



Marine
Management
Organisation

Fishing and exporting seafood products from 1 January 2021

Support for commercial
fishers, merchants and
exporters

Updated 14/01/20



...ambitious for our seas and coasts

The UK has reached an agreement with the EU on its future relationship.

This quick guide signposts to the guidance and help available for all aspects of commercial fishing, exporting/importing seafood or direct landing catch, and to the rules that will apply from **11pm on 31 December 2020**, for fishing or seafood exporting businesses based in England.

You can learn more about the new processes and sign up to get the latest updates on fisheries at <https://www.gov.uk/transition>.

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Commercial fishing licences in UK, EU or other waters

There will be no change to the rights and responsibilities of UK-registered vessels fishing in UK waters. All vessel owners must continue to comply with the law and the conditions of their licence, including existing reporting requirements (such as logbooks), [the economic link criteria](#) and [discard policy](#).

The MMO sent vessel licence holders in England an amended licence to fish in UK waters on 31 December 2020. More information is available on [fishing vessel licence variations](#), current [catch limits for over-10m non sector pool](#) and for the [10m and under pool](#).

From 1 January, UK and EU vessels must not fish in each other's waters without a licence.

The new [Single Issuing Authority](#) (SIA) for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will initially issue licences to eligible UK vessels to fish in EU waters and eligible non-UK eligible vessels to fish in UK waters in the respective 12 - 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zones of either party.

Licensing of UK vessels and non-UK vessels to fish in each other's 6 – 12 nautical mile zones will be issued later, when the eligibility criteria has been confirmed and assured.

The SIA will also issue licences for fishing in Norwegian and Faroes waters, as and when negotiations are complete, as happens every year.

UK licence holders will be emailed directly by the UK SIA with their external waters licence when it is issued and a list of licensed UK vessels will also be available on the UK SIA website.

To make sure you have the appropriate licence, you should:

- Ensure your vessel is registered with the [UK Ship Register](#)
- Apply for an IMO number (if your vessel is over 12 metres overall length) - download the [IMO registration form](#)
- Ensure the Single Issuing Authority has your email address: contact uksia@marinemanagement.org.uk with details of your vessel
- [Apply for a licence if you don't already have one. \(For advice on how to transfer a licence click here\)](#)

Recording your catch and sales

- Vessels under 10m – record on the catch app in accordance with your licence condition
- Vessels 10-12m – submit paper logbooks and landing declarations within 48 hours; if completing an electronic logbook, submission must be in line with the requirements for vessels over 12m
- Vessels over 12m – submit electronic logbooks prior to landing, and landing declarations within 24 hours of landing
- Sales notes must arrive within 24 hours of first sale via the Electronic Reporting System or within 48 hours if submitting by post

For more information [click here](#). Logbooks, landing declarations and sales notes are vital to the future of our fish and seafood industry. The data they provide about what fish is being taken out of the sea, where and when, is the evidence the MMO and government uses to make its decisions and fight the industry's cause – on quotas, negotiations, closures, environmental legislation, funding and grants, port developments, export approval and more.

Landing your catch in the UK

Any UK-registered, licensed vessel can land catch in any port in the UK. Fishing is well regulated in the UK to protect sustainable fish stocks and prevent Illegal, Unreported or Unregulated (IUU) fishing. The MMO's [Compliance and Enforcement Strategy](#) sets out how the MMO enforces the rules for fishing in English waters. If fish is being exported, it will require catch certificates and other documentation. [See this link for further information.](#)

Selling catch by auction in the UK

Fish auction sites must be registered as a [buyer or seller of first-sale fish](#).

Sales notes must be [submitted](#) by the legal deadline. They must arrive within 24 hours of sale for larger businesses and others using the Electronic Reporting System (ERS), or for smaller businesses (with a turnover of less than £200k) that can use paper sales notes, 48 hours by post. Anyone who buys fish direct from a fishing boat needs to be registered as a buyer, other than members of the public who can buy up to a maximum of 30kg for their own consumption.

