



Standards

Developing quality, consistency and trust



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Consumers are increasingly making their purchasing decisions based on a range of values like sustainability, work safety, health and locality, in addition to value for money and quality of product.

They want to be assured that their purchasing decisions are not having an adverse impact on the environment or on the workers who produced the product and they want their purchasing decisions to align with their values.

So, how do you build trust in your product and recognition of its value? How do you demonstrate that it is produced without harming the environment or that your workers are well looked after while they work? How do you get recognition for quality, conscientious workplace practices or ensuring that your supply chains are untainted by connections to crime or environmental vandalsim?

Establishing processes to measure and uphold certain values, can establish trust in your product or service and demonstrate to end-users that what you claim is true.



The process Aligning intent and action in the fishing industry

Developing a policy establishes an intellectual intent on an issue. This sets out what you want to achieve and how you are going to do this. Once you have established that, you can put it in to action.

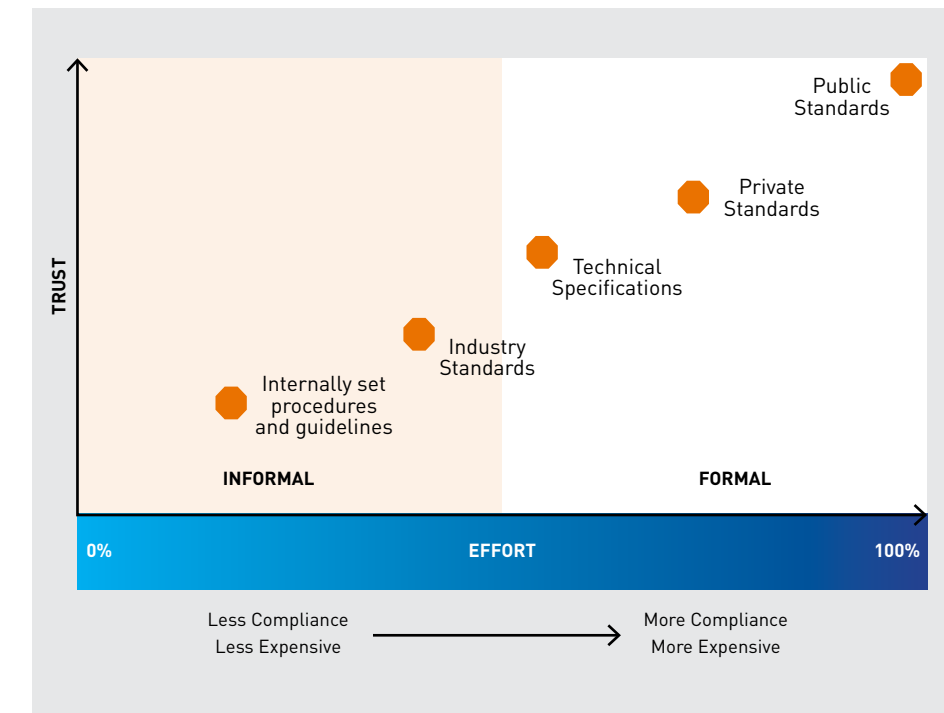
Depending on your resources and intentions there are a range of options available. They range from informal internal guidelines to procedures and specifications that have been externally verified.

If you just want to assure yourself that your staff are safe as they go about their duties you might adopt procedures but only police these internally. If you make a claim about a product or service to consumers, then you need to be able to demonstrate that what you say is true.

This means that your claims need to be measureable and demonstrable to a third party. The rigour that you go through to comply with a code, guideline, specification or standard generally reflects the level of confidence your consumers will have in your product.

A public standard is one of the most rigorous ways of demonstrating compliance with a set of criteria. When you comply with a standard consumers can have confidence that your product meets certain criteria.

Sliding scale different options: Level of Effort vs. Level of Trust



Codes and certifications in Australian seafood & aquaculture

In the fishing industry there are a range of existing guidelines, codes and standards.

These ensure quality of product, safety of personnel and reassure consumers about the products they are buying. They label products as trustworthy in relation to worker safety, sustainability, sanitation and a range of other values. They also ensure consistency within the industry to ensure efficiency and clear communication.

For example, the Australian Maritime and Safety Authority (AMSA) has developed a 'National Standard for Commercial Vessels' which sets out standards for the construction, operation and seafarer qualifications of commercial vessels.

A major concern of many consumers of seafood products is sustainability. The Marine Stewardship Council's (MSC) Fisheries Standard, provides third party certification to a fishery as being sustainable. Products from fisheries certified by the MSC are designated by a blue tick.

In 2011, Coles and Woolworths developed procurement policies requiring certification of their suppliers. These specify criteria for their suppliers relating to size, quality and sourcing.

The Food and Agricultural Organisation's (FAO) Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) provides a framework for national and international efforts to ensure sustainable exploitation of aquatic living resources is occurring at sustainable levels in harmony with the environment.

