

# AWS WATER STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

## BRIEFING NOTE



The Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) provides a comprehensive system to promote, implement, verify and recognise good water stewardship by industry, agriculture and other water-using operations. It achieves this by engaging water-using sites in understanding and addressing shared catchment water challenges as well as site water risks and opportunities. It asks water-using sites to address these challenges in a way that progressively moves them to best practice in terms of water quantity, water quality, water governance and management of important water-related areas. The system encourages collaborative solutions that involve business and industry, government and community as well as civil society organisations.

*AWS Water Stewardship is defined as: “The use of water that is socially equitable, environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial, achieved through a stakeholder-inclusive process and that involves site and catchment-based actions.”*

### OUTCOMES

AWS Water Stewardship aims to achieve sustainable water balance, good water quality, good water governance and healthy important water-related places. The latter include wetlands, important ecological areas and important cultural areas.

### AWS METHODOLOGY

The AWS International Water Stewardship Standard (AWS Standard) defines the process for achieving good water stewardship. The six-step process was developed by the multi-stakeholder International Standard Development Committee (ISDC) and released in April 2014.

The six steps require the following (simplified): (1) Making a commitment to good water stewardship; (2) Developing an understanding of shared catchment water challenges as well as site and supply chain water risks and opportunities; (3) Creating a site water stewardship plan to prioritise actions that respond to issues identified in (2); (4) Implementing the plan in a way that moves the site steadily toward best practice; (5) Evaluating performance on an annual basis both internally and with stakeholders and using this evaluation to revise the plan developed in (3), and; (6) Communicating and disclosing relevant information to stakeholders.

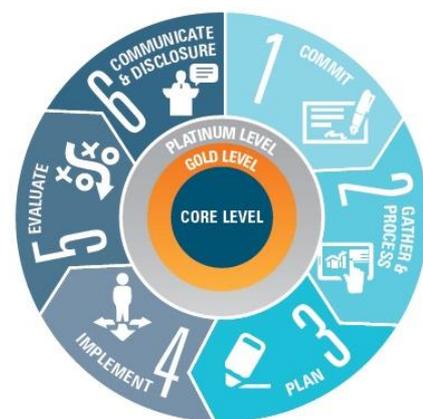
The AWS Standard recognises different levels of performance in implementing good water stewardship and awards certification based on core compliance, gold-level compliance and platinum level compliance.

### VERIFICATION & ACCREDITATION

Performance against the AWS Standard can be verified independently by third party auditors or, for companies and sites that don't wish to make claims about their water stewardship performance, there is an option for self-verification (generally used by firms interested in benchmarking against the AWS Standard). Verification requirements are set out in a series of normative documents published by AWS. Auditors must be accredited by AWS as set out in the AWS accreditation requirements. AWS also accredits trained consultants and trainers so as to maximise capacity and capability while maintaining integrity.

### RECOGNITION & BRANDING

AWS allows access to its brand and other intellectual property by verified water stewards as recognition of their compliance with the AWS Standard. Further guidance is being developed in relation to on-product claims for which there is an emerging need.



## AWS ORGANISATION

AWS is the global umbrella organisation for AWS Water Stewardship. It currently has regional partners in the Asia Pacific (Water Stewardship Australia) and North America (AWS North America). It has a relationship with European Water Stewardship (EWS) in Europe and emerging networks in China, India and South Africa. Water Stewardship Australia (WSA) manages AWS Water Stewardship operations in Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific, South East Asia, East Asia including China and collaborates with AWS international in South Asia.

## GROUP CERTIFICATION

AWS is mindful of the needs of smallholder farmers and smaller enterprises. Accordingly it has developed rules that allow for group certification. Groups must be in a single catchment with similar operating systems. Each group requires a Group Manager. Group certification can lower compliance costs for implementers.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

The AWS Water Stewardship system touches all 17 SDGs and 55 of the 169 targets that fall under the SDGs. Our analysis indicates AWS certification can 'drive' 18 targets in nine goals, it contributes to 22 targets in nine goals and reinforces 15 targets in nine goals. It can build multi-stakeholder partnerships identified in Goal 17.

## WORKING WITH GOVERNMENTS

AWS is currently working with the German and British governments (through GIZ) in Africa, the Australian Government (Australian Water Partnership) in the Indo-Pacific region and the Swiss Government in Peru. It works domestically with governments in Africa, China, Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Latin America. It is in discussion with governments in South East Asia, South Asia and Central Asia.

## WORKING WITH INDUSTRY

US multi-national Ecolab was the first to have a site certified to the AWS Standard in 2015. Australian poultry producer Inghams Enterprises quickly followed. Both have continued to show strong support and worked to promote the system to peers, customers and suppliers. Today 17 sites are registered as undertaking certification from the food and beverage industry, chemicals, papermaking and dyeing. The sites are located in South Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America. In addition there are a large number of sites currently preparing themselves to start the process. The experience of both Inghams and Ecolab was that AWS certification improved plant performance, both environmental and financial, improved staff morale and engaged both sites in outreach on water issues to their local communities, customers and suppliers.

## WORKING WITH AGRICULTURE

Global commodities producer Olam was the first to certify an agricultural site. It certified a coffee plantation in Tanzania and has stated it plans to continue to rollout AWS Water Stewardship through its operations. A group of 24 Colombian coffee growers and a small demonstration farm near Hangzhou in China are currently registered for certification. A large mixed broad acre farm in the Northern Murray Darling Basin (Australia) is currently undertaking certification. AWS has been working with retailer Marks & Spencer to engage its African horticulture supply chain in good water stewardship. It is currently working with Peruvian asparagus growers. WSA is working with two irrigation trusts or collaborations (about 500 farms each) in Australia and New Zealand. AWS has also worked with Hindustan Unilever Foundation on engaging village level farmers in good water stewardship in the Indian State of Gujarat.

## OTHER APPLICATIONS

AWS has worked with the mining industry in South Africa (the principles of AWS Water Stewardship are promoted by the International Council on Mining and Minerals). It is also working with public facilities such as golf courses that are substantial water users. Local government has expressed an interest.

## WORKING WITH SUPPLY CHAINS

WSA is currently working with the Australian textile and fashion industry to identify first and second tier suppliers that have the greatest water risks (catchment and operational risks). The project is focused on suppliers in the Indo-Pacific region. AWS is working with German supermarket chain Edeka to bring their Spanish and North African supply chain into the water stewardship system. It is also working with UK retailer Marks & Spencer in Africa and Swiss retailer Co-op in Latin America.