Landing your catch in the EU

From 1 January 2021 UK registered vessels will be able to land fish into EU ports that are designated under the [North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission](#) (NEAFC) regulations. You will need to register your vessel with NEAFC's [Port State Control System](#). Fresh fish can be landed into any [NEAFC designated port](#). If you are the Captain or Skipper of a factory or freezer vessel that is an approved food establishment, you will need to land into a [Border Control Post \(BCP\)](#) that can handle your type of product - check your trade route in advance and find out who the [relevant EU 'competent authority'](#) is.

Before landing, you must submit a [prior notification](#) to the EU Competent Authority up to 4 hours ahead for fresh fish and up to 72 hours ahead for frozen fish. And you need to submit a [pre-landing declaration](#) at least 4 hours ahead.

You need to complete a [UK catch certificate](#) for the catch you intend to land.

Local Authority approved freezer, reefer or factory vessels that land frozen or processed fish directly into the EU will require a [Captain's Certificate](#) signed by the Captain who is authorised by APHA (Animal and Plant Health Agency) or DAERA (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs). This does not apply to fresh fish.

You need to register to make your [HMRC customs export declarations and VAT declarations](#). Check the link and see the section on customs below for more information on procedures required.

See the [MMO's handy checklist](#) for landing fish and fishery products in the EU from 1 January 2021.

Landing your catch in Northern Ireland

New rules apply to GB vessels landing catch in Northern Ireland and catch certificates and other documentation will be required. Please see this link [for further guidance](#).

Food Labelling

Food producers, manufacturers, retailers and suppliers must change food labels from 1 January 2021. You should check with your EU importer how the EU's labelling requirements will affect your products. [More information is available here](#).

Exporting your catch or fishery products to the EU and Northern Ireland

- Specialist advisors are on hand 24/7 to assist with the Fish Export Service – call **0330 159 1989**
- The updated [GB-EU Border Operating Model](#) provides details of the specific requirements for exporting fish and shellfish on [page 204](#).
- See our handy [process map for export](#)
- You risk your fish being delayed or rejected when they reach the EU if you do not have the right documents or go through the wrong [Border Control Post \(BCP\)](#).

Steps you must take to export fish and seafood products:

1. Register with the Fish Export Service for [catch certificates](#) needed for all consignments.
2. Register for [Export Health Certificates \(EHCs\)](#)
3. Exporters can [get EHCs](#) on-line. Factory / freezer trawlers need to apply for the ability to issue a Captain's Certificate (EHCs are not needed for fresh fish landings)
4. Retain a 'certifying officer' to help you certify your [Export Health Certificates \(EHC\)](#)
5. Apply for a [UK EORI number](#)
6. Apply for an IMO number (if your vessel is over 12 metres overall length) - [download the IMO registration form](#)
7. Vessel owners should contact their local authority to comply with [food hygiene requirements](#)
8. Register for the [Trade Control and Export System \(TRACES\)](#) and part complete a Common Health Entry Document
9. Export via [EU approved premises](#)
10. Comply with [EU food labelling requirements](#)
11. Register to make your [HMRC customs export declarations and VAT declarations](#).
12. For endangered species you need a [CITES export permit](#)

Transporting fish or fish products

- Guidance on how to [transport fish and fish products](#).
- [Haulier driving requirements](#) for driving in the EU
- HGVs carrying exclusively fresh and live seafood will be prioritised in the case of severe disruption at the port of Dover or Eurotunnel. [Here's the GOV.UK guidance](#).

Storage and Processing

You will need UK [storage documents](#) and UK [processing documents](#) for fish and shellfish that have been imported or landed directly into the UK for processing, or stored, ready for export.

You'll need separate documents for each export and for each processing plant.

Importing from the EU into the UK

Importers have been given extra time to make [the necessary arrangements](#). From 1 January, most imports of marine caught fish and some shellfish will need to be accompanied by a catch certificate from the originating country along with other relevant documents.

From April 2021, [Export Health Certificates \(EHCs\)](#) will be needed along with new pre-notification requirements and from July, commodities subject to sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) controls must arrive at an [established Border Control Post \(BCP\)](#). Further details of the import requirements for seafood are on pages 61, 94 and 123 of the [Border Operating Model](#).