The Australian Fish Names Standard is a standard developed by the FRDC (as an approved Standard Development Organisation (SDO)), to ensure the correct names are used for species of fish, all along the supply chain. This ensures correct identification, consistency and traceability.

Australian Fish Names Standard

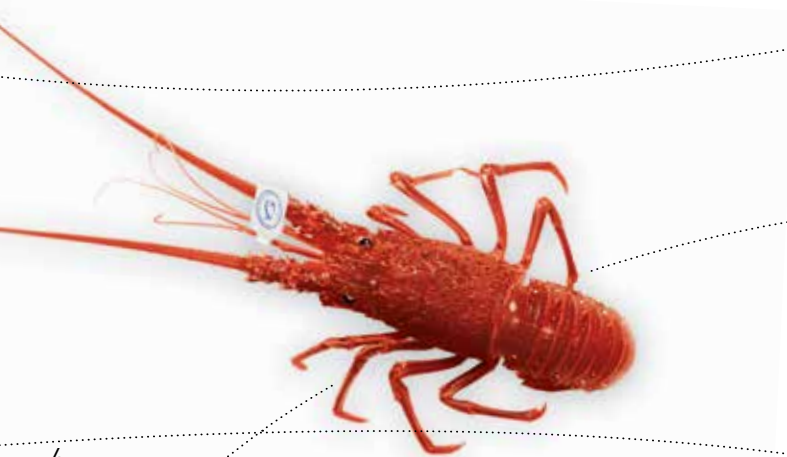
In order to trace a fish's origin and its path to market, it helps if each species is identified by a single name used consistently throughout the supply chain.

To assist with this, the FRDC maintains the Australian Fish Names Standard (AS 5300), which defines the names to be used for all fish and seafood in Australia. It includes a prescribed standard fish name for almost 5000 species of Australian and imported fish produced or traded in Australia.

Most are finfish, but there are plans to add more crustaceans, molluscs and sharks. The standard specifies that fish sold to consumers, for example retail sales and restaurants, must be identified by their standard fish name.

Fish not sold directly to consumers (for example, wholesale, export and import) must be identified by their standard fish name or scientific name.

Standard names allow for more effective fisheries monitoring and management, which in turn results in greater sustainability of fisheries resources. Traceability and food-safety management can also improve seafood marketing campaigns and reduce the potential for misleading and deceptive conduct, resulting in a more profitable industry. The searchable online standard fish names database (www.fishnames.com.au) includes all species listed in the Australian Fish Names Standard.



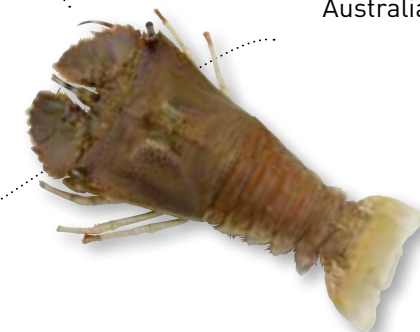
Southern Bluefin Tuna
Thunnus maccoyii



Checkered Snapper
Lutjanus decussatus



Balmain Bug
Ibacus spp.



What is a standard?

Terms like guidelines, certification and standards are used loosely in everyday speech, but they do have more specific technical definitions as well.

So when do you call a set of processes or product specifications a standard and when is it something else? Standards Australia defines standards in this way:

“Standards are published documents setting out specifications and procedures designed to ensure products, services and systems are safe, reliable and consistently perform the way they were intended to. They establish a common language which defines quality and safety criteria.”

Standards establish a common language, are practical; outline achievable goals and are based on sound industrial, scientific and consumer experience and are regularly reviewed to ensure they keep pace with advances in technologies.

In some standards, the type of agreement essentially amounts to advice and guidance; others are much more prescriptive and set out absolute requirements that have to be met if a user wishes to make a claim of compliance with the standard. Standards can be international, regional, national or private.

One of the best ways to understand what a standard is and what isn't is to look at the process that has to be gone through to set a standard. The process of establishing a Public Standard is extremely rigorous and if that process hasn't been conducted then the set of procedures or specifications should be called something else.

The process to develop a Public Standard is outlined on page 8 of this guide.

Different countries, organisations and individuals often use the terms standards, codes and guidelines interchangeably. Standards and codes can be part of the same policy solution like self-regulation.

PRODUCT VERSUS PROCESS STANDARDS

A **product standard** is a set of criteria with which a product or a family of products must comply. The Australian Fish Names Standard is a product standard.

Process standards are either management system standards or performance standards. Management system standards set criteria for management procedures, like documentation for monitoring and evaluation procedures. They do not set criteria for the performance of the management system in terms of outcomes.

Performance standards set verifiable requirements for the performance of a management system, such as the use of limit reference points in a fishery.

