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fairness with the fish we eat

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# Comments on the first draft of Fairtrade Intl. Shrimp Standard

#### Dear Ken

On behalf of fair-fish association, I thank you for the invitation to comment your first draft of a Faitrade Shrimp Standard (FSS).

fair-fish is a Swiss based NGO campaigning for a) animal welfare, b) fairtrade and c) sustainability in fishery and aquaculture. Within the framework of our project with artisanal fishermen in Senegal, we have developed our own standard for fisheries which copes with our 3 goals.

In the following, we appreciate all requirements we do not comment especially.

Our comments are based on field experience (Senegal 2004-2007 with 21 small exports of fresh fillets to Switzerland) AND on its result, the fair-fish guidelines:

http://www.fair-fish.ch/files/pdf/english/instructions.pdf

and appendices: http://www.fair-fish.ch/wissen/richtlinien (go to links in right column)

# The main intentions of our comments are

- to strengthen the fairness for the small farmers and workers in the South
- to strenthen the focussing on fairtrade issues while approaching remote issues in a modular way by external experts

#### Introduction

### **Purpose**

«Shrimp small producers and their workers can participate in Fairtrade if they have formed producer organizations (co-operatives, associations or other types of organizations)...»

We appreciate that you are not presribing co-ops, but we advise you to consider to give access to fairtrade also to producers who – on the production level – are not organized, but work on their own (their family's) account. The obligation of a collective form of production is a rather European concept which e. g. would exclude most of the smallest and poorest artisanal fishermen in a country like Senegal. While lacking own experience with small shrimp farmers in the South we just want to say: be cautious about possibly excluding the ones who need fairtrade most.

There are other ways as well to bring individual farmers together for learning, training, improvement activities a.s.o. – examples: within the frame of already existing interest associations of the fishermen, or organized by a new association built by the producers who join the project, or under the auspicies of the relevant chief of the village who has accepted to take his role as a partner of the project.

#### Guidance

We appreciate your idea to insert guidance to each requirement chapter.

### Requirements, timelines

We suggest to reduce the number of requirements with different timelines as they rend the system unnecessarily to heavy.

In order to avoid misunderstandings, we suggest to **not introduce any requirements without a fixed timeline** – either it's about recommendations which could become mandatory somewhen later, or it's about true requirements which have to be met. According to your draft, you think of the second case in a rather ISO certification like way. We advise you therefor to precisely define what a producer has to do from year to year in order to be acknowledged having achieved «sufficient advances», otherwise this is let to abritrary acts.

# Amendments, changes of requirements

The obligation of the primary producers to follow any change of the requirements **must** be linked to a fair chance of these producers to influence the decision on changes in order to preserve their investment in time and money in order to be certified.

#### 1. General requirements

#### 1.2.2. Membership of non-small producers

First, it is not clear in this paragraph whether you address an organization or a single producer.

It is not quite clear whether the criteria \*\*mostly by familiy\*\* and \*\*not hiring workers all year round\*\* are ment to be at the same time the definition of small workers. If so: what exactly is the limit to \*\*not mostly by family\*\*? And which number of days would equal \*\*all year round\*\*? You should precisely define these terms in order to avoid any ambiguity.

#### 1.3.2. Granting access

By what extent will a producer have to *«grant local communities access to the communities' traditional collection grounds»*? Would it not ease the settling of grievance evoked by concurring use if the requirement was defined more precisely? We suggest at least to state that in case of concurrence, access has to be given to traditional uses as a priority unless it is possible to agree on allocation of access to different uses according to the number of people each one is feeding.

# (Missing 1.5) Control audits, recertification

How often will on site control audits be carried out? By whom? All of them unannounced? How many years after certification will a recertification have to take place?

### Are there any sanctions?

In case of non-compliance (e. g. 1.4.1–1.4.4), what is the procedure of correction to be followed?

What kind of sanctions will non-compliant operators have to face?

### 2. Trade

# 2. Intent and scope (also concerning 2.4.1)

What exactly will be demanded from a producer who wants to sell labelled final products to the consumer?

