



**WWF** FOR NATURE. FOR YOU.

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World Wide Fund For Nature

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## WWF–SASSI ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL

WWF-SASSI assessments are conducted pursuant to the “Marine Common Assessment Methodology”, which is a newly revised methodology (MCAM ver. 5.0.12). This methodology was initially developed under the umbrella of the Seafood Choices Alliance by WWF, the Dutch North Sea Foundation (NSF), Octopod GmbH, and the British Marine Conservation Society (MCS). In order to ensure that the methodology is up to date and globally applicable, it is updated from time to time by fisheries scientists, the North Sea Foundation and WWF fisheries experts from Africa, Asia, Europe and the United States. This methodology is considered best practice for consumer seafood guides. Strengths of the methodology are that it is transparent, and consumers are presented with consistent advice on sustainable choices for local and imported seafood species. This also facilitates fair comparison between countries and allows for the sharing of assessment results across borders.

The Marine Common Assessment Methodology (MCAM) is divided into three categories (Figure 1). The Aquaculture Common Assessment Methodology (ACAM) is also divided into three categories, namely i) sustainable use of the resource, ii) interactions and impact, and iii) management. In all the three MCAM categories, 25 questions are answered and allocated weighted scores to provide a total assessment score. The grouping of questions under each category helps to identify the particular strengths and weaknesses of a given fishery. The questions consider information on positive and negative aspects of the fishery. Negative aspects are adverse impacts of a fishery on the target seafood stock (overfishing) or on the marine environment (e.g. bycatch of its own and other species). A positive aspect is effective management that minimizes the negative impacts of the fishery. The overall assessment score corresponds to a recommendation in the form of SASSI “traffic light” system. Based on the score received, a species is listed on the SASSI seafood list as Red, which includes species from unsustainable populations as well as species that are illegal to buy or sell in South Africa; Orange, which includes species or fishing/farming methods that have associated ecological reasons for concern; or Green, which includes species that are the most sustainably managed.

The WWF-SASSI list is an on-going, iterative process, with new species being re-/assessed as required. The assessment makes use of publicly available scientific data and documents and considers the most recent scientific research. Please note that WWF-SASSI list should not be confused as an eco-label of the fishery such as the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). WWF-SA undertakes significant efforts to update the WWF-SASSI list through an objective, transparent and

collaborative process. Furthermore, to maintain an orderly process and ensure that assessments are completed timeously, the periods provided for input from third parties will be adhered to. It is important to recognise that WWF-SASSI assessments are aimed at providing broad-level guidance to consumers and retailers on a particular species. A fishery is defined by the species under assessment, its capture method and the area of capture.

## CATEGORY 1: TARGET STOCK

The assessment of the stock status of the target species is based on the following guiding principles: The stock is healthy and abundant. Abundance, sex, age, and genetic structure are maintained at levels that do not impair the long-term productivity of the stock or fulfilment of its role in the ecosystem and the food web. Fishing mortality does not threaten populations or impede the ecological role of any marine life. Fishing mortality is appropriate given current abundance and inherent resilience to fishing while accounting for scientific uncertainty, management uncertainty, and non-fishery impacts (e.g., habitat degradation, global warming).

**Question 1:** Are adequate stock assessment of the target stock available? The answer to question 1 decides which track is used.

- **Track A:** Data-rich target stocks
- **Track B:** Data-deficient target stocks

### **Track A: Data-rich target stocks**

Track A is used when data availability of the target stock is optimal. Regular and reliable quantitative stock assessments are performed by the responsible management authority. Scientific reference points are defined for a reliable description of the stock status. Questions to be answered within Track A are:

**Question A2:** What is the current condition of the stock in terms of biomass, recruitment and structure?

**Question A3:** Is the fishing intensity appropriate to achieve or maintain a sustainable target size of the stock?

**Question A4:** Does the overall fishing pressure (all gears combined) have an unfavourable effect on the stock structure?

### **Track B: Data-deficient target stocks**

Track B is chosen when very limited or no fishery specific data is available on the target stock, no scientific stock assessments are performed, and no reference points are defined. This track also applies when assessing bycatch species (i.e. species that are only caught incidentally and subsequently retained and landed). Questions to be answered within Track B are:

**Question B2:** How resilient is a stock of the species under assessment?

**Question B3:** How vulnerable is the species to fishing practices?

**Question B4:** Is there any evidence that this species is at risk or threatened by the fishery?

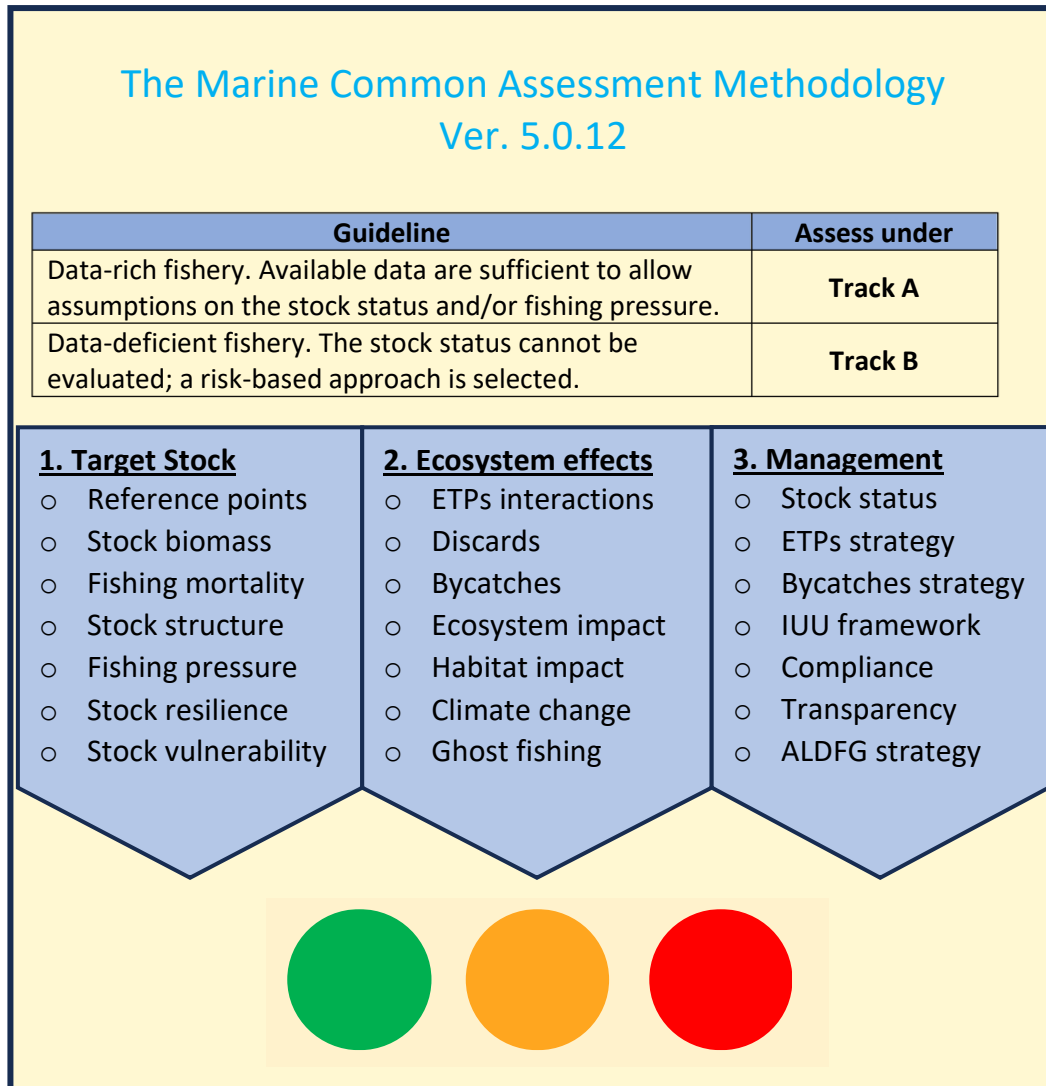


Figure 1: Schematic illustration of the Marine Common Assessment Methodology.

## CATEGORY 2: ECOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF THE FISHING ACTIVITY

The fishing gear determines the adverse effects of a fishery, but the environmental impact is also directly correlated to the scale of the fishery. The impact of a fishery on the marine environment is evaluated according to the following guiding principles:

The fishery under assessment does not threaten populations or impede the ecological role of any marine life. The impact on all species is appropriate given each impacted species' abundance and productivity, accounting for scientific uncertainty, management uncertainty, and non-fishery impacts (e.g. habitat degradation, global warming). The fishery is conducted such that impacts on the seafloor are minimized and the ecological and functional roles of the seafloor habitats are maintained. Fishing activity does not significantly reduce ecosystem services provided by any fish species or result in harmful changes such as trophic cascades, phase shifts or reduction of genetic diversity.

A fishery is awarded full points when these aspects are fully met. Fulfilment of the guiding principles is evaluated by means of seven questions:

**Question 7:** How much does the fishery impact any population of endangered, threatened or protected (ETP) OR highly vulnerable species (free moving and sessile)?

**Question 8:** Does the fishery produce mortalities due to discarding?

**Question 9:** To what extent do landings contain other catches of unmonitored, unmanaged or overfished species?

**Question 10:** What is the impact of the fishery on the trophic web or the ecosystem's functioning?

**Question 11:** What is the impact on habitats?

**Question 12:** What is the carbon footprint of the fishery?

**Question 13:** What is the gear specific relative risk from abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG)?

### CATEGORY 3: MANAGEMENT

The fishery is managed to sustain the long-term productivity of the target stock. Management incorporates sufficient data to assess the target species and manage fishing mortality to minimize the risk of depletion. Measures are implemented and enforced to ensure that fishing mortality does not threaten the long-term productivity or ecological role of the target stock in the future. The fishery is managed to sustain the long-term productivity of all impacted species. The fishery has appropriate management measures in place for the inherent resilience of all affected marine life and incorporates data sufficient to address all affected species and manage the fishery in order to minimize all unwanted impacts. Measures are implemented and enforced to ensure that the ecological and functional roles of the seafloor habitats are maintained and the impact on all marine life is minimized.