A QUESTION OF TERMINOLOGY

The Food and Agricultural Organisation's (FAO) has publicly stated that Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) is not a standard despite the fact that it sets out principles and international standards of behaviour for responsible practices.

However, some argue that the CCRF is a standard because it was developed using a robust and rigorous drafting process agreed to by consensus by the Committee on Fisheries which consists of 194 countries.

Still others argue that because the FAO is not a standards setting body the CCRF is a code not a standard. This debate underscores how different countries, organisations and individuals use terminology in different ways.

There is however general agreement that the CCRF is a normative reference document for the development of sustainable/responsible fisheries standards.

In 2005 the FAO released Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries, which provide specific advice for fisheries to put the CCRF in to practice.



Development of Public standards

Standards (or Public standards) and how they differ and relate to codes, guidelines and private standards can be understood if we look at how standards are developed and who they are developed by.

1. STANDARDS

The Accredited Board for Standards Development (ABSD) accredits an organisation as a Standard Development Organisation (SDO).

The FRDC is the accredited SDO "to develop Australian Standards in the fields of terminology, sustainability, and operational practices in the fishing industry". The FRDC has established the Australian Fish Names Standard.

An SDO uses a robust formal process set out by Standards Australia to develop a standard:

Process to develop a Public Standard



2. PRIVATE STANDARDS

Private standards are developed by entities other than government known as Standard Setting Organisations (SSO). SSOs are not accredited by the ABSO. They may be companies, NGOs, professional associations or stakeholder associations. Private standards are voluntary and do not have to go through the processes specified by Standards Australia. However to be credible they should be developed following a process of transparency, consensus and balance or representation.

For example, The MSC Fisheries Standard is a private standard that measures if a fishery is sustainable and well-managed. To be given the MSC Fisheries Standard a fishery must satisfy three criteria - sustainable fish stocks, minimise environmental impact and effective management requirements.

3. PUBLICLY AVAILABLE SPECIFICATIONS (PAS) OR AUSTRALIAN TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS (ATS)

Publicly Available Specifications (PAS) or Australian Technical Specifications (ATS) are a fast track alternative to standards. They were developed to respond to the urgent need of fast changing sectors where developing a standard would take too long.

PAS/ATS take less time to develop because they do not have to be agreed on by consensus and a sponsor has more control of their content.

Publicly Available Specifications are globally applicable, whereas an ATS is applicable only in Australia.

Many companies develop their own internal specifications to guide their suppliers when buying produce or raw materials. For example Woolworths has technical specifications to guide its purchase of seafood. However these kind of internal specifications are not ATS as they have not been through the formal development process.



Benchmarks

The set of criteria to assess and compare standards is known as a benchmark. A benchmark is a method to recognise whether existing standards, codes and guidelines are equivalent.

The Global Seafood Sustainability Initiative (GSSI) has developed a benchmark tool. The tool helps seafood suppliers to know which schemes meet the benchmark and use the one which best fits their requirements. It avoids the need for multiple certifications.

For the consumer it means simpler more consistent data to guide them when they purchase seafood.



Accredited Board for Standards Development accredits an SDO who works through formal process to develop a **PUBLIC STANDARD**

A non-government entity (SSO) develops a certification or verification method in response to industry need. **PRIVATE STANDARD**

Fast track specifications developed by an expert working group result in Publicly Available Specifications/Australian **Technical Specification**

BENCHMARKS SET OF CRITERIA TO JUDGE DIFFERENT CERTIFICATION SCHEMES

What you have to do Conforming to a standard or a PAS/ATS

Conformance to a standard or specification means that the requirements of the standard or specification can be measured by conformance criteria. This process is called a **Conformity Assessment** and can be undertaken by **first parties, second parties or third parties.**

FIRST PARTY

The fishery or supplier self-declares that the standard/specification has been applied. This is carried out internally.

'We have audited ourselves and all is fine.'

SECOND PARTY

Verification is undertaken by a person or organisation that has a user interest, for example a purchaser or a government department.

'The Department of Environment says all is fine provided we meet some conditions.'

THIRD PARTY

This is performed by a person or body that is independent of any party with an interest. It is usually called certification. Written assurance (a certificate) confirms that the product, service or system is in conformity with the standard.

The independent body is known as a Conformity Assessment Body (CAB).

SCHEME

A scheme is the whole package of documents which sets out the rules and procedures for accreditation, certification, assessment and audit. It is typically made up of the following elements:

- » A standard-setting organization, in charge of developing standards or coordinating the standard development process, preferably in consultation with a number of stakeholder groups.
- » A clearly defined set of objectives that the scheme is aiming to achieve.
- » A set of certification standards that describe the characteristics that a process or product should have to certified by the scheme.
- » A certification process that assesses conformity of a product or process to the certification standards.





FRDC

