



ALLIANCE FOR
WATER STEWARDSHIP

ALLIANCE FOR WATER STEWARDSHIP 2022 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

MAY 2023

Executive Summary

The Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) mission is to ignite and nurture global and local leadership in credible water stewardship that recognises and secures the social, cultural, environmental and economic value of freshwater.

Our Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) System is guided by our Theory of Change (ToC). The M&E System helps AWS evaluate and improve its effectiveness, including with regard to the structure and functioning of the AWS Standard System. It also enables AWS to be accountable to its stakeholders and ensure credibility via the provision of clear and verifiable information.

The primary purpose of this 2022 Performance Monitoring Report is to share progress, insights and learning in relation to our M&E System and Indicators, as well as to convey our future plans.

The AWS M&E Indicators form the basis of performance monitoring for the AWS M&E System and this report. AWS has developed a set of 28 M&E Indicators. This report covers 11 of the indicators: nine at Standard System Level (SSL), one at Site Level (SL), and one at Catchment Level (CL).

Performance

- 11% increase in AWS Members
- 20% increase in the number of AWS Certified Sites
- 44% increase in number of individuals taking AWS Standard System Training compared to 2021
- Over 3,176 AWS Standard Downloads (15% increase compared to 2021)

Progress

- AWS launched the AWS Strategy 2022-2030 that prioritises developing a continually improving knowledge and evidence base for water stewardship.
- We began the inaugural AWS Impact Accelerator with H&M and Primark in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This new programme aims to accelerator positive action in highly stressed locations that are critical production and sourcing hubs.
- As part of the AWS M&E-Assurance Alignment Pilot Project, we developed a template for auditors to ensure stronger alignment between assurance and monitoring, evaluation and learning.
- We developed the AWS Research Agenda to guide partnerships and research on the AWS System.
- AWS announced as an Associated Partner on the four-year GOVAQUA research project, led by the Freshwater Centre, Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE). This EU funded research project will study innovative practices in water governance.
- We wrapped up a two-year ISEAL Innovations Fund project on Boosting Sustainability Practice & Performance at Landscape Level through Good Water Stewardship, supported by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO.

Plans for 2023

- Building further research partnerships
- Commissioning an independent impact evaluation
- Improvements and growth of the AWS Training Programme
- Mapping AWS Certified and Registered sites



Introduction

The Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) is both a global network of businesses, civil society, and public sector organisations, and the custodian of the International Water Stewardship Standard (known as the AWS Standard).



AWS operates globally, and the AWS Standard is applicable to all types of freshwater used by an organisation or industry in any location around the world.

AWS Standard Certification demonstrates that a site has successfully completed each of the steps in the AWS Standard. It enables businesses to make credible claims about their water stewardship practices and commitment to water sustainability and can help increase investor confidence, improve brand perception and strengthen customer relationships.

The AWS Strategy 2022-2030¹ is based on three strategic goals: Influence, Inclusion and Impact. It focuses on strengthening and deepening the AWS System through sectoral engagement in four priority industry sectors while remaining agile and responsive to demand in other sectors. This focus allows AWS to drive increased corporate commitments and certification against the AWS Standard.

AWS is ISEAL Code Compliant. Our system has been independently evaluated against ISEAL's Codes of Good Practice — a globally recognised framework for effective, credible sustainability systems ([isealliance.org](https://www.isealliance.org)). As such, AWS defines impact very specifically as positive and negative long-term effects resulting from the implementation of a standards system, either directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.²

This is the third Performance Monitoring Report produced by AWS. Its purpose is threefold: to share progress made in relation to our Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) system; to report developments to our stakeholders on the AWS System, M&E insights and learning; and to convey our future plans.

This report is primarily targeted at AWS Members, Partners, those certifying sites (and those thinking about certifying sites) against the AWS Standard and AWS global staff.

The data presented cover the period from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022 (unless otherwise stated) and cover our work worldwide.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Performance monitoring is a continuous process that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide indications of the extent to which outputs and short- and medium-term results are being achieved.

¹ AWS Strategy 2022-2030 can be downloaded from a4ws.org/awsstrategy2022-2030

² This report also fulfils ISEAL Impacts Code Clause 8.3 "Performance Monitoring" and Clause 10.4 "Increased Transparency, Public Access and Engagement"

Our M&E System

Our M&E System takes a Theory of Change (ToC) approach. Our 'theory' is that as Enablers, Implementers and Influencers of the AAWS System set about creating and supporting interventions, outputs and outcomes, the desired positive impacts will be realised in order to deliver on our mission and vision (view our ToC infographic at a4ws.org/impacts).

