

seafish



Responsible Fishing Scheme Version 2

Terms of Reference

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Background

The Seafish Responsible Fishing Scheme (RFS) is a voluntary vessel-based assurance programme certifying high standards of crew welfare and responsible catching practices on board fishing vessels. RFS Version 1 was launched to the UK fleet in 2016 with the ambition to roll out internationally.

The RFS will be moving to a new home with Global Seafood Assurances (GSA) no later than May 2020. GSA is a new not-for-profit organisation intended to offer full supply chain assurance for both wild and farmed seafood. This will be achieved through representation of existing standards, management of new standards on behalf of different organisations and/or development of new standards where gaps in assurance offerings are identified. RFS will be the first vessel-specific standard in the GSA portfolio.

A key priority during the transition period is the development of RFS Version 2. The successful development of RFS Version 2 will ensure that the RFS (1) continues to meet the needs of the UK seafood sector and (2) is capable of being used internationally. The structure and content of RFS Version 2 will be guided by feedback received through consultation.

Seafish and GSA are committed to working in partnership to ensure the future of the Scheme is fit for purpose through the supply chain. Through active outreach, the RFS Development Team has received valuable and thoughtful feedback from the breadth of the UK seafood sector. Opinions have been captured from a variety of viewpoints from fishers to policy makers and seafood buyers to non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Consultation has also taken place with international stakeholders to help facilitate the extension of the Scheme to value chains beyond UK waters, in particular those supplying to UK markets in the immediate future.

The current RFS (RFS Version 1) has over 120 vessels certified, contributing 32% of the UK fleet's landings by weight¹, 26% of landings by value and representing approximately 17% of the UK's total registered tonnage. The intent of the RFS Version 2 development process is for the RFS to become a global vessel assurance model for the GSA programme to deliver and grow, both in the UK and internationally.

A robust, collaborative and interactive process will drive the development of RFS Version 2 to ensure the standard is fit for purpose and meets market needs. The RFS certification model will be streamlined to enhance accessibility, and maximise the opportunity to scale up participation via the group certification model, whilst also enabling internationalisation of the Scheme.

¹ Data based on 2017 landings of RFS certified vessels as of 15th August 2018; includes landings by vessels prior to joining the Scheme.

Purpose of the Terms of Reference (ToR)

The RFS Version 2 Terms of Reference (ToR) provides an overview of the process for the review and revision of the RFS, including a summary of the feedback received from a wide range of UK seafood sector and international stakeholders who have been consulted to guide the structure and content of RFS Version 2. The development of RFS Version 2 will follow the ToR.

It explains:

- Objectives of the current RFS Version 1 and development process for RFS Version 2.
- RFS Version 2 consultation process.
- Consultation feedback received.
- Main opportunities for RFS standard development and management, including the:
 - Rationale and risk analysis for the implementation of RFS Version 2.
 - Proposed scope and structure of RFS Version 2.
- Key activities to develop RFS Version 2.

Objectives of RFS Version 1 and Development Process for RFS Version 2

The current key objective for RFS Version 1 is to:

Promote a responsible fishing industry assuring good practice from sea to quayside and contribute to its long-term viability.

This key objective is underpinned by the following 5 Core Principles:

- Core Principle 1 - Safety, health and welfare (reduce accidents, injuries & fatalities; promote decent working conditions, respect & integrity).
- Core Principle 2 - Training and professional development (improve skills, knowledge and understanding; raise standards and open up new opportunities).
- Core Principle 3 - The vessel and its mission (demonstrate due diligence and compliance).
- Core Principle 4 - Care of the Catch (focus on supply of safe, high quality, wholesome product with known provenance).
- Core Principle 5 - Care for the environment (behave responsibly and respect the environment).

The overarching goal of the RFS standard development process for Version 2 is to:

- Ensure the programme continues to meet the UK seafood sector's needs, including:
 - UK Vessels supplying to the UK market.
 - UK Vessels supplying to the UK Export market.
 - UK supply chains sourcing from non-UK registered fishing vessels.
- Develop an internationally credible standard capable of satisfying global market requirements.
- Review and apply measures to streamline the Standard and its certification model, without affecting the credibility of the programme.

