

Best Aquaculture Practices Programs & Requirements for Certification of Cluster Farms and Hatcheries

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) is a voluntary certification program developed by the Global Seafood Alliance (GSA). The BAP Standards cover the entire aquaculture production chain which includes hatcheries, farms, feed mills and processing plants. The BAP program offers participants a way to demonstrate their commitment to supplying safe, environmentally- and socially responsible aquaculture food products.
- 1.2 Farms and Hatcheries/Nurseries can participate in the BAP program as individual facilities, or as part of a coordinated set of facilities, which are described and further defined in this document as Facility **CLUSTERS**. Details concerning ways sponsoring organizations can bring clustered facilities into the BAP certification program are described in this document.
- 1.3 Under the **CLUSTER** program, sponsoring organizations coordinate the certification process of multiple facilities to reduce costs of certification. All member facilities in BAP's **CLUSTER** program must be audited each year to the full scope of the relevant BAP Farm or Hatchery Standard annually.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 BAP Farm and Hatchery/Nursery Standards


- 2.1.1 The BAP FINFISH AND CRUSTACEAN FARM, SALMON FARM, and MOLLUSK FARM STANDARDS, and the BAP FINFISH, CRUSTACEAN and MOLLUSK HATCHERIES AND NURSERIES STANDARD assess key elements related to environmental and social responsibility, animal welfare, food safety and traceability practices within the aquaculture production chain.
- 2.1.2 All species that are approved for certification under these BAP standards are eligible to certify under the sponsorship conditions described in this document

2.2 Sponsored Clusters

- 2.2.1 The BAP **CLUSTER** program has been developed to allow multiple facilities, without restriction in terms of size or volume of production, to become certified under the BAP program with the assistance of a sponsoring organization.
- 2.2.2 **CLUSTERS** may be organized under the sponsorship of a processor, importer or buyer, farmer cooperative or association, or other legally recognized entity that wishes to coordinate the certification process for multiple facilities.
- 2.2.3 There are many advantages to registering facilities under the BAP **CLUSTER** program. All facilities in a **CLUSTER** are registered under a single application and pay a single application fee. Auditing costs are also reduced, since an auditor can schedule audits of multiple facilities during a single trip.
- 2.2.4 Any reference to **CLUSTERS** in the subsequent portions of this document is referring specifically to **SPONSORED CLUSTERS**.

2.3 Sponsor

- 2.3.1 A SPONSOR is a legally recognized entity that is authorized to enter into agreements and make commitments on behalf of the associated facilities. Examples of SPONSORS include processing plants, importers or buyers, farmer cooperatives or clubs, or other aquaculture industry entities that are recognized by local/national authorities.
- 2.3.2 SPONSORS must assist in the coordination of the audit and certification process of sponsored facilities and must have sufficient resources and management commitment to effectively manage these matters for facilities under their

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sponsorship. SPONSORS are expected to take an active role in assuring that BAP requirements for the certification process are applied to all facilities they are sponsoring.

- 2.3.3 Facilities that are organized under the **CLUSTER** facility program must have a SPONSOR and must register together under the BAP certification program, following the conditions that are outlined in this document.

2.4 Coordinator

- 2.4.1 SPONSORS must appoint, train, and qualify a **COORDINATOR** to manage the certification process and assure compliance with all requirements of the BAP Standards and the BAP Multi-Site **CLUSTER** Program. The BAP will not accept applications for any kind of sponsored facility unless the SPONSOR has demonstrated that they have a properly-qualified **COORDINATOR**
- 2.4.2 **Note:** Reduced audit costs are dependent upon the **COORDINATOR** taking responsibility to ensure the facilities are in compliance and able to have their audits completed within the defined time frames. If it becomes evident that the **COORDINATOR** has not been performing as required, the BAP may at its sole discretion suspend the **CLUSTER** from the BAP program.

2.5 Certification Bodies (CBs)


- 2.5.1 CERTIFICATION BODIES are organizations that provide auditing and certification services.
- 2.5.2 Only BAP-authorized CB's may conduct audits for facilities seeking BAP certification.