The M&E System is intended to help AWS evaluate and improve its effectiveness, including with regard to the structure and functioning of the AWS Standard System. It also enables AWS to be accountable to its stakeholders and ensure credibility via the provision of clear and verifiable information.

We publish annual Performance Monitoring Reports to provide an indication of the extent to which outputs and outcomes are being achieved. Outcome and impact evaluations will also be carried out to identify short-, medium- and long-term effects of the implementation of the AWS Standard System.

As part of the M&E System, AWS employs mechanisms to ensure the quality of performance monitoring data and of outcome/impact evaluations. AWS is moving closer to real-time reporting and an increasing amount of our M&E data are collected online, and automatically uploaded to our Salesforce database, as well as regularly updated on the AWS website.

AWS is careful about communicating data and information and aims to do it in a simple and clear way. AWS ensures that claims made in reports or statements that it issues about any outcomes and/or impacts of the AWS Standard System are accurate and linked to data and conclusions from performance monitoring or outcome and impact evaluations.

The AWS M&E Indicators form the basis of performance monitoring for the AWS M&E System and this report. AWS has developed a set of 28 M&E Indicators through a process of stakeholder consultation. The full set of M&E Indicators, known as the M&E Indicator Framework, is available at a4ws.org/impacts. This report covers 11 of the indicators, as follows:

- i. **Standard System Level (SSL)** – There are ten SSL indicators, nine of which are covered in this report
- ii. **Site Level (SL)** – There are ten SL indicators, one of which is included in this report
- iii. **Catchment Level (CL)** – There are eight CL indicators, one of which is included in this report

The new AWS Assurance Model, namely the appointment of Water Stewardship Assurance Services (WSAS) as the sole mission-driven assurance provider for the AWS System, presents an opportunity to collect a greater amount of data at the site and catchment levels through AWS assurance processes. As we collect more data, we will publish annual Performance Monitoring Reports that include a greater proportion of indicators.

MONITORING & EVALUATION SYSTEM

A Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) system is an ongoing process through which an organisation draws conclusions about its contribution to intended outcomes and impacts. It consists of a set of interconnected functions, processes and activities, including systematic collection of monitoring data on specified indicators and the implementation of outcome and impact evaluations.

AWS VISION

A water-secure world that enables people, cultures, business and nature to prosper, now and in the future.

AWS MISSION

We ignite and nurture global and local leadership in credible water stewardship that recognizes and secures the social, cultural, environmental and economic value of freshwater.

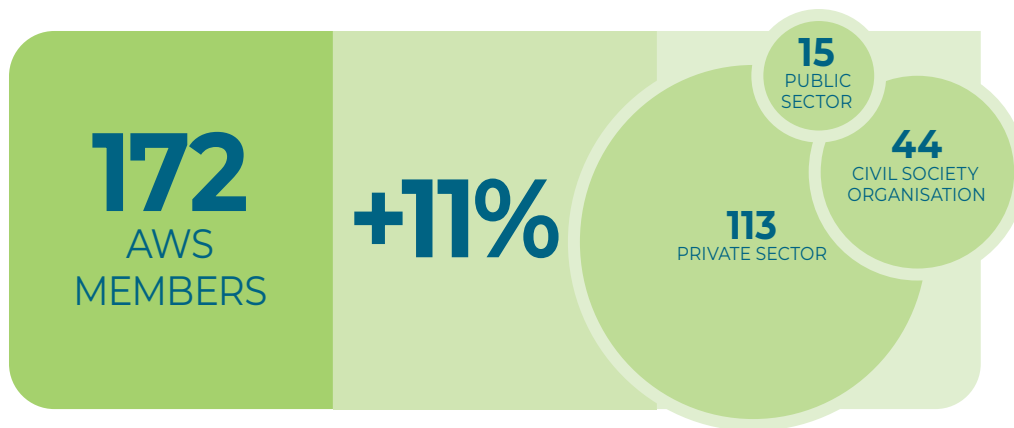
Presentation of M&E Data

Number of AWS Members

AWS is a global network of member organisations who contribute to the sustainability of local freshwater resources by adopting and championing the AWS Standard. Members include businesses, public sector organisations, investors and finance institutions, development agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations, and sustainability service providers.

AWS Members facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences to push boundaries to encourage the uptake of water stewardship around the world. Our strength lies in the diversity of our members and the experience they bring with them.

