



The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) has issued a Fisheries Information Notice entitled: 'Common Marketing Standards'.

Legislative Basis / Relevant Documentation:

- [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1224/2009 \(Control Regulation\)](#)
- [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) No 404/2011 \(laying down detailed rules for the Implementation of the Control Regulation\)](#)
- [Regulation \(EU\) No 1379/2013 \(Common Market Organisation Regulation\)](#)
- [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 2406/96 \(Common Marketing Standards Regulation\)](#)

Glossary of Terms

Below is a glossary of terms and acronyms used in this document.

Terms/ Acronyms	Description
Lot	A quantity of fisheries and aquaculture products of a given species of the same presentation, coming from the same relevant geographical area and the same fishing vessel, group of fishing vessels, or aquaculture production unit.
Marketing	The first offer for sale and/or the first sale, on Community territory, for human consumption.
Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS)	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; such size replaces, where relevant, the minimum landing size.
Minimum Marketing Size	The minimum size required for a species to be legally placed on the market. Where an MCRS is established for a species, this constitutes the minimum marketing size.

Introduction

Fishery products that are marketed must comply with common marketing standards. This Fisheries Information Notice (FIN) provides an overview of the common marketing standards established in European legislation. Operators that purchase, sell or transport lots of fisheries and aquaculture products must be able to prove compliance with these standards at all stages.



Lots

- All fisheries and aquaculture products must be placed into lots **prior** to the first sale.
- Lots may be merged or split after first sale, but only if they can be traced back to the catching vessel/harvesting information.
- Products from several fishing vessels may be grouped into a lot prior to the first sale by the producer organisation or registered buyer if:
 - The quantity per species is less than 30kg.
 - The products are from the same management area.
 - Records of the lot are retained for at least 3 years.

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Traceability

All fisheries and aquaculture products must be traceable at all stages, from catching or harvesting to retail stage. For further information on traceability requirements, please refer to the [FIN Traceability of Fishery Products](#).



Catches Below Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS)

- Fishery products which are below minimum conservation reference size (MCRS) must **not** be marketed for **direct** human consumption e.g., fish fillets.
- These products may instead be sold for indirect human consumption, such as fishmeal for aquaculture use, or as animal by-products (ABPs).¹



Minimum Marketing Size

Species that have no established MCRS but have a minimum marketing size² are listed below.

Species	Minimum Marketing Size
Albacore or long-finned tuna (<i>Thunnus alalunga</i>)	1.5 kg
Anglerfish (<i>Lophius</i> spp.)	500 g (gutted) 200 g (head removed)
Big-eye tuna (<i>Thunnus obesus</i>)	3.2 kg
Black scabbardfish (<i>Aphanopus carbo</i>)	500 g
Black seabream (<i>Spondyliosoma cantharus</i>)	180 g
Conger eel (<i>Conger conger</i>)	500 g
Cuttlefish (<i>Sepia officinalis</i> & <i>Rossia macrosoma</i>)	100 g
Dab (<i>Limanda limanda</i>)	130 g
Flounder (<i>Platichthys Flesus</i>)	200 g
Gurnard (<i>Trigla</i> spp.)	60 g
Lemon sole (<i>Microstomus kitt</i>)	180 g
Poor cod (<i>Trisopterus minutus</i>)	50 g
Pouting (<i>Trisopterus luscus</i>)	50 g
Redfish (<i>Sebastes</i> spp.)	350 g
Red mullet (<i>Mullus barbatus</i>)	40 g
Skate (<i>Raja</i> spp.)	300 g (whole) 500 g (wings)
Spotted dogfish (<i>Scyliorhinus</i> spp.)	500 g
Sprat (<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>)	4 g
Striped mullet (<i>Mullus surmuletus</i>)	40 g

¹ For further information on ABPs, please see the FIN [Food Business Operator Requirements for ABPs](#).

² Established in Council Regulation (EC) 2406/96.

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Size and Freshness Grading

- Certain species are subject to freshness and size grading (listed in Annex 1), and these species must be appropriately graded by the operator.
- Operators must grade products as *Extra*, *A* or *B* for freshness. Freshness ratings are detailed in Annex 2.

There are specific marketing standards for preserved tuna, bonito and sardines.^{3,4} For further information, please use the contact details below.

Marketing rules do not apply to small quantities of fisheries products which are sold directly to consumers and retailers by inshore fishers.

Contact Details

sfpafood&fisheriessupport@sfpai.ie

This FIN was published on 12/08/2024 and replaces FIN 10 of 2011 Common Marketing Standards.

³ Council Regulation (EEC) No 1536/92 of 9 June 1992 laying down common marketing standards for preserved tuna and bonito.

⁴ Council Regulation (EEC) No 2136/89 of 21 June 1989 laying down common marketing standards for preserved sardines and trade descriptions for preserved sardines and sardine-type products.

