

MSC and ASC Certification for Seafood From India

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MSC certifies wild fisheries and ASC certifies farms, and both labels only reach a pack if every company in between holds a chain of custody certificate. For Indian seafood that is the part buyers miss. This guide shows importers how to check all three links, and walks Indian farms, fisheries and processors through getting certified.

The Short Version

- MSC is for wild catch, ASC is for farmed seafood. Indian shrimp exports are mostly farmed, so ASC is the one you will meet most.
- A blue or teal label on a pack needs an unbroken chain of custody. Ask for the processor's chain of custody code, not only the farm certificate.
- ASC is moving all farms to one Farm Standard. Audits against the old species standards end on 30 April 2028.
- Neither label replaces the legal floor. For the EU the plant must be on the approved establishment list, and for the US shrimp needs Green List status.
- A sustainability label says nothing about antibiotic residues in your lot. Test for them.

In November 2014 a clam fishery in Ashtamudi Lake in Kerala became the first in India to earn the Marine Stewardship Council label (MSC, ICAR). Local fishers had agreed on mesh sizes, closed seasons and a ban on mechanised clam fishing, and the clams went to Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia. It's a good story, and it also shows how rare MSC is in India. Most Indian seafood exports are farmed shrimp, and farmed seafood is ASC's territory, not MSC's.



This guide is part of our [certifications hub](#). The legal rules for shrimp at each border (residues, Green List, white spot) are on our [frozen shrimp page](#), and I won't repeat them here.

1. Three Certificates Behind One Label

People talk about "MSC certified shrimp" as if it were one certificate. It is three links, and each has its own certificate.

1. **The source.** An MSC fishery certificate for wild catch, or an ASC farm certificate for aquaculture. (ASC also has a Feed Standard, and in 2025 DNV certified Sandhya Marines as the first Indian shrimp feed mill under it.)
2. **Every company that takes ownership.** The processor, the exporter, the importer and the repacker each need a chain of custody certificate if the product will carry the label. MSC and ASC use the same chain of custody

standard, and MSC counts about 51,200 certified supply chain sites ([MSC chain of custody page](#), read 17 Oct 2026).

3. **The label licence.** A brand or retailer that prints the logo needs a licence to use it.

Break any link and the product can still be sold, but not as MSC or ASC.

2. What the Labels Prove and What They Don't

They prove that an independent auditor assessed the fishery (stock health, ecosystem impact, management) or the farm (environment, water, feed, disease, social and labour conditions) against the standard, and that the supply chain kept certified product separate.

They don't prove the shrimp is free of antibiotic residues. They don't stand in for the legal approval to ship to the EU or the US. They don't tell you anything about the lot's Salmonella or sulphite status. In our count of FDA data, nitrofurans appeared on 105 refused Indian seafood lines and other veterinary-drug residues on 104 (finding F19, to Aug 2026). Some of those plants may well have held certificates. The label is about how the shrimp was farmed, and the lab is about what's in the box.

3. When Your Market Asks for It

No border requires MSC or ASC. Customers do.

- **EU, UK and Nordic retail** often make MSC or ASC a condition for private label seafood.
- **US retail and foodservice** accept ASC, or BAP from the Global Seafood Alliance, which many Indian shrimp packers hold.

- **Australia and New Zealand** retailers increasingly ask for one of the two on frozen prawns.
- **Gulf buyers** rarely ask, though hotel chains with group sustainability policies do.

The legal floor sits underneath. For the EU the Indian processing plant must be on the EU list of approved establishments, which India's Export Inspection Council (EIC) supervises. The EU added 102 Indian fishery establishments in September 2025, mostly for aquaculture shrimp and cephalopods (press reports of the Commerce Ministry release). For the US, shrimp from India sits under the country-wide Import Alert 16–35, and 234 Indian firms were on its Green List on 23 September 2026.

4. What an Importer Should Check

Step 1 – Ask for the source certificate and the chain of custody code. You want the farm or fishery certificate and the processor's chain of custody code. MSC chain of custody codes start "MSC-C-".

Step 2 – Check the farm on ASC's Find a Farm, or the fishery on MSC's Track a Fishery. Look at the status (certified, suspended, withdrawn), the species and the expiry date.

Step 3 – Check the processor in MSC's Find a Supplier directory. Search the code. The scope should name the species and the activity (processing, packing). If the processor isn't listed then the label stops at the farm gate.

Step 4 – Match the volumes. A farm certified for a few hundred tonnes a year can't supply a processor shipping ten times that as ASC. If the numbers don't fit, ask.

Step 5 – Check the legal floor separately. The plant's EU approval number on the EU establishment list, and for the US the Green List under 16–35. Our

frozen shrimp page has the full border checks.



Step 6 – Put it in the contract. Write "ASC certified, chain of custody code X, certified status at shipment" into the purchase order. Certificates can be suspended between order and loading.

