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Organisation: On The Hook

How familiar are you with the Marine Stewardship Council?

☒ Very familiar

What type of organisation do you work for?

☒ Other – [campaign]

What relationship do you and/ or your organisation have with the MSC?

- ☒ Contribute to policy topics and consultations
- ☒ Ambassador, influencer or advocate for ocean sustainability
- ☒ Other – [call for MSC reform]

How urgent do you consider each of the following ocean issues?

1. Ocean acidification and damage to coral reefs and other fragile marine environments
☒ Extremely urgent
2. Pollution of the ocean e.g. plastics
☒ Very urgent
3. Illegal and prohibited fishing
☒ Extremely urgent
4. The effects of rising sea levels
☒ Extremely urgent
5. Genetically modified or harmful chemicals in seafood
☒ Very urgent
6. Overfishing/ depletion of fish species
☒ Extremely urgent
7. The effects of climate change on the ocean
☒ Extremely urgent
8. Slavery in the fishing industry
☒ Extremely urgent
9. Loss of biodiversity in the ocean
☒ Extremely urgent
10. Bycatch of sea life such as dolphins, sharks and turtles
☒ Extremely urgent
11. Working conditions for people working in the fishing industry
☒ Extremely urgent

12. Not enough seafood available to meet growing global demand

☒ Somewhat urgent

Please share any additional comments you have about the urgency of ocean issues today and in the future?

The urgency of ocean issues means MSC's policy development process is inappropriately slow – on issues e.g. shark finning where MSC is already behind best practice, we cannot afford to wait for the next 5-yearly FSR. Equally, it is inappropriate to certify fisheries with substantial conditions and allow them to be described as 'sustainable' for 5 years before closing those out.

Also, sustainability is an inherently holistic concept, but MSC remains excessively focused on stock status. The inclusion here of issues relating to slavery & working conditions is welcome, as these aren't currently addressed adequately by MSC – a fishery isn't sustainable if it doesn't ensure safe & fair conditions for all working within it.

Finally, this list includes impacts of climate change on fisheries but ignores impacts of fisheries on climate change. This is a major oversight that must be addressed: practices such as bottom trawling which damage the ocean's capacity to serve as a carbon sink have no place in a climate crisis.

How much trust do you have in the MSC to contribute to ending overfishing? (On a scale of 1-7 where 1 is no trust and 7 is a lot of trust)

2

Why do you say that?

MSC could and should be a useful tool to reward genuinely sustainable fisheries, drive more sustainable purchasing decisions and subsequently push up standards across the entire industry in accordance with its Theory of Change. In reality, MSC has dropped the bar for sustainability far too low to have the desired impact – perhaps in an attempt to meet growing consumer demand and ambitious catch share targets.

The bar for certification is currently set at a level which means that fisheries trawling and dredging the seabed, setting on FADs, catching vast numbers of sharks and other marine life, are all able to gain certification and are rewarded in the marketplace. As long as this remains the case, MSC is simply enabling the status quo and has no hope of improving practices across the industry and contributing to ending overfishing.

Which of the following descriptions reflect your understanding of MSC's role?

- ☒ Certification organisation
- ☒ Ecolabel organisation
- ☒ Standards setter

In your conversations with colleagues, peers and partners, how likely are you to speak favourably about the MSC? (On a scale of 1-7 where 1 is very unfavourably and 7 is very favourably)

2

The MSC's mission is of the world's oceans teeming with life, and seafood supplies safeguarded for this and future generations. How effective would you say the MSC is in its work to achieve this vision? (On a scale of 1-7 where 1 is not at all effective and 7 is extremely effective).

2

The MSC's mission is to use the ecolabel and fishery certification program to contribute to the health of the world's oceans by recognising and rewarding sustainable fishing practices, influencing the choices people make when buying seafood and working with partners to transform the seafood market to a sustainable basis. How effective would you say the MSC is in its work to achieve this mission? (On a scale of 1-7 where 1 is not at all effective and 7 is extremely effective)

2

What are the biggest barriers you see to the MSC achieving its mission in the future?

MSC could be a useful tool that rewarded only genuinely sustainable fisheries, drove better purchasing decisions and thereby pushed up standards across the industry. In reality, it has dropped the bar for 'sustainability' far too low to achieve that – perhaps in an attempt to meet growing demand/ ambitious targets. The bar for certification is currently set at a level that allows trawl and dredge fisheries/ those setting on FADs/ catching vast numbers of sharks & other marine life to gain certification and be rewarded in the marketplace. As long as this remains the case, MSC will simply enable the status quo and have no hope of improving practices across the industry and contributing to ending overfishing.

Many individuals and organisations have devoted significant time and resources to participating in MSC processes, sharing their expertise and engaging constructively, but MSC remains too reluctant to engage genuinely with critical stakeholders, too defensive and too institutionally resistant to change.

