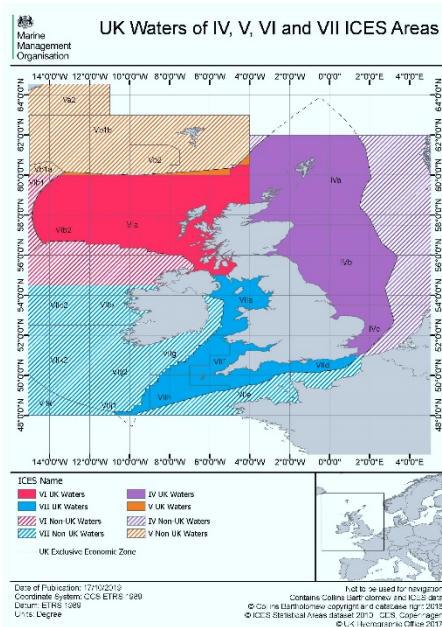




Fishing gear requirements and Landing Obligation exemptions 2021

Applicable to Pelagic gears in UK waters of the North Sea and North Western Waters



Introduction

This document needs to be read in conjunction with the Landing Obligation overview guidance document which explains the general rules. This document provides guidance on the Landing Obligation rules in UK waters for both the North Sea (ICES Area IV) and North Western Waters (ICES Areas V, VI and VII).



Gear selectivity requirements

- A minimum mesh size of at least 16mm from pelagic trawls in all areas targeting pelagic species.
- A smaller mesh size is permitted for the Sandeel fishery

UK Landing Obligation exemptions

The Landing Obligation applies to all quota species (both pelagic and demersal) in pelagic fisheries. The Landing Obligation does not apply to species for which there are exemptions and species that are prohibited to retain and land.

You must ensure that the following rules are complied with:

- All catches of quota species must be kept on board, landed and counted against quota, except where the exemptions listed below apply.
- All catches and discards must be recorded in your logbook.
- Any fish returned to the sea under the exemptions described below must be kept in good condition in order to maximise their survival chances. This includes keeping them wet, handling them carefully and releasing them promptly.

The exempted species are listed in the sections of this document entitled 'Survival Exemptions' and 'De minimis Exemptions'.

The fish species that you are prohibited to retain and land are listed in the current Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and Quota Regulations.

Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) is one of the prohibited species. Should an Atlantic Bluefin Tuna be caught as accidental by-catch, and it is still alive, it must be returned to the sea immediately without it being harmed in any way. Should it be dead, it must be reported to the MMO (local office) and landed whole and unprocessed. It may not be sold but can be used for scientific research should this be approved by the MMO. Further information may be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/bluefin-tuna-in-uk-waters>



Survival Exemption

This type of exemption for pelagic vessels applies to purse seine fisheries. These exemptions also apply to ring net fishing.

These exemptions allow you to discard fish under certain conditions based on the likelihood of a fish being able to survive being caught and returned to the sea.

Herring and Mackerel - You are permitted to discard herring and mackerel provided you comply with the conditions specified in the list below:

- the purse seine gear must be fitted with visible buoys clearly marking the limit for point of retrieval
- the catch must be released before a certain percentage of the purse seine is closed or the point of retrieval:
 - the point of retrieval is 80% closed for mackerel and 90% closed for herring.
for schools which are a mixture of both mackerel and herring the point of retrieval is 80%
- after the point of retrieval it is prohibited to release the catch of herring and mackerel
- the surrounded school of fish must be sampled before release to estimate the species composition, fish size composition and the quantity
- quantities of fish released and results of the sampling must be reported in the logbook

De Minimis Exemption

These exemptions are given where it would be inappropriate to have to land these fish because of the difficulty in avoiding catching a particular species of fish and in handling it once it's been caught.

The *De minimis* exemptions are taken into account when setting quota limits. The total amount of discarding is limited to a proportion of total catch - which the fisheries administration will monitor.

You are permitted to discard certain species of fish provided you comply with the conditions specified in the table below: **(All conditions listed below must be met):**

Fish Species you can Discard	UK ICES Area	Conditions
Albacore Tuna (ALB)	VII	Vessels using midwater pair trawls only
Blue Whiting (WHB)	Vb, VI and VII	Vessel is an industrial pelagic trawler and where Blue Whiting is being



		processed on board vessel for a surimi base
Mackerel (MAC), Horse Mackerel (JAX), Herring (HER) and Whiting (WHG)	VIIId, IVb and IVc south of 54°N	Vessels of 25m in length or less, using mid-water trawls (including pair trawlers)