The potential cost of application will be considered within the development of the certification model. The scope and structure of which will be established and piloted as part of the development process.

RFS Version 2 Consultation Process

To enable the development of RFS Version 2, a comprehensive consultation process was launched at the Seafood Ethics Common Language Group meeting in London on the 11th July 2018. The process consists of two key phases:

- 1) An initial consultation phase - which involved the input of identified stakeholders to determine what key aspects of the current RFS should be retained, amended, created or removed for RFS Version 2 to be fit for purpose in meeting the requirements of the UK market, as well as being capable of being used internationally.
- 2) A public consultation phase - that will commence upon completion of the proposed RFS Version 2 (mid 2019) and remain open for 60 days. The public consultation will be actively promoted through the RFS website and various other channels to encourage input from all stakeholders.

A comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercise underpins all consultations by identifying all stakeholders who are directly and indirectly affected by the current RFS programme, both domestically and internationally. All identified stakeholders were proactively encouraged to engage with the process

The initial consultation phase commenced on the 24th July 2018 and featured four workshops based in Peterhead, Plymouth, Grimsby and London, alongside over 30 one-to-one meetings and telephone conference calls. These meetings were held throughout the initial consultation period and completed by 9th November 2018.

The key objectives of the initial consultation phase were to:

- Identify the strengths and opportunities of the current RFS by:
 - Capturing the opinions of stakeholders through discussion of the current RFS in general terms including positioning, strategy, model, content and use.
 - Inviting discussion of any aspects of the RFS which stakeholders thought worked well, and any aspects they thought would benefit from improvement.
- Critically review the current RFS requirements and Core Principles by:
 - Discussing potential approaches to address improvement opportunities in the RFS model and delivery method.
 - Exploring identified opportunities relating to the content of the RFS Standard.
- Critically review the current certification process by:
 - Discussing opportunities relating to the way the RFS is operated – including the application process, audit execution and auditor training.

Consultation Feedback Received

During the initial consultation period, an excess of 70 stakeholders representing over 60 organisations, submitted comments and feedback on the contents and operation of RFS Version 1, and gave suggestions as to what should be in RFS Version 2. Details of these organisations can be found in Appendix 1.

The initial consultation feedback collated by sector is summarised as follows:

UK Catching Sector

- Need to reduce duplication with regulatory authority checks.
- Now that ILO 188 is being adopted, large parts of the RFS Standard will be redundant.
- Skippers need to see a benefit to membership, and currently will generally only apply if actively encouraged through 'boots on the ground' support.
- If the RFS is international, will all vessels be assessed to the same standard?
- Request for more focus on the responsible work of the fisher, so more emphasis on Core Principle 4, Care of the Catch – request made for a Blue Boat Scheme, similar to Red Tractor.
- Should there be a separate standard for each type of fishing vessel operation?
- Certification process is too complex and too long.
- There is a lack of support for the fishers in the application process.
- Will the cost of the programme increase under GSA ownership?
- RFS needs to establish a clear position alongside other initiatives and certification schemes.

UK Processing Sector and Food Service Sector

- Can see a need for full supply chain assurance and the RFS clearly has the potential to support this.
- Unless directed by customers, processors will not prioritise the purchase of RFS-certified over non-certified fish (where quality and price is comparable).
- All parts of the RFS Standard are useful but feel that if one was to be removed, that Core Principle 4, Care of the Catch, adds the least value as this can be assured by other standards and specifications.
- Several processors noted that assurance relating to avoiding contamination of a catch could add clear value for them.
- Core Principle 3, the Vessel and its Mission, should be amended to cover compliance with legislation such as ILO 188.
- Should there be a different standard for separate categories of vessels in order to recognise the differences in operation and minimise the burden for smaller vessels?

UK Retail Sector

- Need to promote benefit to the catching sector to drive improvements and increase engagement.
- Core Principles 1 & 2 are the priority for retailers i.e. health safety & welfare and training & professional development.
- Need to promote worker voice to help ensure compliance and credibility.
- Keen to promote minimum living wage for fishers.
- Core Principle 4, Care of the Catch, is useful for protecting the integrity of the produce but other standards and systems in the processing sector could be used instead.
- Core Principle 5 is useful for supporting in the protection of the environment.
- Unit of certification should be extended to cover the owners of the vessel.
- Recognition that there is good alignment with the Fishing Industry Safety Group's safety management system, but that the RFS has the ability to go beyond minimum legal compliance and provide additional assurance through third-party certification (a requirement of retailers).