We feel small farmers should rather be encouraged to sell directly instead of being hindered by regulation. Especially the development of a local market in the South for faitrade products should be supported (see comment at the bottom of page 7 hereafter).

### 2.1 Traceability

It is not clear how far back form the shelf you want to establish traceability. Until the pond? Until the farmer? Until the local farmer's organization? In each of these cases, an appropriate system has to be designed to **maintain the identity of the product throughout transformation and repacking**; paperwork won't be sufficient. (cf. the fair-fish control list to give an example: http://www.fair-fish.ch/files/pdf/wissen/kontrollliste.pdf

#### 2.5. Fairtrade premium

- We appreciate that the premium must not be paid to the individual farmer, but to the community he belongs to.
- We advice not to restrict this community to the farmers association; it could also be the village where the farm is located.
- We would further suggest to **insist on the women's part in the decision** on the use of the premium as else, it may be only the men who decide and thus undermine the traditional role of women as keepers of the control over the families income.
- We miss a definition of the premium's purpose. We suggest to exclude any use of the premium for investment in the shrimp production as this should be included in a fair product price. What farmer villages need is a diversification of the local revenues to become more independent from export oriented markets.

### 2.5.2 Way of premium payment / transparency

To answer your question on how the premium should be paid we would not favour one or the other way but rather underline that transparency over how much of the price is due to the premium should be given at each step of the value chain.

More than that, we would even demand that transparency on the percentage of each cost factor shall be given at each step of the value chain.

### 3. Choice of certification schemes for environment protection

We appreciate the **modular approach** of how to cope with environment issues. As a matter of fact it would be hard to understand if Fairtrade International was to develop its own criteria for environment protection while different expert organization are already doing this job. Driving the farmers to conformity with one of these existing schemes is the best way to address the issue.

This said, we strongly oppose the idea to limit the choice of environment certification schemes to the ones which work under WWF-FSC owned ISEAL or IFOAM guidelines. In practice you would urge the farmers to go eather Bio or WWF.

We are astonished that a certification scheme which tries to open market chances to small farmers in the South is limiting their access to affordable certification schemes.

The experience made with WWF-MSC has shown that this scheme is nor appropriate nor affordable to small fishermen in the South. Despite years of studies and projects carried out in developping countries, MSC did not achieve to get such fisheries certified. In the same time, Friend of the Sea (FOS) succeeded to certify artisanal fisheries in the South which represent more than half of all FOS fisheries.

**Affordability of and access to a certification scheme is a core item** of the FAO guidelines for fishery certification, and for good reasons. It will be a core item, too, of coming FAO aquaculture certification guidelines.

Also in the field of aquaculture, FOS has already proven that it is an affordable scheme for small farmers in the South. As far as cases can be compared, certification following IFOAM guidance is more expensive. Given the experience with costs for MSC certification, it is to expect that also certification for WWF's new aquaculture label ASC will be too expensive for most small farmers in the South.

May it be that certification schemes designed by experts in the North are mainly serving consultants and certification companies in the North? Would you agree with us in that a scheme determined to serve farmers in the South should be designed accordingly? We advise you to let farmers choose other certification schemes, too, and **to name at least the Friend of the Sea scheme** which has proven to be well applicable with and accessible for small fishermen and farmers in the South while opening fast growing shares in the market comparable to MSC in the fishery sector and bigger than IFOAM in the farmed sector.

#### 3.1. Progressive improvement

We appreciate that in year 1 already the farmers have to make their plan how to get certified by the scheme of their choice.

But we feel that a 6 years period to finally comply with the requirements of an environment protection scheme is too long. For two reasons:

1. Concerned consumers who want to orient their sourcing by means of a label will wonder why they should support small farmers who's production for quite a couple of

- years will still harm the environment. This could have a **negative impact on the image** of Fairtrade labelled shrimps.
- 2. The period needed until full compliance with a scheme is achieved can depend not only on the production practices originally in place but also on the technical complexity of the scheme to adopt. Experts in the North tend to (make) believe that the more complex a certification scheme is, the higher is its credibility. In the case of certification schemes in fishery, the growing criticism of MSC by marine biologists shows that a highly complex scheme does not lead to better results than a scheme with a pragmatic approach like FOS that addresses the main problems in order to make the essential difference in the shortest period possible.

