

NSF Awards World-First Community Catch Certification to Orkney Crab Fishery

16 July 2026 | News

Milestone certification sets a new benchmark for small-scale fishery sustainability and social responsibility



NSF, a leading global organisation dedicated to protecting and advancing human health, announced that Orkney Crab has become the first fishery in the world to achieve certification to the Community Catch standard for small-scale fisheries.

The certification recognises Orkney Crab's responsible fishing practices, environmental stewardship and social compliance processes, setting an important milestone for small-scale fisheries seeking credible third-party assurance.

Small-scale fisheries contribute an estimated 40 per cent of the global fish catch and employ over 90 per cent of the world's capture fishers, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. However, many small-scale fisheries face barriers to certification due to cost and complexity. Community Catch was developed to address these challenges through a practical framework tailored to the operational realities and resource constraints of community-based fishing operations.

Community Catch provides independent, third-party verification that a fishery operates in accordance with comprehensive criteria covering environmental stewardship, labour rights due diligence, health and safety and responsible social practices. The framework incorporates criteria from the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) guidance, ensuring rigorous assessment of both environmental sustainability and social responsibility.

"Orkney Crab's achievement is an important milestone for NSF, Community Catch and small-scale fisheries around the world," said Dr. Gemma Quilez-Badia, Technical Manager, Food Production, NSF. "It shows that robust environmental and social requirements can be applied practically for community-based fisheries, giving buyers credible, independently verified assurance for responsible sourcing, delivering measurable benefits to marine ecosystems and coastal communities."

The Orkney Crab fleet is made up primarily of vessels under 10 meters in length and uses low-impact, selective pot-fishing methods designed to minimise habitat disturbance and bycatch. The fishery also maintains catch sizes approximately 10 per cent above legal minimum requirements to support stock health and long-term sustainability.

Orkney Crab processes over 1,500 metric tons of brown crab annually, contributing over £6 million to the local economy and providing income to island communities throughout Orkney. Its products are supplied to major UK retailers and exported to European and international markets.

“Community Catch certification provides independent verification of the responsible practices our fishermen have maintained for generations,” said Paul Knight, Managing Director, Orkney Crab. “This achievement strengthens our ability to demonstrate our commitment to sustainability and social responsibility to buyers and consumers who increasingly require verified credentials.”