International Sector

- The format of RFS Version 1 spreads the focus and mission of the Standard too thinly across a number of sectors.
- Core Principles 1 & 2, Health Safety & Welfare and Training & Professional Development, are the most useful but will need to be amended to avoid duplication with current legislation (e.g. UK).
- Core Principle 5 is useful for supporting the protection of the environment; some comments for, some comments against; suggesting that fishery standards already cover this.
- Core Principle 4, Care for the Catch - there is a strong feeling that other standards and systems in the processing sector could be used instead.
- Unit of certification must have group/fleet model incorporated.
- A two-tier standard should be considered; one for artisanal fleets and one for more industrial fleets, as the current standard is too onerous for smaller vessels.
- Need to focus on safety and fishermen welfare, and have additional modules as "add-ons" for other areas.
- Unit of certification should include the owners, as they set the criteria for how a vessel should be operated.
- In order to incorporate more environmental aspects, a vessel management module could be introduced to cover how the vessel should operate, rather than featuring this as a separate principle.

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- Need to have a proper grievance process incorporated – e.g. international help lines for the crew – to allow crew to report poor behaviour around welfare.
 - Auditing for a social standard is different from an environmental standard, so the RFS should be aligned to ISO 17065. However, the RFS Standard should also meet the benchmark requirements of the Consumer Goods Forum's Sustainable Supply Chain Initiative (SSCI), once the SSCI is finalised.

Main Opportunities for RFS Standard Development and Management

Rationale and Risk Analysis for the Implementation of RFS Version 2

There is considerable diversity of stakeholders, resulting in a variety of expectations from the RFS. This variation in viewpoints will likely become more prevalent as the RFS scales up within the UK catching sector and internationally.

Prior to any changes to the RFS being implemented, it is important that they are stress tested. This testing will ensure that the proposed changes are (1) workable and provide the benefits needed for the existing, new and potential applicants to the RFS and (2) meet the seafood supply chain assurance requirements of the market supporters/endorsers.

Standard development best practice dictates that there are three main priorities that must always be considered. These are outlined below and will be used as a guide throughout the development of RFS Version 2:

- 1. Accessibility** – In order to reach more markets and provide access to a greater volume of RFS-compliant seafood, it is paramount that the Standard is accessible, regardless of vessel size or geographic location. Accessibility can be enhanced by working closely with the catching sector, market supporters/endorsers across the UK and within the international arena, to ensure that the RFS Standard and supporting guidance documents are relevant and fit for purpose. This can be achieved by taking out redundant elements, making use of technology, and ensuring alignment with existing international requirements.
- 2. Credibility** – The essence of the value proposition of the RFS is the robustness of the standard criteria and assurance process. Known audit and integrity risks should be identified and managed. Where needed, changes to the audit model should be implemented to enhance the rigour. Any changes to how the RFS Standard is certified should be assessed to ensure they do not jeopardise the credibility of the Scheme. As the RFS scales up and enters new global markets, new assessment risks will appear and will need to be managed appropriately.
- 3. Applicability** – In order to ensure long-term relevance of the Scheme, the RFS Standard and assessment programme must continue to meet the expectations of the supply chain. The RFS will need to respond proactively to any demand for changes in order to carefully maintain the balance between accessibility and credibility.

Proposed Scope and Structure for RFS Version 2

Taking into account the collated feedback, the following section outlines the proposed direction for RFS Version 2 as agreed by the RFS Oversight Board on 21st November 2018. The proposals are outlined below in terms of the scope, standard criteria, certification model, certification requirements and unit of certification.

Scope

Case for change:

It is apparent that the scope of the current RFS is too onerous for smaller vessels, and may be too duplicative for larger vessels. RFS Version 2 needs to thus more clearly differentiate between vessel types.

Proposal:

RFS Version 2 will distinguish between types of vessel, as well as distinguish between single-handed and crewed, to take into account the differing needs of commercial fishing vessels. These distinguishing vessel categories will be determined by further work undertaken as part of the RFS Version 2 development process. All elements of the RFS Standard will apply to every category.