A fishery is awarded full points when these aspects are fully met. Fulfilment of the guiding principles is evaluated by means of 12 questions:

**Question 14:** How comprehensive is the monitoring of the stock?

**Question 15:** How well is the stock managed?

**Question 16:** Are measures established to mitigate impact on ETP species and are these measures effective?

**Question 17:** Are measures established to minimize discards and are these measures effective?

**Question 18:** Are all landed species accounted/managed and are there effective measures to minimize the catch of unaccounted/unmanaged species or species subjected to overfishing?

**Question 19:** Are there effective regulations established to minimize adverse impacts on the ecosystem and the habitat?

**Question 20:** Are there measures enacted to prevent illegal, unregulated, unreported or misreported (IUU) catches and are these measures effective?

**Question 21:** Are there measures established to ensure compliance and enforce fisheries regulations effectively?

**Question 22:** How transparent is the management's decision-making process, and are all

stakeholders involved? Are all information and data freely and fully accessible?

**Question 23:** How likely is the fishery involved in any kind of human rights violations?

**Question 24:** What is the probability that the fishery undermines the livelihood of local communities?

**Question 25:** Are there management measures to minimize the quantities of abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) and its impact on the ecosystem?

## WWF–SASSI ASSESSMENT PROCESS

### *Local species:*

1. Interested and affected parties shall be notified of the assessment process via the WWF-SASSI website, SANCOR network and WWF-SASSI mailing list. Draft assessments shall be submitted to the relevant Scientific Working Groups at the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE) for their review and input. A 30-day period shall be provided for all reviews by Scientific Working Groups and submission of relevant documentation by interested and affected parties.
2. Interested and affected parties shall be notified of the outcome of any draft assessments (anticipated WWF-SASSI listing colour) via the SANCOR network and WWF-SASSI mailing list. This notification will provide for a 30-day period for interested and affected parties to submit comments. Because the WWF-SASSI assessments are based upon scientific documentation, any comments submitted for consideration must be properly substantiated, i.e., supported by published references, such as scientific working group documents or peer-reviewed journal papers.
3. At WWF-SA's discretion, assessments may be sent out for confidential external review to two external reviewers (one knowledge expert in stock assessment and other ecosystem expert) to ensure accuracy across assessments. Any conflicts among external reviewers shall be presented to the external review panel for resolution. Any external reviewers consulted shall have four weeks to conduct their review.
4. An external, expert review panel shall meet over one/two day period after a minimum of two-week review period. The external review panel's decision is considered **FINAL**, after which the assessment will be adopted by WWF-SASSI. The external review panel shall receive all significant comments timely received by WWF-SASSI during the assessment process. An agenda shall be created to ensure the external review panel addresses the principle issues. (more information on the purpose and composition of the external review panel is provided below.)
5. Interested and affected parties shall be notified of final colours via the SANCOR network and the WWF-SASSI mailing list. Finalised assessments will be included into WWF-SASSI materials after at least 60 days.

### *International species:*

1. Interested and affected parties shall be notified of the outcome of any draft assessment (anticipated WWF-SASSI listing colour) outcomes via the SANCOR network and WWF-SASSI mailing list. A 30-day comment period for interested and affected parties shall be provided.
2. Interested and affected parties shall be notified of final colours via the SANCOR network and WWF-SASSI listing mailing list. The final assessment results shall be included into WWF-SASSI

materials after at least 60 days.

***SASSI external review panel:***

1. The external SASSI review panel composed of knowledge experts in stock assessments, ecosystem impact and fisheries management/compliance is anticipated to meet once per year over one to two days.
2. The external review panel has three principal functions:
  - a) To review a sample of assessments to ensure consistency across categories,
  - b) Consider the merits of any significant comments received, and
  - c) To review and reach consensus on all assessments where agreement was not reached by individual external reviewers (where consensus is not possible, decisions will be taken by the majority).

***Exceptional Circumstance:***

In the event the panel is unable to meet in person then the review process can be conducted remotely using emails and online meetings. An action document will be assigned to all panel members with key actions assigned to specific individuals, to ensure transparency at least two or more panel members will be assigned to review an action. A follow up document will be provided after comments received detailing what changes were made. Approval from panel members on the finalization of the assessments will be required.

· Note: Those wishing to view the SASSI draft assessments must complete an official document of motivation to do so, which can be obtained by contacting WWF-SASSI on [sassi@wwf.org.za](mailto:sassi@wwf.org.za)

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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