Designated ports for imports

The UK has confirmed its list of designated ports with the European Commission, via the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), The list of [designated ports is available](#) via this link.

Moving goods into, out of, or through Northern Ireland

More information on processes required to move fish or seafood products into, through or out of Northern Ireland is [available at this link](#).

You can get advice from the new [Movement Assistance Scheme \(MAS\)](#) helpline on moving agri-food goods from Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) to Northern Ireland and can claim money back if you provide an inspection and certification service.

Telephone: 0330 0416 580 Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm on weekdays (excluding bank holidays)

Fishing Quotas

The UK government has announced that provisional catch limits for fishermen in the UK will be set to ensure fishing continues uninterrupted until annual fisheries negotiations with the EU, Norway and Faroe Islands conclude. You can read the [press notice](#) and visit [the website](#) for more information.

Funding and grants available

The MMO has closed the fast-track grants scheme to new applications after fully committing its remaining funding and is now working with applicants to award grants as quickly as possible.

Managing customs and VAT declarations

You can register now and get help to make your [HMRC customs export declarations and VAT declarations](#). Check this website for details of processes required.

The customs export rules apply to:

- Exports to the EU of fish caught by GB-flagged fishing vessel in UK waters
- Exports to the EU of fish imported from another country that have been stored or processed in the UK
- Direct landings in [EU ports](#) by a GB-flagged fishing vessel
- Direct landings by EU registered vessels fishing in UK waters if they wish to land in an EU port
- You do not require a GB export declaration for fish caught by GB vessels in international waters landed directly in EU waters

For further guidance on this issue, please see the HMRC newsletter [here](#). There is also the New Computerised Transit System (NCTS) [webpage](#) and a help line available at 0300 322 7095 Mon-Fri 8am-5pm.

If you continue to experience issues with customs transit, email Defra on FishTrade@defra.gov.uk

Control and enforcement

Most existing rules have been retained in new UK law and remain in place from 1 January 2021.

Fishing vessels will be required to fish in accordance with the conditions of their licences from 11pm on 31 December 2020. Fishing without a licence is illegal.

All vessels are entitled to 'innocent passage' through other territorial waters under UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea).

The MMO will continue to monitor England's seas for Illegal, Unreported or Unrecorded (IUU) fishing to assure the sustainability of our seas and support our fishing industry.

UK fishers will need to continue to comply with their licence conditions and ensure that records such as landing declarations, logbooks and sales notes, all of which are legal requirements, are submitted correctly and on time.

Knowing the limits

In compliance with the UK's obligations under UNCLOS and SOLAS (Safety of Life at Sea), the UK's territorial sea limit, Exclusive Economic Zone, international maritime boundaries and 6 and 12 nautical mile fish limits can be found on the UK Hydrographic Office's ADMIRALTY Standard Nautical Charts and Electronic Navigational Charts. These can be obtained from an international network of ADMIRALTY Chart Agents. You can find a list of these agents and their locations [here](#).

For illustrative purposes, diagrams and shape files (digital data files) are available on the [UKHO's ADMIRALTY Marine Data Portal](#).

Welfare and wellbeing organisations providing support

- [Fishermen's Mission](#) - Offering emergency financial support for the maintenance of the basics of life, and providing pastoral care.
- [Seafarers' Advice and Information Line \(SAIL\)](#) - Part of Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) offering specialised advice for fishers, including independent, financial advice on benefit entitlement, HMRC issues, debt, charity grants and housing.
- [Seafarers' Hospital Society](#) - Offering health, welfare and advice to merchant seafarers and fishers' families
- [Seafarer Support](#) - Guides serving and former UK seafarers and their families towards relevant help in times of need.