Rationale:

RFS Version 2 will retain scope for RFS to be accessible to all types of vessels, and take into account differing needs of commercial fishing vessels.

Standard Criteria

Case for change:

- The focus on crew welfare and operation of the vessel needs to be strengthened.
- The approach to assessing vessel safety, crew health and safety needs to be streamlined to remove duplication, whilst still providing assurance in relation to compliance to ILO 188 and key UK regulations.
- There is a need to adopt an approach to assess how compliant an internationally-operating vessel is in meeting ILO188 requirements.
- The Standard format adopted needs to meet both UK and International market needs.
- There is a need to maximize the opportunity to retain key aspects of responsible operation in relation to environmental impact.
- There is strong support to remove 'Care for the Catch' criteria where other assurance mechanisms can cover this within the supply chain.

Proposal:

Revise the structure to adopt a format with 'universal core principles' covering:

- Overarching operational management of the vessel incorporating:
 - Operational management policies.
 - Recruitment channels.
 - Management of vessel impact on the environment.
 - Documentation of catch.
 - Legal assurance (including fitness of the vessel to carry food).
- Crew conditions incorporating:
 - Welfare (including employment conditions).
 - Safety.
- Vessel Safety Requirements.

Contextual 'supplementary modules' could be introduced to meet local and international market demands to cover, e.g. Care for the Catch.

Rationale:

This structure introduces an agile approach which responds to the differences in market needs identified within different stakeholder groups.

The proposed new Key Objective is for RFS Version 2 to:

Enable fishing operations to provide assurance of decent working conditions and operational best practice from the catch to the quay.

Certification Model

Case for change:

- The current certification model is based on pre-requisite commitments being signed off, followed by an “on-vessel” audit; there is a need to introduce assurance that crew are fully engaged in the process.
- A mechanism is required to provide assurance that there is a good management system, and that good welfare conditions are available at all times to the crew (i.e. strengthen ‘crew voice’).
- Elements of a social nature need to be introduced into the certification process in a way that maintains the integrity of the Scheme, protects safety of the auditor/crew and avoids the costs and barrier to entry associated with a full social audit.
- There is a need to maintain third-party assurance and international credibility across the full certification model, however not all aspects of the RFS Version 2 certification process could be accredited to ISO 17065. For example, social aspects of the RFS Version 2 certification model need to be aligned with social benchmarking initiatives.

Proposal:

Develop a model which ensures RFS Version 2 is still assessed and certified by an independent third-party Certification Body (CB) using auditors with the competency to undertake assessments of a more social nature (recognizing that there are different skills required to audit social criteria effectively).

Explore the potential for compliance with certain aspects of the RFS Standard to be determined through a confidential self-assessment survey, to be completed by crew and assessed by an independent third-party (e.g. CB).

Continue to align the certification model to ISO 17065 protocols, where appropriate, whilst also updating the certification model and associated processes to meet the requirements of the Global Seafood Sustainability Initiative (GSSI) & the Consumer Goods Forum’s Sustainable Supply Chain Initiative (SSCI).

Rationale:

This would maintain a robust, transparent and impartial approach to certification whilst strengthening ‘crew voice’ in a manner which will keep certification costs to a minimum.

Certification Requirements

The certification requirements are the essential components that must be assessed by the CB in order to certify fishing vessels meet RFS standards. The purpose of the RFS certification requirements will be to ensure (1) there is credibility, transparency and control of how each CB auditor assesses a vessel or organisation to the RFS Standard criteria, and (2) that the certification processes used by the CB are robust and impartial to meet supply chain assurance expectations.

Case for change:

- Currently the guidance documents available to the applicant and RFS auditors are detached from each other. This creates some confusion and inconsistency which needs to be addressed. Clearer guidance is required to provide greater support to applicants and auditors alike, making it easier to understand what is required to meet the RFS Standard requirements.
- There is a need to ensure that support documentation can be maintained efficiently when changes in legislation and good practice occur, and that there are viable ways to identify different ways to evidence compliance without the need to change the RFS Standard criteria.