2.6 Auditors

- 2.6.1 This is the person appointed by the CB to perform the audit.
- 2.6.2 CBs may only use BAP-accredited auditors to perform BAP audits.
- 2.6.3 The auditor does not need to be a senior BAP auditor to conduct Cluster audits.

3.0 BAP Rules and Procedures for Sponsoring Clusters

- 3.1 **Qualified Sponsors:** Any legal entity wishing to sponsor **CLUSTERS** may participate in the BAP **CLUSTER** program by following the procedures set out in this document.
- 3.2 **Member Facilities:** Participating sites must be enrolled as members of a **CLUSTER**, and the Sponsor shall have authority to represent all member facilities in matters relating to BAP certification.
- 3.2.1 **Annual Production Limits:** There is no limitation on the number, physical size and tonnage produced at the sites that comprise the **CLUSTER**, except that the **CLUSTER** must not be so large that it cannot be managed effectively.
- 3.2.2 **Number of Facilities:** **CLUSTERS** must be composed of no less than 2 facilities, and no more than 10 facilities. There are no set limits concerning the number or dimensions of culture units within the individual member facilities of a **CLUSTER**.
- 3.2.2.1 Any exceptions to the limits on the maximum number of facilities in a **CLUSTER** will be at the sole discretion of the BAP. An audit duration calculator will be employed by the BAP when considering any requests for exceptions to these limits, to ensure that all the audits can reasonably be expected to be completed by a single auditor during a single trip.
- 3.2.3 **Same Species and Production Methods:** Participating member facilities within a **CLUSTER** shall **produce the same species and** employ similar production methods and practices. SPONSORS may not for example combine in the same **CLUSTER** both

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fish and shrimp farms or hatcheries, or both land-based pond systems and cage systems, or both low-density non-fed extensive farms and high-density intensive farms. Any exceptions to this rule will be at BAP's sole discretion.

3.2.4 **Proximity of Facilities to One Another:** Participating facilities in a **CLUSTER** are not required to have a common boundary or common water source. However, to reduce travel time and costs associated with annual audits, all facilities in the **CLUSTER** shall:

3.2.4.1 Be located in the same region.

3.2.4.2 Have no more than two hours traveling time one-way between the two most distant facilities in the **CLUSTER**. SPONSORS must supply a table and/or map showing the locations (including GPS coordinates) and distances between facilities, and the plant(s) where the products are expected to be processed.

3.2.5 **Adding New CLUSTER Members:** New facilities may only be added to **CLUSTERS** at the time of re-application.

3.2.5.1 The Sponsor must provide details of the names and locations of all member facilities during the BAP application process prior to each year's annual audit

3.2.5.2 Once a **CLUSTER's** recertification application has been completed and approved by the BAP, no other facilities can be substituted or added to the **CLUSTER** until the following year's recertification application process begins.

3.2.6 **Removing CLUSTER Members:**

3.2.6.1 Any member facility in a **CLUSTER** that is unable or unwilling to take the necessary corrective actions to close non-conformities that were issued during the annual audit within the specified time of 35 calendar days, must be removed from the **CLUSTER** by the **COORDINATOR**, or the entire **CLUSTER** may be suspended from BAP certification. In such a case, the **COORDINATOR** must formally advise the CB and BAP in a timely manner concerning the details of the facility that is to be removed from the **CLUSTER**.

3.2.6.2 Removing facilities from a **CLUSTER** will not affect the certification status of the remaining BAP-compliant facilities in the **CLUSTER**. Once removed from a **CLUSTER**, facilities may only be added back into the **CLUSTER** during the following year's recertification application process.

3.3 The sponsoring entity must have the following documents in place:

3.3.1 Organizational chart showing the **CLUSTER COORDINATOR** and related positions.


3.3.2 Documented managerial commitment.

3.3.3 Record keeping system for all sites.

3.3.4 Agreements between all facilities and sponsoring entity.

3.3.5 Sponsoring entity management must assure that all documents, records, and data critical to supporting the **CLUSTER** program are in place, and kept together in a single location to facilitate the annual auditing process.

