on the number of traps that can be owned and deployed, the fact that traps can remain underwater for several days makes it challenging to monitor these fisheries and enforce regulations.
Although non-target species are usually successfully removed from traps, there is still a by-catch associated with this fishery, which can nevertheless cause (relatively low) mortality depending on factors such as depth and soaking times. By-catch of Protected, Endangered, or Threatened (PET) species is also reported, with turtles becoming entangled in vertical lines and both vertical and ground lines causing entanglement of marine mammals, resulting in permanent injuries or death. Currently, there is a debate regarding the implementation of mitigation methods, such as using culling rings to allow undersized animals to escape, sinking ground lines instead of floating ones between traps, reducing the number of buoy lines, or using ropeless gears with associated recovery/hauling technology.

Reference: *Carefish report – Welfare assessment in pots and traps fisheries.* *https://esszett.cloud/apps/files/files?dir=/PROJECT_CAREFISHCATCH/Workpackage_2_welfare_reports&openfile=1135179*

Description of the unit of certification

This document shall only be filled out by personnel of the CB in charge of the audit.
It shall be filled out in English, if spoken fluently.

a) NAME OF THE UNIT OF CERTIFICATION TO BE AUDITED:
b) NAME OF THE UNIT OF CERTIFICATION REQUESTING THE AUDIT:
c) IS THE UNIT OF CERTIFICATION TO BE AUDITED PART OF A GROUP? IF SO, PLEASE SPECIFY THE NAME OF THE GROUP AND LIST ALL MEMBERS:
d) ADDRESS OF THE UNIT OF CERTIFICATION TO BE AUDITED:
e) NAME AND CONTACT DETAILS OF THE PERSON AT THE UNIT OF CERTIFICATION RESPONSIBLE FOR THE AUDIT AND CONTACTS WITH THE AUDITOR:

f) FLEET TO BE AUDITED:

Name of the fishing vessel	Registration number	Vessel's flag	Fishing method	Capacity (MT)	Unloading harbour	Ship owner, if different from “a)”

g) VESSELS AUDITED ON SITE (the auditor shall list the vessels which have actually been audited on site as a sample representing the fleet)**:**

Name of the fishing vessel	Registration number	Unloading harbour

h) FISHING ZONE *(Coordinates and/or FAO area and/or subarea and/or ICES area and/or EEZ. If available, please include a map.)**:***

i) COMMON AND SCIENTIFIC NAME OF THE SPECIES TO BE AUDITED, WITH THE RESPECTIVE FISHING METHODS:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fishing method

j) TOTAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:

k) ENVIRONMENTAL CERTIFICATIONS AND AWARDS:

I) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Please specify the type of audit (initial, surveillance, additional, unannounced or recertification). In the case of multi-site audits, please specify also the method for calculation of sites inspected.

☐ **TheCarefish/catch project was introduced** *(If not, the auditor shall provide a short description).*

☐ **The unit of certification and the ship owners were informed of the opportunity, in case of approval, of using the Friend of the Sea logo on the certified products.**

☐ **The unit of certification has a document qualifying and confirming the roles of the staff carrying out the audit.**

☐ **The duration of the audit was agreed upon.**

☐ **The information included in the Preliminary Information Form (PIF) was confirmed** (in the case of changes to the PIF, an updated version has to be promptly provided).

<table>
<tr><td>CERTIFICATION BODY:</td><td>AUDIT TEAM:</td><td>AUDIT START AND END DATE:</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">SIGNATURE OF AUDITOR:</td><td rowspan="2">NAME OF THE PERSON IN CHARGE OF THE UNIT OF CERTIFICATION AND ACCOMPANYING THE AUDITOR DURING THE AUDIT:</td><td>AUDIT CODE:</td></tr>
<tr><td>TYPE OF AUDIT:</td></tr>
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NOTES TO THE AUDITOR

1) The auditor shall fill out all fields in the checklist.

2) The Auditor shall provide an explanation when requirements are not applicable.

3) The Auditor shall write YES when the unit of certification complies with a requirement and NO when it does not.

4) The Auditor shall comment and explain the positive or negative answers. Simple "YES," "NO," or "N.A." are insufficient.

5) Each relevant document shall be added to the final audit report in a separate and numbered attachment.

6) Photographic evidence added to the checklist or attached is appreciated.

7) The application process is NOT discriminatory on size, scale, management, minimum number of operators and number of vessels involved.