Again, you will have to answer the question whether Fairtrade Intl. wants to nourish experts in the North or boost the market chances of farmers in the South.

We think the period to pass certification for environment protection can be reduced to 3 years.

This will be followed by the advantage that Fairtrade Intl. does not have to care about remote issues like antibiotics, feed, stocking density, biodiversity, energy and animal welfare (see below).

#### 3.2 Antibiotics

We appreciate the intent to lead farmers away from the use of antibiotics – but you should be aware that even bio-certified farms are allowed to use antibiotics in cases where you have no other means to cope with a disease.

Defending the use of antibiotics once and forever is far from practice and could be followed by farmers only if loss of the whole stock was remunerated.

We advise to omit paragraph 3.2 and leave this to the expert organizations.

# 3.9 Feed

Again, we advise to omit this paragraph and let expert organizations define what is appropriate.

Feed is a rather complex issue that should be addressed by specialists. Even if we feel that expert organizations are still too permissive with regard to the use of wild fish for feed, we don't think that the paragraph in this form will outmatch the ongoing reduction effect of price increase for fishmeal and fish oil.

If Faitrade Intl. would like to limit the use of wild fish in the feed more strictly than expert organizations are doing so far, such limit should be defined by a formula with precise figures similar to what fair-fish proposed when commenting on WWF's Salmon aqaculture standard.

http://www.fair-fish.ch/files/pdf/english/sat2\_salmon\_comment\_ff-20110614.pdf

If ever, we would suggest that Fairtrade Intl. requires an increasing proportion of the feed components to be sourced locally and in accordance with faitrade criteria, both of which would not be the fact in many cases else. In doing so, you would e. g. give local fish processors the chance of selling the slaughterhouse waste for a better price.

### 3.9.1 Stocking density

Again, we advise to omit this paragraph and let expert organizations define what is appropriate.

Stocking density is just one of several variables which are responsible for ecology, animal welfare and economy, and it is by the way not directly correlated to the feed issue. Arbitrarily setting the density at one level for all will not be appropriate in various cases.

#### 3.10 Biodiversity

Again, we advise to let this vast and complex field to expert organizations which address it thouroughly within their certification schemes already.

# 3.11 Energy consumption, carbon foot print

We advise to let also this issue to exptert organizations. The FOS scheme for example adresses it directly by demanding stepwise reduction and compensation of not reduced  $CO_2$  emissions.

#### 3.12 Animal welfare

We very much appreciate that Fairtrade Intl. wants to take animal welfare into consideration while most certification schemes don't even look at this issue.

Though, animal welfare is a vast field which demands much more than just a prescription to «humanly» kill the animals. And killing shrimps by ice slurry may not even be as gentle as it looks. Hypothermia is disputed, see e. g. the study carried out on different slaughter methods by the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL): http://orgprints.org/16511

As generally stated in your draft, animal welfare issues embrace the whole life span of a farmed animal. We suspect that for the time being it will be hard to find ethological findings on which due requirements could be based. Further research is still requested and will best be pushed on by the animal welfare movement.

We therefor suggest that you let this field, too, to expert organizations.

### 4. Labour conditions

### 4. Intent and scope

We would need an explanation why and to which extent a certified producer should be allowed to produce also under non-compliant conditions. Will this not undermine the efforts made?

We would need also explanation why the certification body should focus its audits on permanent workers while temporary work is widely found in the field.

#### 4.4 Freedom of association

What is a *«siginficant number of workers»*? Many small farmers will employ, if ever, a small number of workers. Should just these workers not be enabled to rely on the right to freely associate?