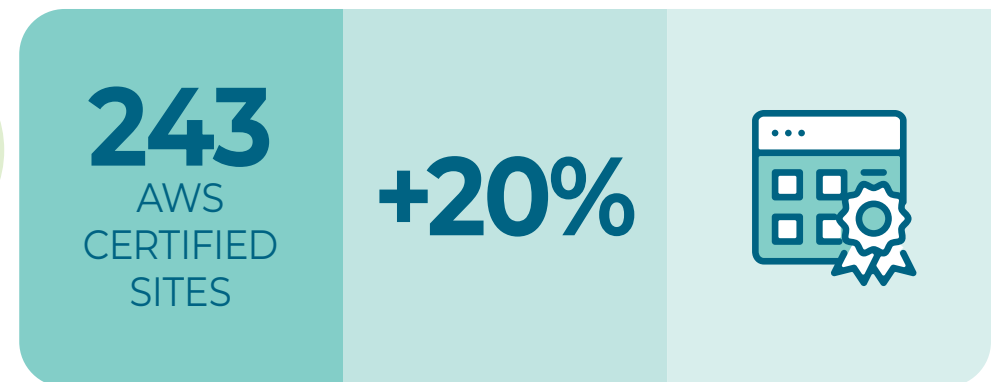
Our Membership programme has grown significantly since being launched in 2016. At the end of 2022, there were a total of 172 Members across our three membership categories: Civil Society Organisation, Private Sector and Public Sector. This represents an increase of 11% from 2021. For a complete list of all our members see a4ws.org/membership.



Number of AWS Certified Sites

Once a site has implemented the AWS Standard and met the criteria for each step, they can be audited and certified by a third-party Assurance Provider. Certification against the Standard allows sites to make credible claims about their water stewardship activities and achievements.³ This can help improve relationships with customers, strengthen a business's social licence to operate, enhance brand perception and open up dialogue with regulators and policy makers.

As of the end of 2022, there were 243 AWS Certified Sites⁴, which represents a 20% increase since the end of 2021. Of the four AWS priority sectors, Food and Beverage Manufacturing continues to account for the largest proportion of AWS Certified Sites (47%), followed by Agriculture (17.5%), Microelectronics (10.5%) and Textiles and Apparel (1.5%). "Other" (22.5%) includes sectors such as: Pharmaceutical, Personal Care, Chemical & Other Material Production, Telecommunications and Tobacco.



³ Certification Reports are found here: a4ws.org/certification/certified-sites

⁴ For 2022 reporting purposes, due to the ongoing conflict and international sanctions against Russia, all AWS conformity assessment activities in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus are suspended until further notice, effective from 25 March 2022. This has reduced the total number of Certified Sites.



Number of AWS Registered Sites⁵

Prior to certification, sites are required to register their intent to implement the AWS Standard and to seek certification. The number of registered sites tends to fluctuate as the status⁶ of registered sites change as they progress through the system to become certified, while at the same time more new sites are added to the total as they register online. This indicator gives AWS an idea of the demand pipeline for certification and helps us to plan effectively. As of the end of 2022, there was a total of 205 Registered Sites.



Number of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs)⁷

Water Stewardship Assurance Services (WSAS) is the appointed Assurance Provider for the AWS System. They provide auditing and certification services in line with requirements set by the AWS Technical Committee. After initial certification, WSAS monitors sites' progress through surveillance and re-certification auditing processes. As custodian of the AWS Standard, AWS has oversight of WSAS's performance to maintain the quality, integrity and credibility of the AWS Assurance System.

Number of AWS Members with timebound public commitments to AWS Certification

It is not a requirement for AWS Members' to make a timebound public commitment to the AWS Standard Certification, but this indicator collects and assesses the content and growth of commitments made by companies' own volition over the year. This indicator encompasses commitments by AWS Members to certify their own operations, as well as sites in their value chains.

Certification is at the heart of the AWS System, as it enables sites to make credible claims related to their AWS activity and allows us to better monitor and understand the impact of the AWS System. Therefore, timebound public commitments to certify a specific type or number of sites to the AWS Standard (rather than apply or align to the Standard) represent the greatest contribution to the system.

To improve system integrity, AWS recently updated its Claims Policy V2.0 (see a4ws.org/claims) to provide requirements that eligible organisations must comply with when using AWS Assets or Claims. This includes sharing evidence with AWS for review and approval.

Data collected and input into AWS's Salesforce database for this indicator during 2022 are currently under review to determine the extent to which the commitments identified comply with the new Claims Policy. Only those in conformance with the policy will be included. As such, data regarding timebound public commitments to AWS certification are not presented as part of this Performance Monitoring Report.