1 – CAPTURE

No.	Requirement	Level	Parameters and information	Y/N/N.A.	Comments
1.1	Reduce soaking time as much as possible	Recommended	The UoC shall reduce the time of the traps soaking to reduce the possibility of fish dying trapped in the traps. Reducing soaking time would reduce the risk of pain, injuries, or death by depredation, suffocation, exhaustion, physical injuries (e.g., scale loss, cuts, bleeding wounds) or psychological impact due to restraining stress during net entangling.		
1.2	Hauling speed shall be reduced as much as practically possible.	Recommended	The UoC shall reduce the speed with which the pots and traps are hauled on board.		
1.3	The traps should have an opening wide enough to remove the animal without damaging it.	Essential	The opening shall be wide enough to ensure the safe removal of the catches, reducing the possibility of injuries (such as cuts, loss of scales, etc)		
1.4	The twine that closes the traps must be biodegradable.	Recommended	This requirement is intended to ensure that, if the fishing gear is lost, it loses		

			its effectiveness in catching animals after a certain period of time.		

2 – ONBOARD HANDLING

No.	Requirement	Level	Parameters and information	Y/N/N.A.	Comments
2.1	The UoC shall create and apply a codified procedure for hauling and handling catches.	Essential	There shall be a written procedure that takes into account what is addressed in the following requirements. All the staff involved in fishing operations shall undergo training on the procedure. Appropriate refresher courses shall be organized by the UoC annually and for all new employees. A designated and clearly identifiable person in charge of training and monitoring shall be appointed.		
2.2	Handling time and method.	Essential	The UoC shall handle catches in an appropriate way to reduce damage and stress to them. Appropriate way is here intended as: calm, wet gloves, handling with 2 hands, avoid use of excessive forces when removing fish from nets, avoiding throwing on deck and kicking of fish and decapods; do not walk or stand on decapods, or drop from height.		
2.3	Air exposure	Essential	The removal of catches from their natural environment and their prolonged air exposure can produce stress and pain to catches, the UoC shall reduce to the minimum as much as possible capture's air exposure from time when catches are hauled on board and when are dead.		

2.4	Sorting activities	Essential	The sorting activity shall be conducted after hauling as quickly as possible. Leaving the catches on deck, entrapped in the fishing gear or thrown shall be avoided. Appropriate catch boxes, in kind and number, shall be used.		
2.5	Avoid the use of excessive strength when removing catches from the fishing gear.	Essential	It is requested to reduce, as much as possible, the strength used by the fishermen to extract the catches from the gears (e.g., avoid pulling fish from the gill, octopuses from the tentacles, decapods by limbs, etc)		
2.6	Avoid the use of bleach and other chemicals.	Essential	This practice can cause unnecessary damage and suffering to octopuses and fish in general whenever applicable. We recommend using alternative methods, as mentioned below in the standard.		
2.7	The UoC ensures the negative effect of the capture method on the target species and decapods, **and the risk of bycatch** is minimised through the use of adapted equipment, fishing and handling practices during and immediately after capture.	Recommended	Actions used to reduce the negative effects of capture methods should include: avoiding exposure to shifts in barometric pressure, salinity, and temperature; avoiding physical trauma/injury/exhaustion; adjusting mesh sizes and pot designs to enable escape **for bycatch, and for target species in the event of lost pots**; and increasing the frequency at which pots are checked.		
2.8	The UoC does not permit the removal of claws from any live decapod crustacean. **Only applicable to fisheries targeting decapod species.**	Essential	Declawing is the practice of manually removing one or both claws from live crabs or other decapod crustaceans. There is clear evidence that declawing is not a sustainable practice		

			that causes trauma, stress, and pain to the animals. There is also evidence that declawed animals show increased morbidity and mortality if returned to the sea following declawing, as they are less able to feed, defend themselves, or compete for resources.		
2.9	The UoC does not permit the immobilisation of claws by 'nicking' (cutting of claw tendons) or any other injury. **Only applicable to fisheries targeting decapod species.**	Essential	The process of claw nicking involves the fracturing of the apodemes and the cutting of tendons in the dactyls of claws to prevent functioning. Research has shown that the process of claw nicking is extremely harmful to the animals, as the painful wounds can lead to blood loss, infection, and death. Claw nicking also prohibits freedom to express natural behaviour, as claws are essential for natural movement and activity for these animals.		
2.10	Other environmental stressors - Avoid exposing decapods to light, **avoidable** noise/vibration, extreme/fluctuating temperatures, unfavourable weather conditions, social stress, risk of crushing/injury. **Only applicable to fisheries targeting decapod species.**	Recommended	Appropriate holding conditions should be provided that are specific to each species' needs. The same conditions specified for sorting, holding, and transport should be observed when decapods are landed at the quayside.		
2.11	The UoC shall develop an Emergency Action Plan for the holding and transport of decapods. **Only**	Essential	An alternative plan should be created and made available to the crew to be used in the event of an emergency, such as a		

	applicable to fisheries targeting decapod species.		vessel breakdown, delaying the landing of live animals.		

