

Aquaculture Stewardship Council to cease operations in China

'Over the last 18 months, ASC has undertaken a strategic business review of internal operations...[it] has decided to phase out program operations and cease investment in China'

By [Neil Ramsden](#) | March 27, 2024 14:42 GMT



□ Guolian (Yiyang) Crayfish Breeding Biotechnology became the first crayfish farm in the world to earn ASC certification in 2023

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) has decided to phase out its operations in China following a strategic review over the past 18 months.

After reviewing "internal operations and...current and future operational regions and markets," it has decided to "phase out program operations and cease investment in China," it said.

"This will allow ASC to focus and invest in coming years in regions, markets and activities where we believe we can have the greatest impact through effective use of our limited resources."

It commented to *Undercurrent News* only to add that "our position may change following future business reviews."

ASC has processes in place to enable a structured approach to the phasing out of activities for companies with chain-of-custody (CoC) certification, with a scope for ASC (and potentially also a valid ASC licensing agreement for label use) in China.

These can be found in full in ASC's letter to conformity assessment bodies (CABs) [here](#), but it noted that all existing ASC CoC certificates and surveillance audits will be maintained until certificate expiry.

Any new applicants for CoC certification with ASC scope will not be entered in the CoC database after April 19, 2024. Only ASC CoC certificates expiring in 2024 are eligible for recertification. "It is strongly recommended that CABs check all certificates that are due to expire in 2024 and engage clients regarding recertification."

"The latest ASC CoC certificate expiry shall be Nov. 14, 2027."

Over the past half-year, an investigation by the Outlaw Ocean Project, published in *The New Yorker* and revealing "horrific details about abusive practices towards North Koreans forced to work in seafood processing plants" in China -- and the fact that this seafood ends up on American plates -- has prompted numerous outcries from the seafood sector.

In March, a US Congressional body created in 2000 to monitor China's compliance with international human rights standards urged the departments of State and Homeland Security to [act quickly to address alleged forced labor in China's seafood industry](#).

The Congressional-Executive Commission on China sent a letter to Antony Blinken and Alejandro Mayorkas, the secretaries respectively of each agency, asking them to "act quickly and decisively to address forced labor in China's seafood industry and the very real possibility that US consumers of seafood are funding North Korea's nuclear saber-rattling."

A search of ASC's 'find a supplier' function on its website shows 429 companies under "China," 289 of which are currently certified.

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