⁵ The list of registered sites is updated weekly on the AWS website: a4ws.org/certification/registered-sites

⁶ In the AWS System, sites can be Registered, 'Registered pending Audit', Certified, Suspended or Withdrawn.

⁷ Water Stewardship Assurance Services (WSAS) Limited is the sole Assurance Provider for the AWS System. All new sites seeking certification should contact directly <https://watersas.org>. As part of the transition to our new modernised assurance model, there remain six other AWS accredited CABs that provide Surveillance Audits only up until the end December 2024. For further information about certification see a4ws.org/certification

317

PROFESSIONALLY
CREDENTIALLED
INDIVIDUALS

Number of AWS Professionally Credentialed Individuals

The PC Programme provides a mechanism through which AWS trained individuals can continue to develop and enhance their AWS skills and experience and make claims related to their level of credential through marketing and communications.

As of the end of 2022, there were 317 Professionally Credentialed Individuals across all three levels of credential (Foundation, Advanced and Specialist).⁸ Together, these PC Individuals speak over 10 languages and are located across some 43 countries.

+44%

INDIVIDUALS TRAINED BY
AWS OVER 2021.

1,905

INDIVIDUALS TRAINED BY
AWS TO DATE.

Number of individuals trained by AWS

The AWS Training Programme offers four types of online training courses: Open Public, Tailored Training, Project-related training and On-Demand Training via the Tools Hub, all designed to equip organisations to implement the AWS Standard. Training is offered in up to seven languages with the added possibility of simultaneous translation.⁹

To ensure quality and continual improvement of the AWS Training Programme, the training curriculum is standardised across all types of trainings and is also regularly reviewed and updated. In addition, AWS Trainers undergo a system of 'Training the Trainer' before facilitating courses. Following each course, trainees are invited to anonymously evaluate the Trainers and course delivery and content.

During 2022, a total of 329 individuals took AWS Standard System Training. This represents a 44% increase over 2021. Trainees represent diverse roles from site managers, individuals from corporate sustainability teams, consultants and implementing partners, to NGO staff and auditors.

24%

INDIVIDUALS
IN THE PC PROGRAMME
IDENTIFIED AS FEMALE

Number of women active in Professional Credentialling Programme

The three strategic goals of the AWS Strategy are Influence, Inclusion and Impact. AWS aims to be inclusive and active in generating the widest possible participation while stimulating dialogue, encouraging action and generating evidence.

One way that we understand inclusion in the AWS System is by tracking the extent to which those identifying as females participate in the AWS Professional Credentialling (PC) Programme. In 2022, 75 individuals (24%) in the PC Programme identified as female. Although this number may appear relatively low, note these data are self-reported and voluntary, and 50% of PC Individuals chose not to disclose their gender when completing their profile.

⁸ Our directory of AWS Professional Credentialed Individuals is found at: a4ws.org/training/professional-credentialing-directory

⁹ For more information on the AWS Training Programme see: a4ws.org/training

Countries where AWS Certified Site are located

The AWS Standard is a globally applicable framework for credible water stewardship that can be implemented in any sector, in any country and in any catchment around the world.

As of the end of 2022, AWS Certified Sites were located in a total of 54 different countries¹⁰, an increase of three countries over 2021. The presence of Certified Sites in these countries demonstrates that AWS has taken concrete steps to embed water stewardship in some of the most water-stressed locations around the world that are critical for production and sourcing hubs. This progress also demonstrates the relevance and applicability of the AWS Standard as a universal framework to drive contextually appropriate actions on water stewardship across the globe.

AWS
CERTIFIED
SITES ACROSS
54
COUNTRIES

3,176
STANDARD
DOWNLOADS

Number of AWS Standard Downloads

The AWS Standard is a framework that helps major water using businesses understand their water use and impacts and to develop and implement water strategies that can then be audited and certified by an independent third-party. In 2022, the AWS Standard was downloaded 3,176 times, which places the total number of downloads for all time at 10,421 (up to 31 Dec 2022).

The majority of individuals downloading the Standard are doing so for the purpose of implementation and certification (53%), either in-house or supporting others. Use of the Standard for research (41%) also remains a significant source of interest, which will provide new insight into outputs and impacts of the Standard and hence continual improvement of the Standard System.

AWS COMMUNICATIONS

As AWS continues to grow, so do our efforts to communicate about AWS and water stewardship, and to build a community of practice. In 2022, we continued to build our online community on LinkedIn. Over the course of the year, our LinkedIn channel gained 2,190 followers and our posts earned over 127K impressions.

