Fisheries Information Notice 09-2023

Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes (MCRS) for common species within the Irish EEZ

AN t-ÚDARÁS UM CHOSAINT IASCAIGH MHARA | SEA-FISHERIES PROTECTION AUTHORITY

The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority has issued Fisheries Information Notice entitled:
'Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes (MCRS) for common species within the Irish EEZ'

Legislative Basis

- Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy
- Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 404/2011 establishing a community control system ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy
- Council Regulation (EU) 2023/194 of 30 January 2023 fixing for 2023 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks, applicable in Union waters and, for Union fishing vessels, in certain non-Union waters, as well as fixing for 2023 and 2024 such fishing opportunities for certain deep-sea fish stocks.
- Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 on the conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures
- Regulation (EU) 1380/2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy
- SI No. 26 of 2019 Brown Crab (Conservation of Stocks) Regulations
- SI No. 289 of 2019 Crawfish (Conservation of stocks) Regulations
- SI No. 160 of 2018 Razor Clam (Conservation of Stocks) (North Irish Sea) Regulations
- SI No. 431 of 2017 Velvet Crab (Conservation of Stocks) Regulations
- SI No. 341 of 2016 Bass (Conservation of Stocks) Regulations 2016
- SI No. 591 of 2014 Lobster (Conservation of Stocks) Regulations
- SI No. 753 of 2007 Cockle (Fisheries Management and Conservation) (Waterford Estuary) Regulations 2007
- SI No. 531 of 2007 Cockle (Fisheries Management & Conservation) (Waterford Estuary) Regulations 2007
- SI No. 533 of 2007 Cockle (Fisheries Management and Conservation) (Tramore Bay) Regulations 2007
- SI No. 232 of 2006 Crawfish (Conservation of stocks) Regulations
- SI No. 233 of 2006 Crawfish (Fisheries Management & Conservation) Regulations
- SI No. 236 of 2006 Spider Crab (Conservation of Stocks)
- SI No. 237 of 2006 Whelk (Conservation of Stocks) Regulations
- Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora
- Bye Law No. 628 of 1982 Oysters (Minimum Size)
- FND No. 2 of 2023 (Dundalk Bay)

Glossary of Terms

Terms / Acronyms	Description
Irish Exclusive Economic Zone (Irish EEZ)	*'Exclusive Economic Zones'* are areas of internationally recognised rights to conduct certain activities on areas of the high seas. Irelands EEZ extends 200 nautical miles from the coast.
Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS)	*'Minimum conservation reference size'* means the size of a living marine aquatic species taking into account maturity, as established by Union law, below which restrictions or incentives apply that aim to avoid capture through fishing activity;
Landing Obligation	*The landing obligation* was brought into force to end the practice of discarding in EU fishing waters. Catch recording requirements demand all fish caught are recorded in the logbook this recording includes all retained and all discarded catch.
Landing Obligated Species	Any species subject to catch limits. *Landing obligated species* must be retained and recorded in the fishing logbook

Introduction

Minimum conservation reference sizes (MCRS) ensure the health of a fishery stock and allow the species to breed at least once before being removed from the sea. The purpose of applying MCRS is to:

- Ensure the health of a fishery stock by protecting juvenile marine species
- Establish fish stock recovery areas
- Constitute minimum marketing sizes

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Measuring MCRS Species

The size of marine species must be measured in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 - **Annex IV**

- Where more than one method of measuring the size of a marine species is provided for, the specimen shall not be considered to be below the minimum conservation reference size if the size measured by any one of those methods is equal to, or greater than, the minimum conservation reference size.
- Lobsters, crawfish and bivalve and gastropod molluscs belonging to any such species for which a minimum conservation reference size is established can only be retained on board whole and may only be landed whole.



Landing Obligation

Quota species that are below MCRS are subject the landing obligation and must be retained, recorded and landed.