Proposal:

The support documentation for both the applicant and auditor will be combined, updated and reconfigured into a certification requirements guidance document. This guidance document will be able to be used by both parties to understand the rationale behind each standard clause, as well as provide examples on how to comply.

Rationale:

This will ensure that all the certification requirements are made clear and can be updated more efficiently so that the RFS remains consistent and credible.

Unit of Certification

Case for change:

- The unit of certification needs to take into account that (1) the skipper of a vessel is responsible for the operations of the vessel while out at sea, while (2) the owner is responsible for the condition and maintenance of the vessel and equipment, re-numeration agreements with the crew and the culture and values on board.
- In single owner fleets, skippers move from one vessel to another, so RFS Version 2 will need to identify the most appropriate unit of certification to capture these moves effectively.
- Questions on “relief” skippers were a voiced concern, so the proposed change will need to recognize that it is the owner’s responsibility to ensure that all skippers (permanent or relief) are operating to a consistent standard.

Proposal:

The unit of certification shall include the vessel, skipper and owners of the vessel.

It will reflect that it is the vessel owner’s responsibility to ensure that an effective management system is in place and being adhered to by all skippers who may take charge of the vessel. The way in which this will be undertaken will be explored and tested within the development process.

In a group scenario where there are a number of individually-owned vessels, the central management organisation shall also be in the unit of certification.

Rationale:

The owner, or owners, will set the precedent on expected working conditions and how the vessel will be operated; it is the fishing vessel owner who takes responsibility for compliance with ILO 188.

This will also address instances when relief skippers are used on a vessel, as the responsibility lies with the owners to ensure that the relief skippers operate the vessel in accordance with their own operational requirements.

In a group scenario, where there are a number of individually-owned vessels, the central management organisation controlling compliance of all the vessels to the RFS Standard, shall also be in the unit of certification. This will ensure that the requirements required for participation within the RFS Standard are being maintained.

Key Activities to Develop RFS Version 2

The ToR for RFS Version 2 has been developed and agreed by the RFS Oversight Board, guided by feedback received during the initial consultation phase. This proposed scope and structure has been approved by both the Seafish Board and the GSA Board, and will guide the key activities of the development process outlined below.

The key stages of the development process will entail the following:

- The formation of a bespoke technical working group/committee with membership comprising of individuals representing organizations who have the key skills required to develop the standard criteria for each agreed core principle.
- A new set of RFS Standard criteria will be developed and any retained RFS Version 1 Standard criteria will be aligned in order to ensure that all criteria (1) complies with UK legislation (e.g. ILO 188 ratification) and (2) takes into account the requirements of the revised standard format.
- The new RFS Standard Version 2 shall be pilot tested on a specified number of UK supply chains ensure that the standard criteria contained within is auditable to ISO-17065 certification protocols and international social benchmark requirements. These pilots will include:
 - UK Vessels supplying UK market.
 - UK Vessels supplying UK export market.
 - UK supply chains that source from non-UK registered fishing vessels.
- A 60-day public consultation will be undertaken. Feedback received will be incorporated into the finalised RFS Standard, which will then be presented to RFS Oversight Board, and ultimately the Seafish and GSA Boards for approval.
- In accordance with standard development protocols, a full impact assessment on all current RFS certificate holders will be conducted at the final stages of the development of RFS Version 2, to determine what effect the proposed new criteria will have on the certificate holders' respective capabilities to comply. If a large proportion of the current certificate holders are unable to comply with the new criteria, a credible and robust transition plan will be proposed to ensure certification holders have time to implement necessary changes.
- RFS support documentation outlining the certification requirements will be created. A full set of auditor training tools will also be developed to ensure that all RFS auditors and CBs who will audit and certify to the new RFS Standard, can do so with credibility and consistency.
- All RFS auditors shall be required to prove competency in assessing to the new RFS Standard by sitting and passing an examination based on the new conformance criteria.

It is expected that the development of RFS Version 2 will take up to 9 calendar months from when the Terms of Reference was approved by the Seafish and GSA Boards. The aim would therefore be for Version 2 of the RFS Standard to become available to applicants within the catching sector by mid-to late 2019. A transition plan for existing RFS certificate holders will be developed to allow them time to meet the new requirements of RFS Version 2.