3.4 CLUSTER COORDINATOR Requirements:

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- 3.4.1 The Sponsor must appoint, train, and qualify a **COORDINATOR** to manage the certification process and assure compliance with all requirements of the **CLUSTER** program.
- 3.4.2 The **COORDINATOR** shall meet the qualifications and training requirements described below:
 - 3.4.2.1 Have a post-high school degree or diploma in a subject related to aquaculture, and 2 years of practical experience on aquaculture facilities. Where there is no relevant degree, experience is acceptable in lieu of a degree providing it is a minimum of 3 years at a supervisory level.
 - 3.4.2.2 Must demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the relevant BAP Standards and the BAP **CLUSTER** Program.
 - 3.4.2.3 Have the ability to manage, oversee, enforce, and train **CLUSTER** members regarding the requirements.
 - 3.4.2.4 Complete continuing education or professional development of at least 2 days every 2 years. (Some examples: additional auditing course, food safety or GMP seminar or workshop, disease management, an aquaculture seminar, regulatory update seminar, etc.). This may include, at BAP's discretion, the taking of an on-line exam regarding BAP requirements.
 - 3.4.2.5 Have good communication and organizational skills.
 - 3.4.2.6 The **COORDINATOR** must be proficient in the local language as well as in English, and must be familiar with the requirements of the BAP standards. Where proficiency in English is not demonstrated, a translator must be appointed by the SPONSOR.
- 3.4.3 The **COORDINATOR** must communicate with and visit sponsored facilities regularly throughout the year to monitor compliance with BAP standards, and in case any deficiencies are detected, to ensure they are corrected in a timely manner.
- 3.4.4 The **COORDINATOR** must assure that records associated with the BAP standards are being maintained as required, and must assist facilities be in a state of audit readiness at all times. If any exemptions are being claimed from portions of the BAP standards (such as from effluent monitoring as outlined in clause 5.3 of the BAP Farm and Hatchery standards), it is the responsibility of the **COORDINATOR** to ensure that any evidence needed to justify the exemption is maintained and available at the time of the annual recertification audit.
- 3.4.5 The **COORDINATOR** must be empowered by the SPONSOR to remove non-compliant facilities from **CLUSTERS**.

4.0 Audit Process


4.1 Annual Audits

- 4.1.1 All Sponsored **CLUSTER** Facilities participating in the BAP program are subject to annual audits and must meet the requirements of the entire scope of the relevant BAP Standard and the requirements of the BAP **CLUSTER** Program.
- 4.1.2 Once the applications and other required steps previously mentioned have been reviewed and verified by BAP as complete, the auditing and certification process can begin.