Red flags

- A farm certificate but no chain of custody for the processor.
- "MSC shrimp" from Indian aquaculture. Farmed shrimp can't be MSC.
- A certificate PDF with a status you can't find online.
- A trader offering ASC shrimp from "various farms". Traders are a normal part of the shrimp chain, but each certified farm and the processor should be named.

5. How an Indian Exporter Gets Certified

This half is for Indian shrimp farms, fisheries and processors.

Who is involved in India

MSC and ASC are the scheme owners. Accredited conformity assessment bodies do the audits (both schemes use Assurance Services International to accredit them). In India the legal side is separate and comes first: MPEDA registration as an exporter, EIC approval of the processing plant, and for the EU the plant's listing. Check the current rules on the EIC and MPEDA sites.

For a shrimp farm (ASC)

Step 1 – Decide which standard you'll audit against. New farms should go straight to the ASC Farm Standard. Audits against the old shrimp species standard can only start up to 30 April 2028, and from 1 May 2028 every audit is against the Farm Standard ([ASC](#), read 17 Oct 2026).

Step 2 – Gap check. Score the farm against every clause. That means land rights and permits, mangrove and habitat rules, water discharge testing, feed sourcing, antibiotic and chemical use records, disease management, workers' contracts, wages and hours, and community consultation. About one to two months.

Step 3 – Fix the gaps. The common long jobs are effluent treatment, written records of every chemical used, and proper employment records for pond workers. Small farms often group up and certify as a group, which shares the cost and the paperwork.



Step 4 – Choose an accredited certification body and register the audit.

ASC publishes upcoming audits so stakeholders can comment. Check the current fee with the body.

Step 5 – The audit. On site, usually several days for a farm or group. The auditor raises non-conformities.

Step 6 – Close the non-conformities and get the decision. The report is published on the ASC site. Expect two to four months from audit to certificate.

Step 7 – Keep it. Annual surveillance audits, with recertification on the cycle the standard sets. Check the current certificate validity in the ASC certification rules.

For a wild fishery (MSC)

The fishery, not one company, is the unit. A group (fishers' society, state fisheries department, exporters' association) is the client. It starts with a pre-assessment, then a full assessment against the MSC Fisheries Standard with public consultation and peer review, which usually takes over a year. Ashtamudi took that route with the Kerala government, CMFRI and WWF-India behind it. Check whether its certificate is still current in MSC's Track a Fishery. I could not confirm that.

For the processor (chain of custody)

Step 1 – Write the procedures. Receiving, identification, segregation of certified and non-certified product, traceability from farm lot to finished carton, and labelling.

Step 2 – Train the staff who receive, grade and pack.

Step 3 – Choose an accredited body and have the audit. Usually one day.

Step 4 – Get your code and check it shows in MSC's Find a Supplier.

Step 5 – Surveillance audits as the standard requires. Check the current interval in the chain of custody standard.

Common reasons farms and plants fail

- Antibiotic records missing or incomplete.
- Pond expansion into land without the right permits.
- Labour records for seasonal workers that don't exist.
- Processors mixing certified and non-certified shrimp in the same production run with no records.

What to send the buyer

The farm or fishery certificate, the chain of custody certificate and code, the EU approval number, the FDA registration and Green List status if relevant, and residue test reports per lot.

Group certification for small farms takes coordination across dozens of ponds. If you'd like someone to run that, [SourcingSync](#) can manage it.

6. A Worked Example With Vannamei Shrimp for a Dutch Retailer

This example is an illustration built from the rules above, not a real firm.

Say you import frozen vannamei shrimp from a packer in Andhra Pradesh for a Dutch retailer that requires ASC.

The packer sends an ASC farm certificate for a group of farms near Bhimavaram and its own chain of custody code. You find the farm group in ASC's Find a Farm, certified, with annual volume that covers your order. You find the packer's code in MSC's Find a Supplier with shrimp processing in scope. You then check the plant's EU approval number on the EU list. All three pass.

Then you still have every lot tested for nitrofurans, chloramphenicol and other residues before loading, because the EU border checks the shrimp, not the label.

7. Frequently Asked Questions

Can farmed shrimp be MSC certified? No. MSC is for wild fisheries. Farmed seafood uses ASC.

Is BAP the same as ASC? No. BAP is run by the Global Seafood Alliance. Many US buyers accept either, and many Indian packers hold both. Ask your buyer which they accept.

Do I need chain of custody if I'm only the importer? If you take ownership and the product will be sold with the label, yes. Check the MSC rules for exemptions on sealed consumer packs.

Does ASC cover labour? Yes. Social and labour conditions on the farm are part of the standard. For deeper factory labour checks see [social audits](#).

8. Next Steps

- All certificate guides in the [certifications hub](#).
- The border rules for Indian shrimp on [frozen shrimp](#).
- Food safety schemes for the processing plant in [food safety certifications](#).
- The health certificate each shipment needs in [health and veterinary certificates](#).
- Testing lots before they ship with [food import testing](#).
- Reading the US lists with [FDA import alerts](#).