3 - STUNNING AND SLAUGHTER

No.	Requirement	Level	Parameters and information	Y/N/ N.A.	Comments
3.1	A codified procedure for stunning and slaughtering must be in place, with a designated supervisor and trainer.	Essential	In the case of Octopus fisheries, the recommended practice is stunning by making an incision with a sharp, pointed object (e.g., a knife) into the brain. This procedure should be encouraged and ideally performed while the Octopuses are still inside the traps or immediately after their removal from the traps. Stunning methods in net fishing shall include percussion by using a sharp blow to the head, destroying the central nervous system and rendering the fish unconscious immediately and irreversibly; or electricity by providing an electrical shock either in water or in contact with two electrodes while emerging, rendering the fish unconscious, yet reversibly. While different vessels and sizes of operations may vary widely, manual percussive stunning seems to be more adequate for set net fishing than electrical stunning, which requires additional manpower and equipment.		

3.2	Use of appropriate and effective stunning tools by trained staff.	Essential	A sharp blow to the head delivered by a trained member of the crew should be effective and fast to render the catch unconscious. This method may be used with a fishing priest or with a captive bolt pistol. In the case of octopus fisheries, an incision with a sharp, pointed object (e.g., a knife) into the brain shall be used. Electrical stunning equipment and appropriate slaughter equipment (e.g. sharp knives) should be provided for the slaughter of decapods on board vessels, along with the required training.		
3.3	The UoC doesn't use ice as a stunning method, although it should be used if no stunning or slaughter method is available.	Recommended	The use of ice can only be considered in cases where alternative methods can not be made available. Use adequate amounts of ice and a slurry in the boxes where fish are stored.		
3.4	Conscious decapods should not be slaughtered using any of these methods: boiling or other thermal cooking, chilling, wet/ice chilling (for temperate species), asphyxiation, chemical anaesthetics, CO_2 gassing, tailing, or other forms of dismemberment.	Recommended	Effective stunning followed by immediate slaughter, with insensibility enduring until death occurs, is the only humane way to kill decapods. Current scientific evidence supports electrical stunning as best practice when appropriate species-specific parameters are applied. Mechanical killing by Double spiking (***crabs***) or full-body splitting (***lobsters***) should be carried out by trained, skilled professionals only.		

3.5	The UoC shall develop and make available to vessel crew an Emergency Action Plan for the humane slaughter of decapods in the event of electrical stunning being temporarily unavailable.	Essential	Alternative procedures should be made available to ensure that no decapods suffer inhumane deaths. This plan should be for emergencies only.		

4 – BY-CATCH

No.	Requirement	Level	Parameters and information	Y/N/ N.A.	Comments
4.1	There shall be a written procedure to manage the welfare of by-catch species appropriately.	Essential	This procedure shall address the sorting and release in order to ensure minimal stress and damage to by-catch species.		
4.2	The unit of certification subjects its employees to a course taught by experts on how to manage the release of accidental catches.	Essential	The course must include general notions on the potential bycatch present in that marine area.		

5 – ON LAND

No.	Requirement	Level	Parameters and information	Y/N/ N.A.	Comments
5.1	The UoC shall provide appropriate species-specific transport conditions for live decapods for as long as they remain in the UoC's custody. **Only applicable to fisheries targeting decapod species.**	Essential	This requirement applies only after landing and concerns exclusively companies that transport fishery products.		
5.2	Live sales to the public. **Only applicable to fisheries targeting decapod species.**	Essential	The UoC shall have a clear policy banning the sale of live decapods directly to members of the public at quayside or at any other time. With the requirement for electrical stunning as best practice and specialist training for manual dispatch, it is not possible for slaughter to be achieved in domestic kitchens. The UoC should acknowledge its duty of care to live decapods by not selling them to non-commercial buyers.		

			Fisheries could have 12 months of transition time to achieve compliance with this requirement.		

6 – TRAINING

No.	Requirement	Level	Parameters and information	Y/N/ N.A.	Comments
6.1	UoC staff involved in fishing operations must undergo fish / decapod welfare training conducted by experts.	Essential	Evidence of conformity.		
6.2	The UoC must train one of its staff members as a fish / decapod welfare expert.	Essential	The person chosen to become a fish / decapod welfare expert must complete the course required in requirement 6.1 and will be the point of reference for all fish welfare activities in their company.		

Further comments:

CONCLUSIONS:

The Auditor shall fill out the following fields:

☐ **The unit of certification COMPLIES with Friend of the Sea Fish Welfare requirements.**

☐ **The unit of certification DOES NOT COMPLY with Friend of the Sea Fish Welfare requirements.**

MAJOR NON-CONFORMITIES (to be corrected within 3 months)

List major non-conformities.

RECOMMENDATIONS (to be communicated within the next inspection)

List recommendations