- For species subject to the landing obligation the use of catches of species below the minimum conservation reference size shall be restricted to purposes other than direct human consumption.
- For species not subject to the landing obligation, catches of individuals below the minimum conservation reference size shall not be retained on board, but shall be returned immediately to the sea, except when they are used as live bait.



Recording Requirements for below MCRS catches

Below MCRS catches must be recorded separately from legal size catch in the:

- Vessel Logbook
- Landing Declaration
- Transport Document
- Sales Notes
- Other associated documentation



See the SFPA Landing Obligation Fisheries Information Notice and SFPA Guidance Video for further information in respect of the Landing Obligation.

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The table below outlines the MCRS for common species within the Irish Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

Species	Scientific Name	FAO Code	MCRS
FISH			
Anchovy	*Engraulis encrasicolus*	ANE	12 cm or 90 individuals per kg (1)
Sea Bass	*Dicentrarchus labrax*	BSS	42 cm
Blue Ling	*Molva dypterygia*	BLI	70 cm
Cod	*Gadus morhua*	COD	35 cm
Haddock	*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*	HAD	30 cm
Hake	*Merluccius merluccius*	HKE	27 cm
Herring	*Clupea harengus*	HER	20 cm (1)
Horse mackerel	*Trachurus trachurus*	HOM	15 cm (1)
Ling	*Molva molva*	LIN	63 cm
Mackerel	*Scomber scombrus*	MAC	20 cm (1)
Megrim	*Lepidorhombus spp.*	LEZ	20 cm
Plaice	*Pleuronectes platessa*	PLE	27 cm
Pollack	*Pollachius pollachius*	POL	30 cm
Saithe	*Pollachius virens*	POK	35 cm
Sardine	*Sardina pilchardus*	PIL	11 cm (1)
Sole	*Solea sole*	SOL	24 cm
Whiting	*Merlangius merlangus*	WHG	27 cm
MOLLUSCS			
Queen scallop	*Aequipecten opercularis*	QSC	40 mm
Razor clam	*Ensis spp.*	EQX	100 mm 125 mm - *North Irish Sea*
King Scallop	*Pecten maximus*	SCE	100 mm 110 mm - *VIIa North of 52°30'N and VIId*
Solid Surf clam	*Spisula solida*	ULO	25 mm
Whelk	*Buccinum undatum*	WHE	25 mm diameter *(at its broadest part)* 45 mm length
Grooved carpetshell	*Ruditapes decussatus*	CTG	40 mm
Octopus	*Octopus vulgaris*	OCC	750g
Cockles	*Cerastoderma edule*	COC	17mm - *Waterford Estuary, Tramore Bay & Dundalk Bay*
Native Oysters	*Ostrea edulis*	OYF	80mm – *Lough Foyle* 76mm – *Outside of Lough Foyle*

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CRUSTACEANS			
Crawfish (Crayfish)	*Palinurus spp.*	CRW	110mm
Edible/Brown crab	*Cancer pagurus*	CRE	140 mm
Lobster	*Homarus gammarus*	LBE	87 mm (max. 127mm)
Spider crab	*Maja squinado*	SCR	130 mm (Male) & 125mm (Female)
Norway lobster	*Nephrops norvegicus*	NEP	**6a & 7a**: Total length 70mm, Carapace 20mm, Tail 37mm **All other areas**: Total length 85 mm, Carapace 25 mm, Tail 46 mm
Velvet Crab	*Necora puber*	LIO	65 mm

(1) By way of derogation from Article 15 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, the minimum conservation reference sizes of sardine, anchovy, herring, horse mackerel and mackerel shall not apply within a limit of 10% by live weight of the total catches retained on board of each of those species. The percentage of sardine, anchovy, herring, horse mackerel or mackerel below the minimum conservation reference size shall be calculated as the proportion by live weight of all marine organisms on board after sorting or on landing. The percentage may be calculated on the basis of one or more representative samples. The limit of 10% shall not be exceeded during transhipment, landing, transportation, storage, display or sale.

This Fisheries Information Notice was published on the **26th September 2023**

Contact Details

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