



BSI Professional Services
Case Study

Seafish

Proliferating standards can lead to consumer **confusion**, additional **costs** for suppliers and **uncertainty** for commercial buyers. Standards **convergence**, while eliminating these, must still deliver specifications that meet stakeholders' **specific needs**, and that are capable of being implemented in a **meaningful** and **coherent** manner.

BSI Professional Services worked with the sea fish industry to meet growing calls for a socially responsible sea-fishing standard. Employing world-class **research skills** and state-of-the-art **modelling techniques**, BSI delivered a **fast-track standard** that met **stakeholder requirements** while carrying an assurance of being **systems-engineered** as **fit for the future**.



When Britain's Sea Fish Industry Authority heard a growing number of calls for a socially responsible sea-fishing standard, it recognized in BSI a body of expertise in researching, drafting and gaining agreement for such a standard among a diverse group of stakeholders. Completed in a matter of months, and published in May 2006, Publicly Available Specification, PAS 72:2006 *Sea fish responsible fishing*, draws on BSI research skills to identify proven best practice from around the world, thus gaining industry-wide acceptance.

“The more we could incorporate material that was already in place somewhere in the world, the faster we would progress – and the greater the resulting credibility and workability.”

Established in 1981, the Sea Fish Industry Authority (Seafish) is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the UK government, and funded by a levy on seafood. Its mission: working across all sectors of the UK seafood industry to promote sustainable seafood of a high quality, raising standards, and ensuring that the industry develops in a viable way.

Responding to a groundswell of opinion

As the UK's only genuine cross-industry seafood body, explains Seafish development director Jon Harman, its network of advisory groups enables Seafish to work not only with fishermen themselves, but also with fish processors, wholesalers, seafood farmers, caterers, retailers and the import/export trade. As such, he notes, Seafish keeps close to developments within the seafood supply chain, and was well positioned to act quickly when in 2004 it detected a groundswell of opinion backing the adoption of some kind of environmental standard within the industry.

Over the years, Seafish had already developed various accreditation systems of its own. In this case, though, explains Dr Harman, it recognized that an environmental standard possessed an altogether more demanding level of complexity, calling for the skills and experience of a third party. Having developed the BS 8555 environmental standard, BSI was an obvious body for Seafish to talk to, he adds. Discussions identified that although BS 8555 itself wasn't appropriate for Seafish's needs, BSI could if required help to develop something that was appropriate: a Publicly Available Specification, tailored precisely to the needs of Seafish and the seafood industry. "Provided that we could do it in the time indicated, it was clearly an attractive option," recalls Dr Harman.



A cross-industry group was drawn together, with representatives from each sector. Considerable efforts were expended to get the right people involved: “We wanted practical ‘hands-on’ people,” explains Dr Harman. Facilitated by BSI experts, a consensus emerged among the group about how the scheme should work.

For maximum effectiveness, it was agreed, it should be a ‘business to business’ certification and conformance scheme, and not just a consumer label. Likewise, it should be vessel-based, with individual vessels being certified as working to it within the parameters of a managed fishing regime. And it should be broadly based – covering not just each vessel’s environmental impact in terms of waste, seabirds, ‘by-catch’, gear recovery and litter removal, but also the health and safety of the crew, the handling of the fish that they caught, and the fitness-for-purpose of the vessel itself. Just as importantly, it needed to be workable, with pragmatic approaches to what was permissible, what wasn’t, and what records required keeping.

“Although the BSI people had no prior fishing experience, they were very quickly able to identify the key issues, and come up with proposals that were acceptable to what was really a very diverse group of people.”

With a rough outline in place as to what the scheme should look like, BSI experts scoured the world for comparable schemes – covering all or some of the requirements – from which material could be borrowed or adapted. “We knew of a scheme in Australia that sounded useful,” recalls Dr Harman. “The more we could incorporate material that was already in place somewhere in the world, the faster we would progress – and the greater the resulting credibility and workability: we wouldn’t be experimenting so much as applying something that was already in place, and working successfully somewhere else.”

Modelling convergence and coherence

Useful though the research programme was, it was only a stepping stone. “We’d assembled a lot of pieces of paper: now we needed to identify what exactly each of them delivered, how they could fit together – and where the gaps were,” says Dr Harman. Again, BSI experts provided a solution, building detailed models on how the various schemes worked, determining points of interlock and omission, and suggesting appropriate metrics that could be used for monitoring purposes. “Although the BSI people had no prior fishing experience, they were very quickly able to identify the key issues, and come up with proposals that were acceptable to what was really a very diverse group of people,” he recalls.



Indeed, stresses Dr Harman, the modelling process proved fundamental to the success of the project, building on the series of good practice guides created by Seafish staff, which would underpin the PAS. "At the outset, we identified that there was a significant risk that the whole process could become bogged down in conflict and argument. Modelling helped to develop a consensus that there was existing good practice, delivering on its objectives in a demonstrable way. In any exercise of this nature, there's always a danger that people will raise concerns over whether what is proposed is robust enough, or goes far enough – and by using existing schemes, we were able to keep people's feet on the ground."

“There was a significant risk that the whole process could become bogged down in conflict and argument. Modelling helped to develop a consensus that there was existing good practice, delivering on its objectives in a demonstrable way.”

And it's a success that's widely recognized, now that the project has resulted in the publication in May 2006 of a Publicly Available Specification, PAS 72:2006 *Sea fish responsible fishing*. By the summer of 2006, notes Dr Harman, some 30 vessels had been certified as meeting the specification, with another 120 applications in progress. "We have undoubted buy-in from both fishermen and the major retailers – which has to be a highly satisfactory result," he concludes.



BSI Professional Services helps businesses, governments and non-governmental organizations deploy standardization as a means to proactively engage with the strategic and operational challenges they face. With a portfolio of proven solutions and services, we assist clients to leverage standardization to engage, influence and deliver value.

How to find out more about BSI Professional Services

For more information on BSI Professional Services, please contact us on **020 8996 7173**, email value@bsi-global.com.

raising standards worldwide™

BSI Group headquarters

389 Chiswick High Road
London W4 4AL
United Kingdom

Tel +44 (0)20 8996 9001
Fax +44 (0)20 8996 7001
www.bsi-global.com/pss