4.2 Audit and Certification Process and Independent Certification Bodies (CBs)

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- 4.2.1 The audits are conducted by independent CBs, who manage the certification process. The CB will contact the SPONSOR to organize the audit process.
- 4.2.2 Each facility will be individually audited against the entire scope of the relevant BAP Standard, and the CLUSTER will be assessed using a supplemental **CLUSTER Checklist**, by an auditor chosen by the CB, and auditors will prepare separate full audit reports for each audited facility, and will report on the CLUSTER performance against the CLUSTER Program requirements. **(Note: SPONSORS AND COORDINATORS ARE HEREBY SPECIFICALLY NOTIFIED THAT A SUPPLEMENTAL CHECKLIST SHALL BE USED TO VERIFY COMPLIANCE OF THE SPONSOR AND COORDINATOR AGAINST SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS STATED IN THIS CLUSTER PROGRAM DOCUMENT. NON-COMPLIANCES CITED AGAINST THIS SUPPLEMENTAL CHECKLIST MUST BE ADDRESSED BY CORRECTIVE ACTIONS AS A CONDITION OF CERTIFICATION FOR ALL MEMBER FACILITIES.)**
- 4.2.3 Non-Conformity Definitions: Non-conformities raised during audits shall fall into one of the following three categories:
- 4.2.3.1 Critical – Where there is a Critical failure to comply with a legal, environmental, and social or food safety issue. Or, a critical failure to comply with one or more fundamental requirements of the relevant BAP standard or BAP **CLUSTER** Program to the extent that it results in a risk to the integrity of the Scheme. This would also include situations where there is a fundamental breakdown in the site’s programs and systems to the extent that there is a critical overall failure to comply with the BAP Standard or BAP **CLUSTER** Program requirements.
- 4.2.3.2 Major - Where there is a substantial failure to meet the requirements of the intent of any clause of the relevant BAP standard or BAP **CLUSTER** Program. But there is no Food Safety risk, issue of legality (including social responsibility requirements), fundamental systems failure, or immediate risk to the Integrity of the Scheme.
- 4.2.3.3 Minor - Where absolute compliance to the clause or intent of the BAP Standard or **CLUSTER** Program requirements has not been demonstrated. Minor non-conformities would typically be technical deficiencies, small missing elements, small record-keeping errors, or similar minor matters.
- 4.3 Instructions specific to Salmon and Mussel farm CLUSTERS** (normally sites OWNED or LEASED by a single Sponsoring company):
- 4.3.1 Salmon and Mussel farm audits must be coordinated and scheduled in advance with the **CLUSTER** Sponsor and will consist of two stages:
- 4.3.1.1 A one-day audit performed at the Sponsor’s regional headquarters to examine all company documents and records for operations of the sites to be certified as part of the CLUSTER program. If there is more than one region involved, the auditor may be required to spend additional time to review the information from each regional headquarter location.
- 4.3.1.2 In the second stage of the annual audit, individual facility audits will be conducted on the facilities in the area nearby each regional office.
- 4.3.2 The number of Salmon and Mussel farm sites that can be audited in one day will vary, depending on the distance between sites in the same zone. The number of audit days

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will depend on the number of sites included in a **CLUSTER**, the distances between the sites, regulations for transiting between zones, and the locations of the regional offices where the documents are located. All active, producing sites that compose the **CLUSTER** unit will be visited at the time of the annual audits. Should weather or logistical issues make it impossible for the auditor to travel to member sites during the annual audit, BAP shall be consulted for a decision concerning how to proceed.

4.3.3 BAP recognizes that for Salmon and Mussel farms, due to regulations (national or regional) governing zones, or due to provisions in an area's voluntary Area Management Agreement, most or all facilities in a given zone will normally be stocked and operating at the same time, or conversely may all be fallow ("all-in, all-out" style of production).

4.3.4 A majority of Salmon and Mussel farm sites in a **CLUSTER** must be stocked at the time of the annual CB audits, and BAP must be specifically advised concerning the expected dates when sites will be fallowed (if any). Salmon and Mussel **CLUSTER** facility audits are valid for one year.

4.3.5 Salmon and Mussel farms must assure that records for fallowed sites are maintained and available, to facilitate auditor reviews of ongoing environmental monitoring, escape, feeding, and other such records from the previous crop cycle.

4.4 COORDINATOR involvement in audits

4.4.1 The **COORDINATOR** is responsible for assuring that **CLUSTER** member facilities are ready for the annually scheduled BAP audit.

4.4.2 The **COORDINATOR** or their designee must be present during all visits and audits.


4.5 Corrective actions to resolve non-conformities

4.5.1 Upon completion of the audit, a list of non-conformities will be provided to the **COORDINATOR**. It is the **COORDINATOR's** responsibility to see that proper corrective actions for all non-conformities are forwarded in a timely manner to the CB for each facility.

4.5.2 Non-conformities raised during the audit must be closed within twenty-eight (28) calendar days from the audit date.