Appendix 1: Stakeholders Providing Input into the Consultation

During the initial stage of the consultation period, an excess of 70 stakeholders representing over 60 organisations submitted feedback on the contents and operation of RFS Version 1, and provided suggestions as to what should be included in RFS Version 2.

The table below shows the names of the organisations and individuals that have provided their input into this initial stage of the development process:

Organisation / Individual	Region of Core Interest	Category
2 Sisters Food Group	UK & International	Processing
Alaskan Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI)	International	Standards
Aldi	UK & International	Retailer
Asda	UK & International	Retailer
Association of Sustainable Fisheries (ASF)	UK & International	Other
Building Information Modelling	International	Standards
Birgitte Poulson	UK & International	NGO
The Blue Marine Foundation (BLUE)	UK (SW England)	NGO
The Blue Seafood Company	UK (SW England)	Multi-sector
British Ports Association (BPA)	UK	Markets
CamNesa	UK (Wales)	Multi-sector
Client Earth (Sustainable Seafood Coalition - SSC)	UK & International	NGO
Combe Fisheries Ltd	UK (SW England)	Processing
Conservation International (CI)	International	NGO
Consumer Goods Forum (CGF)	UK & International	NGO
Co-op	UK & International	Retailer
Cornwall Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Association	UK (SW England)	Catching Sector
David Agnew	International	Multi-sector
Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF)	UK & International	NGO
Fairtrade USA	International	Standards
Falfish	UK (SW England)	Multi-sector
Falfish (RFS support)	UK (SW England)	Catching Sector
Fishing into the Future	UK	NGO
Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI)	UK & International	NGO
Huw Thomas	UK & International	Multi-sector
The Global Standard for Responsible Supply (IFFO RS)	International	Standards
International Labour Organization (ILO)	UK & International	Other
Interfish	UK (SW England)	Multi-sector
International Pole and Line Foundation (IPNLF)	International	NGO
International Transport Federation (ITF)	UK & International	NGO

Jonathan Shepherd	UK & International	Multi-sector
Joseph Robertson	UK (Scotland)	Processing
Lidl	UK & International	Retailer
Lloyd's Register (Acoura)	UK & International	Auditing
Lovering Foods	UK & International (EU)	Catching Sector
Lowe Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE)	UK (Scotland)	Processing
Lunar Filleting/Freezing	UK (Scotland)	Catching Sector
Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)	UK	Enforcement
Monterey Bay Aquarium / Seafood Watch	International	NGO
Morrisons	UK & International	Retailer
Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)	UK & International	Standards
National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations (NFFO)	UK (England)	Catching Sector
New England Seafood International (NESI)	UK & International	Processing
New Under Ten Fisherman's Association (NUTFA)	UK (SW England)	Catching Sector
Nofima (Norwegian Research Institute)	International	Other
Peter Hajipieris	UK & International	Processing
Sainsbury's	UK & International	Retailer
Scottish Fishermen's Federation (SFF)	UK (Scotland)	Catching Sector
Scottish Fishermen's Organisation (SFO)	UK (Scotland)	Catching Sector
Scottish White Fish Producers Association (SWFPA)	UK (Scotland)	Catching Sector
Seachill	UK & International	Processing
Seafresh (Sea-farms)	International	Processing
Sealord Caistor	UK & International	Processing
Shark Trust	UK & International	NGO
Shetland Fish Producers' Organisation (SFPO)	UK (Shetland)	Catching Sector
Shetland Fishermen's Association	UK (Shetland)	Catching Sector
South Devon and Channel Shell fishermen	UK (SW England)	Catching Sector
Tegen Mor Consultancy (Nathan De Rozarieux)	UK (SW England)	Multi-sector
Tesco	UK & International	Retailer
Thai Union	International	Multi-sector
Waitrose	UK & International	Retailer
Western Training Association	UK (SW England)	Training
Whitby Seafoods	UK & International	Processing
World Animal Protection (WAP) / Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI)	UK & International	NGO
World Wildlife Fund (WWF)	UK & International	NGO
Young's Seafood	UK & International	Processing

Contact Details

Feedback from all stakeholders with an interest in the seafood industry is welcome and appreciated. Please contact the RFS Development Team to submit any comments on this document or the development of RFS Version 2.

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