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The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) and the Certification and Ratings Collaboration (CRC)'s written stakeholder statement for the 8th Annual Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs held at the UN headquarters in New York, USA.

Dear members and audiences of the 8th Annual Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs,

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council ([ASC](#)) and the Certification and Ratings Collaboration ([CRC](#)) support ambitious sustainability systems and, with their partners, seek to tackle the world's most pressing challenges in the realm of seafood, fisheries and aquaculture. Collectively we advance scalable, credible and effective solutions making demonstrable impacts; working specifically to coordinate and increase our impact so that more seafood producers adopt a clear pathway towards environmental sustainability and social responsibility.

However, publicly available 3rd party-assured sustainability data is rare at country and industry level. Lack of credible SDG and ESG data could hinder industries producing major global commodities' implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Impacts-driven voluntary sustainability standards from Code-compliant members of the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance (ISEAL) also play a critical role in providing solutions to such data gaps: enabling corporations and industries make relevant and substantiated claims to the marketplace. They also empower consumers worldwide to make informed sustainable and ethical purchasing decisions.

Voluntary sustainability standards often go beyond the realm of legal compliance and enable market and industry transformation; as well as addressing SDG targets by requiring certain measurable performances goals to be attained in order to gain certification.

To find integrated solutions enabling progress across all SDGs, including SDGs 6, 7 and 9 -- *holistically and specifically at target level* -- we are committed to continuous improvement, transparency, accountability, multi-stakeholder engagement (including indigenous people) and science-based stringency in addressing various commodities' production key impacts.

ASC is the world's leading farmed seafood certification programme. Aquaculture is already feeding billions and its contribution will continue to grow, but the benefits must not be outweighed by negative environmental and social impacts. Global progress towards delivering on the SDGs has slipped in the past years due to factors including the COVID-19 pandemic and recent events on the world stage. As a result, stringent monitoring and questioning of sustainability data quality is ever more important.

We are committed to collaborating with academia by exploiting a first-of-its-kind methodology for a quantitative SDG performance study at the 169-target level. The ASC's [SDG study](#) highlights, amongst others, some of the inter-linkages between the SDG performances of certified operations as regards to SDG 6 (Clean water and Sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy) and SDG 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure). According to the latest figures from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), around 60 million people rely directly on fisheries and aquaculture for employment, highlighting that all SDGs – including those with a more social dimension and not only SDG 14 targets - are



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material to the seafood industry. More specifically, around half of the 169 SDG targets can be deemed relevant when it comes to responsible aquaculture.

ASC and Collaboration members are also committed to sharing with researchers vast amounts of independently verified SDG-aligned performance data – and geospatial data -- to foster scientific innovation. The CRC has also included in its Sustainable Seafood [Data Tool](#), a new Data Deficient (nei) Species Groups category.

Public and private sector stakeholders are increasingly looking to independent 3rd party voluntary standards and ratings as key tools to help deliver their sustainability goals and, in the case of producers, help provide them with a social licence to operate. However, in order to demonstrate and verify impacts, outcomes must first be measured and monitored over time; also using efficient integrity and assurance mechanisms to ensure high-quality sustainability data.

This is why the ASC and the CRC are firmly and collaboratively intent on upscaling sustainable industrialisation, transparently contributing to provide much needed SDG and ESG data assurance. ASC encourages aquaculture organisations and other industries to begin mapping and objectively quantifying their detailed and substantiated progress towards meeting all relevant SDG targets, and to publish the results for the benefit of all stakeholders.

This, we believe, will also help prevent SDG/Green-washing at Horizon 2030.

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