



The Sea Fisheries Protection Authority has issued Food Safety Information Notice entitled: **Reduced limits for Nitrate/Nitrite Additives in Processed Fish & Fishery Products**



### Legislative Basis / Relevant Documentation:

- **Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/2108** amending Annex II to Regulation (EC) No. 1333/2008 and the Annex to Commission Regulation (EU) No. 231/2012 as regards the food additives nitrites (E 249-250) and nitrates (E 251-252).
- **Regulation 1333/2008** (Annex II) establishes the Union list of approved food additives and conditions of use.
- **Regulation 231/2012** sets specifications and purity criteria for additives on the Union list.



### Introduction - New Requirements for Seafood Processors from 09 October 2025

The SFPA has issued this Information Notice to advise seafood processors of changes to the permitted use of nitrates and nitrites in processed fishery products. Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/2108, adopted on 06 October 2023, revises maximum limits for these additives to reduce consumer exposure to nitrosamines, while ensuring microbiological safety in foods such as meat, fish, and cheese. The new limits will apply from **09 October 2025**.



### Scope - Relevant Food Category (FC)

The Regulation introduces changes for Food Category 09.2 Processed fish and fishery products including molluscs and crustaceans.

| Product Type   | Additives Authorised                          | Status from 09 October 2025 |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| Pickled herring and sprat  | Nitrates (E 251–252) only                     | Authorised with new limits  |
| All other processed fishery products (e.g. smoked salmon, smoked trout, smoked mackerel, marinated mussels/crustaceans, kippers, other processed fish) | Nitrites (E 249–250) and nitrates (E 251–252) | Not authorised              |



### Key Changes & Authorised Limits:

- **Reduced maximum levels for nitrate additives** in pickled herring and sprat.
- **Nitrite additives** (E 249–250) **no longer authorised** for any processed fish or fishery products.
- **Additive purity criteria** tightened for contaminants (lead, mercury, arsenic).
- **Introduction of residual limit requirements** (amount remaining through shelf-life, not just added amount).
- **Expression of limits** now on an **ion basis** ( $\text{NO}_2^-/\text{NO}_3^-$ ) rather than the salt form ( $\text{NaNO}_2/\text{NaNO}_3$ ).

## Food Safety Information Notice 07-2025

### Reduced limits for Nitrate/Nitrite Additives in Processed Fish & Fishery Products



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**Table 1.** Changes to maximum levels of nitrates in Fishery Products

| Additive             | Product                 | Period of Application | Maximum levels (mg/l or mg/kg)  | New footnotes |
|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---|---------------|
| E 251-251 (Nitrates) | Pickled herring & sprat | From 09 Oct 2025      | 270 mg/kg (ingoing, as NO <sub>3</sub> <sup>-</sup> ion)<br>≤45 mg/kg (residual, as NO <sub>2</sub> <sup>-</sup> ion) | (XA)<br>(XD)  |

Footnotes:

- (XA) Maximum ingoing amount at end of production process, expressed as nitrate ion (NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>).
- (XD) Maximum residual amount from all sources, expressed as nitrite ion (NO<sub>2</sub><sup>-</sup>), not to exceed 45 mg/kg throughout shelf life.



### Effective Date & Transitional Arrangements

- The revised limits apply from **09 October 2025**.
- **Transitional provision:** Foods lawfully placed on the market before this date may be sold until their *use-by* or *minimum durability* date.
  - Food business operators (FBOs) must retain evidence of production dates for verification.



### Food Business Operator Actions

**If you pickle herring/sprat:**

- Set formulations to ≤270 mg/kg NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> (ingoing) and verify residual nitrate ≤45 mg/kg NO<sub>2</sub><sup>-</sup> at market-ready/end shelf-life.
- Keep test records in ions (NO<sub>2</sub><sup>-</sup>/NO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup>); maintain supplier purity specifications & instructions for use.
- If product tests over the permitted residual level, investigate the cause.

**If you smoke/cure fish, or marinate molluscs (or any other FC 09.2 product):**

- Do not use nitrite/nitrate additives (check all brines/marinades/cures and supplier premixes).
- If a supplier premix lists nitrite/nitrate (or it's a meat-curing mix), do not use it for seafood lines; reformulate with authorised ingredients only.
- Be mindful that carry-over is not applicable where the additive has a preservative function in the final seafood.

**For all FC 09.2 processors:**

- Keep **production dates** for transitional verification.
- Ensure your **HACCP/shelf-life validation** shows **microbiological safety** (incl. *C. botulinum* control) and, where applicable, **residual** compliance.

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