How effective do you think the MSC is across each of the following areas? (On a scale of 1-7 where 1 is not at all effective and 7 is extremely effective)

Setting strict sustainable fishing standards – 2

Helping safeguard food security for communities around the world – 1

Ensuring independence in the certification process – 1

Responding to different viewpoints in a balanced way – 2

Ensuring that certified fisheries control their activity carefully so that other species and habitats within the ecosystem remain healthy – 2

Helping my organisation achieve its sustainability goals – 1

Helping to prepare and protect fisheries from the impacts of climate change – 1

Communicating well on its vision and mission publicly – 1

Ensuring that certified fisheries fish at a level that can continue indefinitely and the fish population can remain productive and healthy – 2

Helping protect livelihoods of people around the world – 1

Ensuring that certified fisheries are well-managed – 1

Working in partnership with stakeholders – 1

Advocating for healthy oceans – 1

Listening to stakeholders – 1

What do you think the MSC's role should be in the future of sustainable seafood?

MSC's role should NOT be to meet consumer demand or to base its standards on facilitating fisheries remaining in the program.

Instead, MSC's role should be focused on recognising those fisheries which are genuinely sustainable, in holding them to account in making continued improvements post-certification in line with evolving best practice, and in driving and advocating for sustainability across the entirety of the fishing sector.

How well do you think the following characteristics describe the MSC? (On a scale of 1-7 where 1 is 'does not describe MSC at all' and 7 is 'describes MSC very well'.

Reliable – 2

Collaborative – 2

Ethical – 3

Rigorous – 3

Friendly – 2

Independent – 1

Open/ transparent – 1

Scientific – 5

Ambitious – 2

Honest – 2

Innovative – 2

Good listener – 1

The following questions are about MSC's Fisheries Standard Review process and the Chain of Custody Standard. If you have any knowledge of or interaction of this part of MSC's work, how satisfied are you with the following?

The Fisheries Standard Review process

☒ Unsatisfied

The scope of the Fisheries Standard

☒ Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied

The strictness of the Fisheries Standard

☒ Unsatisfied

The scope of the Chain of Custody Standard

☒ Don't know

The strictness of the Chain of Custody Standard

- ☒ Don't know

Please explain the reasons for your answers regarding the Fisheries Standard Review process and the Chain of Custody Standard.

The Standard doesn't currently set the bar high enough for MSC to serve as a meaningful indicator or driver of sustainability. E.g. the standard should NOT enable certification of: fisheries targeting unhealthy/ unrecovered stocks/ ETP species, destructive fishing practices with significant ecosystem/ habitat impacts (e.g. FAD-set tuna fisheries, dredging/ bottom trawling incl. in MPAs), fisheries where shark finning/ IUU fishing occurs.

Substantial reform of the Standard is required but the Fisheries Standard Review process won't achieve that for reasons including: MSC proposals on e.g. finning are far too weak/ industry-driven to resolve the issue, stakeholder participation is confined to limited windows & predetermined topics, timeline & policy development process are unclear & non-transparent. On the Hook urges MSC to undertake an independent, external root-and-branch review of its Standard, governance & operations to drive the genuine reset needed for the organisation to remain relevant & effective.

In the future are there any additional areas that you would like to see within the MSC program?

- ☒ Small-scale fisheries in the developing world
- ☒ Reduction of fishing gear waste (plastics)
- ☒ Small-scale fisheries in the developed world
- ☒ Social standards
- ☒ Climate targets

How frequently do you engage with the MSC's local and global teams?

Local MSC team in my country

- ☒ Occasionally

The MSC International team

- ☒ Occasionally

How satisfied are you with the level of engagement and communication from the MSC in the last twelve months? (on a scale of 1-7 where 1 is very satisfied and 7 is very dissatisfied)

1

What, if anything, have you heard, read or seen about the MSC in the last six months?

[Left blank]

From which of the following sources have you heard information about the MSC, in your professional capacity?

- ☒ MSC speakers at conferences and other events
- ☒ MSC-organised events (in-person and online)
- ☒ MSC press releases or mailings
- ☒ Conversations or emails with MSC employees
- ☒ Specialist media covering the seafood industry

- ☒ MSC Annual Impacts Report
- ☒ MSC Website
- ☒ MSC social media feeds

And from which sources would you like to hear more?

- ☒ Conversations or emails with MSC employees

How important do you think each of the following actors are for the MSC to engage with to help achieve its mission? (on a scale of 1-7 where 1 is not at all important and 7 is extremely important)

Press and media – 5

Local community action groups – 7

Governments e.g. national, state and local – 7

Fisheries – 7

The UN and other global institutions – 6

NGOs – 7

Fishery representative organisations, e.g. fishery associations – 7

Retailers, brands and food service – 7

Consumers – 7

Scientists and academics – 7

Processors – 7

Do you think there are any additional actors the MSC should engage with?

The MSC needs to take much more seriously engagement with the substantial number of NGOs, experts and other stakeholders calling on it to reform. Rather than responding defensively or seeking to discredit these, it should recognise these interventions as efforts to improve the functioning of a program which we all agree is a vital component of the ocean governance landscape.

Which of the following kinds of communication activity do you think the MSC should prioritise?

- ☒ Communicating about the issue of overfishing and the impact it has on the ocean
- ☒ Other – open communication about conditions/ room for improvement for fisheries within the program

How familiar are you with the MSC Ocean Stewardship Fund?

- ☒ Somewhat familiar

What is the one piece of advice or recommendation that you would give to the MSC to help achieve its mission?

To stop focusing on growing its catch share by certified fishing methods and fisheries that can never be genuinely sustainable and that flood the market with greenwashed products, and instead return to its initial principles of recognising the very best actors and allowing the benefits those experience to incentivise genuine meaningful change across the sector.