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Annex 1 - Species Subject to Size and Freshness Grading

- Albacore or longfinned tuna (*Thunnus alalunga*)
- Anchovy (*Engraulis* spp.)
- Anglerfish (*Lophius* spp.)
- Bigeye tuna (*Thunnus* or *Parathunnus obesus*)
- Black sea bream (*Spondyliosoma cantharus*)
- Blue whiting (*Micromestistius poutassou* or *Gadus poutassou*)
- Bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*)
- Bogue (*Boops boops*)
- Cod of the species *Gadus morhua*
- Common flounder (*Platichthys flesus*)
- Common scallop (*Pecten maximus*)
- Common whelk (*Buccinum undatum*)
- Conger (*Conger conger*)
- Cuttlefish (*Sepia officinalis* and *Rossia macrosoma*)
- Dab (*Limanda limanda*)
- Dogfish (*Squalus acanthias* and *Scyliorhinus* spp.)
- Edible crabs (*Cancer pagurus*)
- Gurnard (*Trigla* spp.)
- Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*)
- Hake of the species *Merluccius merluccius*
- Herring of the species *Clupea harengus*
- Horse mackerel (*Trachurus* spp.)
- Lemon sole (*Microstomus kitt*)
- Ling (*Molva* spp.)
- Mackerel of the species *Scomber japonicus*
- Mackerel of the species *Scomber scombrus*
- Megrin (*Lepidorhombus* spp.)
- Mullet (*Mugil* spp.)
- Norway lobsters (*Nephrops norvegicus*)
- Picarel (*Maena smaris*)
- Plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*)
- Pollack (*Pollachius pollachius*)
- Poor cod/Mediterranean cod (*Trisopterus minutus*)
- Pouting (*Trisopterus luscus*)
- Ray's bream (*Brama* spp.)
- Redfish (*Sebastes* spp.)
- Saithe (*Pollachius virens*)
- Sardine of the species *Sardina pilchardus*
- Scabbardfish (*Lepidopus caudatus* and *Aphanopus carbo*)
- Shrimps (*Crangon crangon*) and pandalid shrimps (*Pandalus borealis*)
- Skate (*Raja* spp.)
- Sole (*Solea* spp.)
- Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*)
- Striped or red mullet (*Mullus barbatus*, *Mullus surmuletus*)
- Whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*)

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Annex 2 - Freshness Ratings

Group of products	Species
Whitefish	Haddock, cod, saithe, pollack, redfish, whiting, ling, hake, Ray's bream, anglerfish, pouting and poor cod, bogue, picarel, conger, gurnard, mullet, plaice, megrim, sole, dab, lemon sole, flounder, and scabbard fish
Bluefish	Albacore or longfinned tuna, bluefin tuna, bigeye tuna, blue whiting, herring, sardines, mackerel, horse mackerel, anchovy, and sprat
Selachii	Dogfish, skate
Cephalopods	Cuttlefish
Crustaceans	Shrimps, Norway lobster

Whitefish

	Extra	A	B	Not admitted (N/A)
Skin	Bright, iridescent pigment (save for redfish) or opalescent; no discolouration	Pigmentation bright but not lustrous	Pigmentation in the process of becoming discoloured and dull	Dull pigmentation ³
Skin mucus	Aqueous, transparent	Slightly cloudy	Milky	Yellowish grey, opaque mucus
Eye	Convex (bulging); black, bright pupil; transparent cornea	Convex and slightly sunken; black dull pupil; slightly opalescent cornea	Flat; opalescent cornea; opaque pupil	Concave in the centre; grey pupil; milky cornea ³
Gills	Bright colour; no mucus	Less coloured; transparent mucus	Brown/grey becoming discoloured; thick, opaque mucus	Yellowish; milky mucus ³
Peritoneum (in gutted fish)	Smooth; bright; difficult to detach from flesh	Slightly dull; can be detached from flesh	Speckled; comes away easily from flesh	Does not stick ³
Smell of gills and abdominal cavity (whitefish other than plaice)	Seaweed	No smell of seaweed; neutral smell	Fermented; slightly sour	Sour ³
Smell of gills and abdominal cavity (plaice)	Fresh oily; peppery; earthy smell	Oily; seaweed or slightly sweetish	Oily; fermented; stale, slightly rancid	Sour ³
Flesh	Firm and elastic; smooth surface (fresh fish prior to onset of rigor mortis will not be firm and elastic but will still be graded as Extra freshness)	Less elastic	Slightly soft (flaccid), less elastic; waxy (velvety) and dull surface	Soft (flaccid) ³ ; scales easily detached from skin, surface rather wrinkled
Extra criteria for headed anglerfish				
Blood vessels (ventral muscles)	Sharp outline and bright red	Sharp outline; darkening of the blood	Diffuse and brown	Totally ⁵ diffuse, brown and yellowing of the flesh

⁵ Or in a more advanced state of decay.

