

Statutory guidance

# New Technical Measures background

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The technical measures for the fishing industry mean that the key objectives are to:

- align technical measures to the landing obligation rules
- minimise unwanted catches of juveniles and vulnerable species
- introduce and extend the use of highly selective gears and minimise impacts on the wider ecosystem
- play a role in developing and fine-tuning regional technical measures

Baseline mesh sizes apply in the North Sea and North Western Waters for nets and trawls. Smaller mesh fisheries are allowed provided the by-catch of gadoid species such as cod and haddock are caught in low quantities (less than 20%). These smaller mesh fisheries are more loosely defined and do not have specific and complicated catch composition requirements. The previous catch composition rules were a blunt tool which required discarding of excess non-target species which is no longer compatible with the landing obligation (discard ban). The new rules introduce more focus on regional gear measures to allow the escape of certain species (mainly gadoids) and juvenile fish.

The regulation allows for further rules that are best suited to specific regional fisheries. These could include aspects such as twine thickness or new selectivity designs. Some of these have already come into play via the 'discard plans', for example new technical provisions in the Celtic and Irish Seas.

The technical rules are therefore spread across a number of regulations. In order to provide clarity the MMO has produced guidance which draws these rules together. We will test the format of the guidance with MMO staff and the industry to ensure it is easy to follow. Inevitably there are areas where the rules (being less prescriptive) are subject to a degree of interpretation. The guidance takes this into account.

Some rules remain the same as before (albeit recently amended for compatibility with the landing obligation), for example:

- Beam trawl area (12nm) and area/engine power restrictions.
- Some area restrictions such as the mackerel box.
- North Sea and Hake technical provisions.
- Minimum sizes applicable to sale for human consumption.

The main difference with the new regulation relates to catch composition. With the exception of exemptions (legislated through the discard plans), all quota species

must be landed and counted against quota regardless of the gear in use. Generally, derogations that allow mesh sizes smaller than the 'baseline' can only be used where the catch of gadoids (cod, haddock and saithe) caught, are less than 20% of the total catch over a full trip. Where the discard plans introduce gear requirements (as recently introduced for the Celtic Sea and Irish Sea) there are also derogations that require a minimum catch of target species or alternative maximum percentages of gadoids.

To regulate these rules it will be important to continue to monitor what is being caught with what gears (on inspected hauls and from landings data). Where there is evidence that too many gadoid species (or not enough target species if applicable) are being caught with mesh sizes smaller than the regional baseline appropriate and proportionate action will be taken to prevent this.

Some measures will be new to the fishing industry such as the introduction of square mesh panels in the East Channel. The MMO will be focusing on informing the industry of these new requirements and provide a reasonable period to make necessary adjustments before taking further action for non-compliance.