In addition, AWS was mentioned in over 600 articles from conventional global media such as Business Wire, Bustle and Economic Times, among many others.

Name of catchment where AWS Certified Site is located

Defining the scale of a catchment at which the AWS Standard is applied, and being able to determine consistently when sites are located within the same catchment, is fundamental for AWS to be able to carry out effective M&E to better understand and demonstrate the impact of its work.

There is currently no one internationally agreed standard convention on catchment naming, which poses challenges. To improve system integrity, AWS is in the process of working with the AWS Technical Committee to develop a more detailed standard protocol for defining catchments at the appropriate scale for AWS Standard implementation and certification.

During this process, AWS continues to collect and hold preliminary catchment data in AWS's Salesforce database. AWS also collects the M&E Indicator on GPS Coordinates for all sites that, in the future, will be used for mapping and may be combined with polygon data to provide a more accurate indication of the proximity of AWS Certified Sites and identification of the catchment within which they are located.

¹⁰ Although a similar number of countries was reported in 2020, there have been changes not only as new countries are added to the list. As a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and Ukraine do not appear in this dataset.

Continuous Improvement & Impact

Consolidation & Growth

The year 2022 was a period of consolidation and growth. There was a focus on completing the implementation of changes to the organisational structure made in 2021, including the first full year of WSAS operations. Despite these changes and the continued economic impact of COVID-19, the demand for certification continued to increase. Between 2021 and 2022, there was a 20% increase in the number of AWS Certified Sites. This demonstrates how AWS's commitment to continual learning, improvement and leadership enables us to provide greater value to our members and users, in pursuit of our mission.

AWS Impact Accelerator

In 2022, AWS took concrete steps to further embed water stewardship practices in some of the most water-stressed locations around the world. The focus of AWS is to concentrate resources to accelerate positive action in highly stressed locations that are critical for production and sourcing hubs. For example, AWS began its first Impact Accelerator programme¹¹ in Bangladesh, where 30 suppliers nominated and supported by H&M Group and Primark began to take steps to implement the AWS Standard.

Prioritising Knowledge & Learning

The AWS Strategy 2022-2030 prioritises, among other activities, a continually improving knowledge and evidence base for stewardship in value chain hubs. The

44% increase in number of individuals receiving AWS Standard System Training is a key part of enabling the fulfilment of this strategy. The knowledge and learning created from the implementation of the AWS Standard in value chain hubs drives new commitments to support positive outcomes and impacts in these catchments.

The AWS Research Agenda, developed during 2022 and launched in early 2023, will also contribute towards developing an evidence base by guiding and focusing research about the AWS System. Importantly, this work also included the identification of unintended outcomes of our system.

AWS wrapped up a two-year ISEAL Innovations Fund project on Boosting Sustainability Practice & Performance at Landscape Level through Good Water Stewardship, supported by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO.

Our intention continues to be to foster collaboration among AWS Members, researchers, investors, funders, industry peers and other stakeholders interested in understanding the impacts of the AWS System. To learn more, get in touch with lisabunclark@a4ws.org.

Plans For 2023

- **Building further research partnerships** – AWS will continue to build partnerships with the research community to explore effective ways to deliver on the AWS Research Agenda. AWS's participation in the GOVAQUA research initiative is a key example of this type of partnership (see a4ws.org/govaqua).

- **Commissioning an impact evaluation** – We will commission the first independent impact evaluation of the AWS Standard System across a sample of certified sites to better understand and evaluate the impacts of our System.
- **Improvement and growth of the AWS Training Programme** – A range of new training products will be launched to enable AWS to deliver a broader training offering to a larger number of trainees and further strengthen quality assurance.
- **Mapping** – AWS will continue working with partners to advance and deliver on the geospatial mapping of AWS Certified and Registered Sites.
- **Real-time reporting** – A refreshed AWS website with capacity for real-time reporting on key AWS Performance Monitoring Indicators will be launched in Q4 2023.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact: Dr Lisa Bunclark, Knowledge & Learning Coordinator, Alliance for Water Stewardship

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Download all AWS Publications here
a4ws.org/resources

¹¹ The Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) Impact Accelerator is a collaborative, place-based approach to water stewardship that brings multiple sites together to implement the AWS Standard at the same time helping to share costs, create peer support and maximise impact. For more information see a4ws.org/impact-accelerator

Alliance for Water Stewardship SCIO is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation incorporated in Scotland with Scottish charity number SCO45894.

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