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Bluefish

	Extra	A	B	Not admitted (N/A)
Skin⁶	Bright pigmentation, bright, shining iridescent colours; clear distinction between dorsal and central surfaces	Loss of lustre and shine; duller colours; less difference between dorsal and ventral surfaces	Dull, lustreless, insipid colours; skin creased when fish curved	Very dull pigmentation; skin coming away from flesh ⁷
Skin mucus	Aqueous, transparent	Slightly cloudy	Milky	Yellowish grey, opaque mucus ⁵
Consistency of flesh⁴	Very firm, rigid	Fairly rigid, firm	Slightly soft	Soft (flaccid) ⁵
Gill covers	Silvery	Silvery, slightly red or brown	Brownish and extensive seepage of blood from vessels	Yellowish ⁵
Eye	Convex, bulging; blue-black bright pupil, transparent 'eyelid'	Convex and slightly sunken; dark pupil; slightly opalescent cornea	Flat; blurred pupil; blood seepage around the eye	Concave in the centre; grey pupil; milky cornea ⁵
Gills⁴	Uniformly dark red to purple. No mucus	Less bright colour, paler at edges. Transparent mucus	Becoming thick discoloured opaque mucus	Yellowish; milky mucus ⁵
Smell of gills	Fresh seaweed; pungent; iodine	No smell or seaweed. Neutral smell	Slightly sulphureous ⁸ fatty smell, rancid bacon cuttings or rotten fruit	Rotten sour ⁵

Selachii

	Extra	A	B	Not admitted (N/A)
Eye	Convex, very bright and iridescent; small pupils	Convex and slightly sunken; loss of brightness and iridescence, oval pupils	Flat, dull	Concave yellowish ⁵
Appearance	In rigor mortis or partially in rigor; small quantity of clear mucus present on skin	Beyond rigor stage; no mucus on skin and especially in mouth and gill openings	Some mucus in mouth and on gill openings; slightly flattened jaw	Large quantities of mucus in mouth and on gill openings ⁵
Smell	Seaweed smell	No smell or very slight stale but not an ammonia smell	Slight ammonia; sour	Pungent ammonia smell ⁵

⁶ For herring and mackerel preserved in cool seawater (either chilled by ice/ CSW or refrigerated by mechanical means/ RSW) complying with the hygiene requirements for such vessels, the criteria for freshness category A applies to both Extra and A categories.

⁷ Or in a more advanced state of decay.

⁸ Iced fish goes rancid before stale, CSW/RSW fish goes stale before becoming rancid.

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Specific or Additional Criteria for Skate

	Extra	A	B	Not admitted (N/A)
Skin	Bright, iridescent, and shiny pigmentation, aqueous mucus	Bright pigmentation, aqueous mucus	Pigmentation in the process of becoming discoloured and dull, opaque mucus	Discolouration, skin creased, thick mucus
Texture of the flesh	Firm and elastic	Firm	Soft	Flaccid
Aspect	Edge of the fins translucent and curved	Stiff fins	Soft	Drooping
Belly	White and shiny with a mauvish edge around the fins	White and shiny with red patches limited to around the fins	White and dull, with numerous red or yellow patches	Yellow to greenish bellies red patches in the flesh itself

Cephalopods

	Extra	A	B
Skin	Bright pigmentation, skin sticks to flesh	Dull pigmentation; skin sticks to flesh	Discoloured; easily detached from flesh
Flesh	Very firm; pearly white	Firm; chalky white	Slightly soft; pinky white or slightly yellowing
Tentacles	Resistant to removal	Resistant to removal	More easily removed
Smell	Fresh; seaweed	Slightly or no smell	Ink smell

Crustaceans

Shrimps

	Extra	A
Minimum requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surface of shell: moist and shiny Shrimps must fall out separately when transferred from one container to another Flesh must be free from any foreign odour Shrimps must be free from sand, mucus, and other foreign bodies 	The same as for Extra category
Appearance		
1. Shrimp with shell	Clear reddish-pink in colour with small white flecks; pectoral part of shell predominantly light in colour	Ranging in colour from slightly washed-out reddish-pink to bluish-red with white flecks; pectoral part of shell should be light coloured tending towards grey
2. Deep-water prawn	Uniformly pink	Pink with possibility of start of blackening of head
Condition of flesh during and after shelling	Shells easily with only technically unavoidable losses of flesh; firm but not tough	Shells less easily with small losses of flesh; less firm, slightly tough
Fragments	Occasional fragments of shrimp allowed	Small quantity of fragments of shrimp allowed
Smell	Fresh seaweed, slightly sweet smell	Acidulous; no smell of seaweed

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Norway Lobster

	Extra	A	B
Shell	Pale pink or pink to orange-red	Pale pink or pink to orange-red; no black spots	Slight discoloration; some black spots and greyish colour, particularly on shell and between tail segments
Eye and gills	Shiny black eyes; pink gills	Eyes dull and grey/black; gills greyish	Gills dark grey or some greenish colour on dorsal surface of shell
Smell	Characteristic mild shellfish smell	Loss of characteristic shellfish smell. No ammonia smell	Slightly sour
Flesh (tail)	Translucent and blue in colour tending towards white	No longer translucent but not discoloured	Opaque and dull in appearance

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