

Ports, harbours and fish markets - handling undersize fish under the landing obligation

Fishermen will have to land undersize fish of quota species under the Landing Obligation rules. This guidance sets out how those fish should be stored and handled, and what uses it can be put to.

Are undersize fish waste?

No, undersize fish do not have to go to landfill. Undersize fish can still be sold for profit or given away (e.g. for bait). The only rule is that they must not be used for direct human consumption.

You must not dump fish, this is an offence under the [Environmental Protection Act 1990](#).

What can undersize fish be used for?

Undersize fish must not be sold for direct human consumption but can be sent for other uses. Fishermen can still make some money from this fish, although not as much as for food fish. If fish are handled well and according to food hygiene rules, then that increases the number of markets they can be sent to and maximises its value.

There may be additional rules depending on the exact market the fish is being directed to - for example there are specific rules for how raw material should be handled for fish meal and feed.

Non-direct human consumption uses

Non-direct human consumption is where the fish is processed in particular ways before re-entering the human food chain. Undersize fish being sent to these markets should be handled according to food hygiene legislation.

At the moment these non-direct human consumption uses are as follows (this list could change in future following discussions with the European Commission):

- food additives
- extracts of fish proteins
- fish oil (for human consumption)

Non-human consumption uses

Non-human consumption uses do not enter the human food chain at all. Animal By-Products (ABP) rules apply. ABP rules apply from the moment that the decision is made to send fish for non-human consumption. If you decide to provide a storage or handling facility from which fish will only be directed to non-human consumption uses then you will need to apply for ABP approval.

You can find out more about how ABP rules apply to undersize fish here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/guidance-for-the-animal-by-product-industry>

These uses include:

- fish meal
- fish oil (that will not go for human consumption)
- pot bait
- pet food
- fertiliser
- feed additives
- pharmaceuticals
- cosmetics
- composting
- rendering
- anaerobic and aerobic digestion/energy recovery
- incineration
- silage

The Seafish report on commercial [bulk uses](#) contains more practical information on non-human consumption uses. The Seafish report on the use of [discards in bait](#) has more information on the potential for undersize fish to be used as bait.

What fishermen need to know

Fishermen are responsible for the undersize fish until they are sold to another owner. They should handle catches of undersize fish according to food hygiene rules on board the vessel and when they land them. If it is decided to send the undersize fish for non-human consumption uses, Animal By-Products (ABP) rules apply from the moment that decision is made. ABP fish should be stored in an ABP-approved facility and transported on ABP registered transport.

It is worth talking to ports and other businesses in the area to see what processes can be accessed to handle undersize fish.

What ports, markets, agents and other businesses handling fish need to know

It would be helpful for ports, markets, agents and other businesses to think through the role they can play in managing undersize fish.

A one-size-fits-all approach will not be possible across England as different areas will have different challenges in managing the fish due to their diverse fisheries and available infrastructure. Ideally the fishing industry will want to work together to see what can practically work in their area. Ports, markets and other businesses may want to set up new processes or amend existing ones e.g. processors might want to expand their existing collection networks to include additional ports.

Who takes responsibility?

A cross-industry approach is needed. Different parts of the industry might want to collaborate to deliver a solution that works in a local area. There is no statutory obligation on ports to handle undersize fish, but you might want to set up facilities that will help your local fishermen.

In some areas other businesses might have more of a natural role than ports. For example, if one agent collects all the catch landed at a port, the agent will likely have more relevant expertise or access to infrastructure such as transport networks.

Producer Organisations should plan for dealing with undersize fish in their production and marketing plans. You will likely have contacts and expertise that can help members to direct undersize fish to appropriate routes.

If a port or other business does set up a communal facility (where fishermen can deposit fish until it is collected by a processor) then responsibility for the fish is transferred to the owner of the facility until it is collected by a buyer.

Practical ways of managing undersize fish

Some ideas for setting up or amending cross-industry processes for handling undersize fish are outlined below:

- Storage/refrigerated facility where fishermen can place undersize fish until it is collected by buyers.
- Communal collection facility to 'bulk up' fish and arrange for collection by one processor regularly, for example for fishmeal.
- Micro-digestion unit placed at or near port that produces energy from the undersize fish.
- Hub collection networks where one large port arranges for undersize fish to be collected from smaller ports in the area. The fish is then transported to a processor from the large port.
- Expanding existing collection networks. For example, a processor collecting from a number of ports already may want to expand this to include additional ports near the route.
- Using existing chains for the processing of food fish. There may be current food fish processors near a port that already direct their processing remnants to other uses. Undersize fish could be collected and incorporated into these existing chains.

- Expanding or setting up new pot-bait exchange schemes. Ports where there are suitable ratios of potting vessels to fin fish vessels may want to encourage vessel-to-vessel exchanges.
- Larger ports may want to help smaller ports with skills that may be relevant to managing undersize fish e.g. cargo management.

Contact

If you have any queries specifically on animal byproduct regulations or registration requirements, please contact the Animal Plant and Health Agency (APHA) on: 0300 020 0301 (England), or, 0300 303 8268 (Wales).

If you have questions on any other topic, please contact your local fisheries administration. A list of Marine Management Organisation (MMO) offices are available [here](#).