# 4.6. Occupational health and safety

Should it not be required that the farmers or their organizations take care as well for their own health and safety, including insurance? Generally small farmers should be prevented from exploiting themselves while they care for others...

#### 5. Business and Development

#### 5.1.1 Fairtrade development plan

We appreciate the idea to initially accept the environment protection plan in place of the fairtrade development plan if this period is reduced to 3 years (see our comment to 3.1).

#### 5.1.10 and 5.1.11

We especially appreciate the propagation of polyculture systems and of using a part of the fairtrade premium to create ponds for local food supply.

#### 5.2. Democracy

While democratic rules should not be imposed by directly offending local conventions, the rules should be valid for all persons working within them frame of a certified production. We therefor suggest to **require that an association of certified farmers**, according to non-discimination (5.3.1), **admits workers as members with equal rigths**.

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### **Requirements to Processors**

We strongly appreciate your will to apply your standard also to processing factories. As you say, it is much likely that they occupy as much hands as the farmers do, and **many of them are employed on an irregular basis**. In areas with high fish production, processing workers often wander around from factory to factory as daytalers.

We know the problems tied with a certification of social measurements of fish factories by own experience. While in primary production appropriate farms can be identified and subject to certification, **processing plants usually are of a size that at least initially they could not do with certified products only**. If social requirements go far beyond the horizon of their usual business, they tend to refuse to undergo certification.

For a pragmatic approach it is therefor advisable to **choose an internationally broadly acknowlegded assessment tool**. Thus we support your proposition (method 2) **to work with the SA 8000 protocol** (or its equivalents) as the factory could profit from such certification also in satisfying other clients.

We suggest to postpone the development of a genuin Fairtrade standard for processing factories. As the market for fairtrade fish and seafood grows, Fairtrade Intl. can still define specific requirements at a later date.

\* \* \*

Finally, we would like to draw your attention to two additional issues:

### Producer's participation on benefits

Generally, we would prefer a system which is based on fixed primary producer prices which fully cover his production costs and the living costs of his family. The problem is of course that in such a way the producer would not profit from eventual higher prices on the market. Therefor we accept the concept of a fairtrade minimum price and the obligation of the buyer to pay more if he realizes a higher price.

Though, we would need further explanation **how Fairtrade Intl. makes sure that the benefits generated along the fragmented value chain are fairly shared** with the primary producers.

### Developping the market for fairtrade products in the South

When we developed the fair-fish standard for artisanal fishery in Senegal, we integrated a **requirement which obligates the local licensee to develop the local market for his licenced products as well**. We generally suggest that Fairtrade Intl. imposes a similar obligation onto their licensees.

As shrimp is mainly a commodity designed for exportation to the North which local people could not afford, we suggest in this special case to follow the ideas already raised unter 5.1.10 and 5.1.11.

\* \* \*

We would like to underline again that we are willing to cooperate for and contribute to the development of fairtrade standards in fishery and aquaculture. And we still hope that Faitrade Intl. will be able to establish a standard that we could fully adopt ourselves in order to concentrate our efforts on issues not addressed by others.

If however Fairtrade Intl. were to define criteria we could not approve (like e. g. limiting the choice of environment protection schemes to the ones guided by ISEAL or IFOAM), further cooperation could become quite difficult for us and would rather make us continue with the concept we had developed with artisanal fisher(wo)men in Senegal.

Thank you very much for taking our input into account.

Kind regards

fair-fish association

Billo Heinzpeter Studer

Director

CC: Max Havelaar (CH), Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst EED (DE), Gebana (CH), Helvetas (CH), International Collective in Support of Fishworkers ICSF (BE, IN), Oxfam (NL), Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements CFFA-CAPE (BE), Transfair (DE), GEPA (DE), Instituto Terramar (BR), Fairtrade (AT), Terrafair (CH), Forum Fairer Handel (DE), Swiss Fairtrade (CH), EFTA European Fairtrade (NL), Association romande des Magasins du Monde (CH), Friend of the Sea (IT).