4.6 Unannounced Audits

4.6.1 BAP reserves the right to have CBs auditors, or auditors separately assigned by the BAP Program Integrity department conduct unannounced audits on behalf of the BAP at any time. Sponsors are required to cover the cost for unannounced audits performed by CB's when such audits are carried out as part of the annual recertification process.

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Annex

A.1. Application Process - New Applicants

- A.1.1. SPONSORS must complete individual applications for each facility participating in the BAP PROGRAM for the first time, including those being included in **CLUSTERS**. This includes completing the self-assessment survey portion of the application. Excel versions of these self-assessment surveys may be downloaded from the BAP website at the following link: <https://www.bapcertification.org/Certification>. SPONSORS must also complete a **BAP Cluster Farm Application**, which can be supplied by the BAP office. Contact bapcert@bapcertification.org for more information.
- A.1.2. Copies of the current **Standards and guidelines** are available online at the following link: (<https://www.bapcertification.org/Standards>).
- A.1.3. The **BAP Cluster Farm Application** shall list the following information for each participating facility:
 - A.1.3.1. Name of aquaculture facility and contact person (facility owner, government registration number);
 - A.1.3.2. Address and contact information for the facility (city, province, GPS coordinates indicating the point of entrance to the facility, etc.);
 - A.1.3.3. Production area and quantity harvested of each product by species for each participating facility for the previous calendar year;
 - A.1.3.4. Updated facility layout map for each participating facility.
 - A.1.3.5. All facilities will be audited against the full scope of the relevant BAP standard. All culture areas/units within a member facility must be audited – **no exclusions** are allowed.
- A.1.4. The name and contact details for the **COORDINATOR** must be supplied to the BAP by the SPONSOR.
- A.1.5. When the online application process has been completed, including the online Facility Agreement, the SPONSOR will be sent an **Invoice** for the application fee, and inspection costs, and any other required documents. The cost of inspection will depend upon the number of sites that an Auditor can reasonably inspect per day, plus estimated travel cost. Inspection fees are quoted after the application is received, and are collected annually.
- A.1.6. All required steps must be completed before the audits will be assigned to the BAP-approved CBs.

B.1 Application Process - Recertification Applications


- B.1.1. After the first year that Facilities have been in the BAP program, SPONSORS seeking recertification must re-apply for participation in the BAP program.
- B.1.2. Five months prior to the renewal date posted on the BAP website, the BAP office will send SPONSORS a new **BAP Cluster Farm Application**, together with a reminder to complete the online application for facilities participating in the **CLUSTER**.
- B.1.3. If there are no changes in membership of the facilities in the **CLUSTER**, the SPONSOR must complete the application process no later than three months prior to the recertification date.

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- B.1.4. Any requests concerning changes in the membership composition of **CLUSTERS** must be made by SPONSORS at the time of re-application, and such requests must be received no later than **three months** prior to the recertification date. In case facilities are added to existing **CLUSTERS** that are new to the BAP PROGRAM, an individual application must be completed for each new facility, including also the self-assessment survey portion of the application.

C.1 Post-Audit Procedures

- C.1.1. Timely completion of the entire process must be respected to maintain a CLUSTER's certification status.
- C.1.2. Testing fees incurred as part of the audit process are to be paid by the SPONSOR.
- C.1.3. SPONSORS are obligated in cases of both successful and failed audits to pay all costs that have been incurred.
- C.1.4. When all corrective actions and testing results have been received and approved by the CB, the CB will notify BAP that certification has been granted. The BAP office will then send the SPONSOR the final **Program Fee Invoice** to be paid, and once payment has been received, BAP will release the CB certificate(s) and issue BAP's Validation Letter. The process is not complete and the facility is not in BAP compliance until these final steps have taken place.
- C.1.5. After all fees are paid and required steps verified, the BAP office will send a copy of the CB certificate(s) and BAP Validation form to the SPONSOR for distribution to the individual facilities. **Certificates will be issued for each farm in a CLUSTER.**
- C.1.6. Individual **CLUSTER** member facilities will be listed on the BAP website under a name that clearly shows their affiliation with the **CLUSTER**.

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