Further information and help

- **Fish Export Service** – 0330 1591989 (operating 24/7)
- **Fisheries in England** – MMO Email: info@marinemanagement.org.uk
Phone: 0300 1231032
- **Fisheries in Scotland** – Email: marinescotland@gov.scot
Phone: 0300 2444000
- **Fisheries in Wales** – Email: milfordhavenfisheriesoffice@gov.wales
Phone: 03000 253 500
- **Fisheries in Northern Ireland** - Email: marine.inforequests@daera-ni.gov.uk
Phone: 028 90569262
- **APHA** – Email: fish.exports@apha.gov.uk
- **HMRC Customs** and International Trade Helpline: 0300 3003700
- **MMO local offices**: for local contacts [click here](#).

You told us... we did... [Updated 13/01/21]

We very much appreciate your feedback – as in the examples below **it helps us to help you**.

- When we were told the system may not have contained all the commodity codes needed, we checked almost 2,000 codes. Of these, 30 were amended, three were added and one was removed.
- UK exporters told us that some Member State ports were requesting catch certificates for seafood products that are exempt for these requirements, including Skate Wings, Whelks and Sea Snails. They also mentioned that there were issues with ports accepting the QR code on the catch certificate. The IUU team proactively engaged with the European Commission on this and other issues. As a result, the Commission will now engage with the relevant Member States to confirm that catch certificates are not required for these products and the QR code is to be accepted.
- Thanks to feedback from one fishing business we were able to ensure the prior notification form complied with Dutch authorities' requirements.
- You asked if we could create more space to for multiple entries of landings on to each catch certificate. We have increased the number of landings from 10 to 100 landings on any one catch certificate – to record more landings, you can start a new certificate.
- In response to a query about unpowered vessels being able to apply for catch certificates, we have set up a manual override process for vessels that are not on the list, supported by our contact centre.
- We were asked about wood pallet standards for export, which resulted in new guidance on [gov.uk](#) confirming that wood packaging must meet ISPM15 international standards. [More information is available here](#).

FAQs on the Fish Export Service

- 1 Is it correct that fresh fish direct landed into the EU don't need Export Health Certificates (EHCs)?** That's correct, but they do need a catch certificate. If the fish has undergone some form of secondary processing aboard a vessel approved for such purposes, then it will also require a Captain's Certificate.
- 2 If I'm starting from the Republic of Ireland do I need a catch certificate?** If you're exporting fish caught by a UK flagged vessel into the EU, you need UK catch certificates. If the product has been landed direct or transported into the Republic of Ireland which is in the EU, or into Northern Ireland, it requires UK catch certificates.
- 3 If I'm landing catch direct into the EU for sale to an auction who is classed as the importer?** As the exporter, you need to refer to the competent authority for the country you are exporting to. Before you export, as [our process map on this link shows](#), you need to check that you and/or your importer in the EU is registered for the Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES) so it's important to contact your auction, agent or buyer in the EU in advance.
- 4 How do you get a Captain registered with APHA? Does it have to be the captain when another officer, like the production manager, might be better?** You'll need a Captain's Certificate signed by the Captain or someone who is authorised by APHA (Animal and Plant Health Agency) or DAERA (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs) when direct landing fish into the EU. You can [get more information here](#) at this link.
- 5 When can we expect new UK fishing vessel licences? Please see above licencing section**
- 6 Can the Fish Export System save 'favourites' such as species and vessels, so it makes applying for a catch certificate quicker and easier each time?** The team will investigate this possible improvement.
- 7 Could there be a central database for registered vessels who have a certified veterinary inspector so that fish auctions and merchants would know which vessels are already registered?** This is a question about EHCs, which are not within MMO's remit, but we are aware that local authorities hold their own lists of registered vets.
- 8 Our company buys live shellfish from wholesalers (not from fishers) - who should provide the catch certificates, the wholesaler or our company who exports to France?** The exporter needs to apply for catch certificates as they are responsible for the export.
- 9 Is it correct that from 1 January, all wooden pallets used for export to the EU must be ISPM 15 compliant?** There is [information in this link](#).
- 10 What measures are required for UK vessels that finish fishing at the end of 2020, tie-up in a foreign port and then need to transit back to UK after 1 January?**
All vessels need to ensure they have the appropriate licence to fish in EU or other external waters. If not, all gear should be lashed and stowed when transiting.