

Fisheries Information Notice 08-2023

Restrictions on fishing of Deep-Sea Species & protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems



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The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority has issued Fisheries Information Notice entitled: **Restrictions on fishing of Deep-Sea Species & Protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems.**

Legislative Basis:

- [Regulation \(EU\) 2016/2336 establishing specific conditions for fishing for deep-sea stocks in the north-east Atlantic and provisions for fishing in international waters of the north-east Atlantic \(also known as the Deep-Sea Access Regulation\).](#)
- [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2022/1614 determining the existing deep-sea fishing areas and establishing a list of areas where vulnerable marine ecosystems are known to occur or are likely to occur.](#)
- [Sea-Fisheries \(Conservation and Rational Exploitation of Deep-Sea Species\) Regulations 2017 \(SI 50 of 2017\)](#)

Glossary of Terms

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

Term/ Acronyms	Description
Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VME)	Special parts of the ocean floor where habitat-forming animals such as deep-sea sponges, stony corals, sea pens, sea fans, lace corals and black corals form three-dimensional underwater forests. These forests are biodiversity hotspots as they provide habitat, nursery areas and feeding grounds for fish and invertebrates ¹ .
Deep-sea species	Species listed in Annex I of Regulation (EU) 2016/2336 (see summary in Annex I of this Notice)
Existing deep-sea areas	Areas in which deep-sea fishing may be authorised: Union waters of the North Sea and ICES zone IIa, North-western Waters, South-western Waters, and areas specified in Annex I of Reg. (EU) 2022/1614)
Encounter with VME	An encounter with a possible VME is defined as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• for a trawl tow, and other fishing gear than longlines: the presence of more than 30 kg of live coral and/or 400 kg of live sponge of VME indicators*; and• for a longline set: the presence of VME indicators* on 10 hooks per 1 000 hook segment or per 1 200 m section of longline, whichever is the shorter. <p>*VME indicators are comprised of specified organisms, occurring in specified areas, outlined in Annex III</p>

Introduction

Deep-sea Species are species which occur in deep seawaters and have low reproduction rates with slow maturity, slow growth, and long-life expectancies. Deep-sea species and most vulnerable species are listed Annex I and Annex III.

Any vessel, targeting or catching incidental catches of the species listed below Annex I, may only do so subject to an authorisation.

There are two types of authorisations granted for deep-sea species:

1. Directed Fishing Authorisation,
2. By-Catch Authorisation.

Both such authorisations will list the deep-sea species which the vessel is authorised to fish.

¹ Source: [Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems – MzanSea](#)

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Directed Fishing Authorisation

Vessel shall be deemed to target deep-sea species and required to have Directed Fishing Authorisation in the following circumstances:

- ✓ Any fishing trip contains at least 8% deep-sea species of total catch onboard,
- ✓ More than 10 tonnes of deep-sea species recorded by vessel in a calendar year.

Fishing for deep-sea species with bottom trawls below a depth of 800m is unauthorised in all existing deep-sea fishing areas.



By-Catch Fishing Authorisation

- Where fishing activity does not target deep-sea species but catches deep-sea species as a by-catch, such vessels shall be subject to a "By-catch Fishing Authorisation".
- If a vessel catches less than 10 tonnes in a calendar year is required to have a by-catch authorisation.
- The by-catch fishing authorisation shall include the deep-sea species that the vessel may encounter as by-catch when fishing for other species.



Application for Fishing Authorisation

Application for a fishing authorisation shall be accompanied by a detailed description of the area in which the fishing vessel intends to carry out fishing activities, the type of gear, the bathymetric band in which the activities are to be carried out, the expected frequency and duration of the fishing activity, as well as the names of the deep-sea species concerned.

- Directed fishing authorisations will only be issued for fishing activities within existing deep-sea fishing zones.
- No authorisation shall be issued for fishing with bottom gear deeper than 800 meters.



Vessels NOT holding an Authorisation

- Any vessel, NOT holding either type of Authorisation, is prohibited from fishing for Deep-Sea Species more than 100kg in any trip.
- Deep-sea species in excess of 100kg shall not be retained or landed, except where they are subject to the landing obligation.



Protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VME)

Vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) are special parts of the ocean floor where habitat-forming animals such as, deep-sea sponges, stony corals, sea pens, sea fans, lace corals and black corals form three-dimensional underwater forests. These forests are biodiversity hotspots as they provide habitat, nursery areas and feeding grounds for fish and invertebrates.

Identification of VMEs

These rules apply in areas below 400m depth.

Where, while fishing operations, the quantity of VME indicators caught in that fishing operation, as set out below exceeds the following thresholds then an encounter with VME's is considered to have taken place:

- for a trawl tow, and fishing gear other than longlines: the presence of more than 30 kg of live coral and/or 400 kg of live sponge of VME indicators; and
- for a longline set: the presence of VME indicators on 10 hooks per 1,000 hook segment or per 1,200 m section of longline, whichever is the shorter.

Where an encounter with a VME is considered to have taken place the master shall.

- Immediately cease fishing operations in the area concerned and may only resume in an alternative area no less than 5 NM distant from where the encounter occurred.
- Immediately notify each finding of vulnerable marine ecosystems to the Fisheries Monitoring Centre (FMC) or Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA). A full list of VME indicators is listed in Annex III of this document.

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Specific Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems

As well as the requirements set down in EU 2016/2336, specific areas in which VME's are known to occur or are likely to occur, are now designated and described in Annex II.

- Fishing with bottom gear below a depth of 400m is prohibited in these areas.

Designated Ports

No landing more than 100kg of deep-sea species may take place in other than a designated port. The designated ports within the Republic of Ireland are Greencastle, Killybegs, Ros an Mhil, Galway, Fenit, An Daingean, Castletownbere and Union Hall. Please refer [Landing and Prior Notification Requirements of Irish FV FIN](#)

Prior notification

Masters of an Irish fishing vessel intending to land **100kg or more** of deep-sea species are required to submit a PNO to the FMC **at least four hours** prior to entry to a designated port. Vessels of 12 metres in length overall or less are required to submit a PNO **at least one hour** prior to entry to a designated port. Please refer [Landing and Prior Notification Requirements of Irish FV FIN](#)

Recording of Catch and Activity

For vessels holding either a Deep-Sea Authorisation or a Deep-Sea By-Catch Authorisation, shall:

- Record each fishing operation separately in the paper logbook and electronic logbook after each haul; or
- record separately after each haul in the electronic reporting System.

Master's shall record all quantities of deep-sea species listed, below and any quantity of VME listed in excess of:

- for a trawl tow, and other fishing gear than longlines: the presence of more than 30 kg of live coral and/or 400 kg of live sponge of VME indicators; and
- for a longline set: the presence of VME indicators on 10 hooks per 1,000 hook segment or per 1,200 m section of longline, whichever is the shorter.

The master shall report species compositions and weights to the competent authority.

Contact Details: sfpafood&fisheriessupport@sfpa.ie

This fisheries information notice was published on 26/09/2023 and replaces FIN 05 of 2017 Deep Sea Fishing and Protection of VME.

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Annex I - Deep-Sea Species (Annex I Reg. (EU) 2016/2336):

Gulper sharks (CWO)	Large-eyed rabbitfish (Ratfish) (CYH)
Black dogfish (CFB)	Straightnose rabbitfish (RCT)
Portuguese dogfish (CYO)	Roundnose grenadier (RNG)
Longnose velvet dogfish (CYP)	Black cardinalfish (RMZ)
Kitefin shark (SCK)	Bluemouth (Bluemouth redfish) (BRF)
Greater lanternshark (SHL)	Orange roughy (ORY)
Iceland catshark (APQ)	Roughhead grenadier (Rough rattail)
Frilled shark (HXW)	Blue ling (BLI)
Birdbeak dogfish (DCA)	Common mora (RIB)
Blackmouth dogfish (SHO)	Blue antimora (Blue hake) (ANT)
Mouse catshark (GAM)	Red (blackspot) seabream (SBR)
Bluntnose six-gilled shark (SBL)	Wreckfish (WRK)
Velvet belly (ETX)	Greenland halibut (GHL)
Sailfin roughshark (Sharpback shark) (OXN)	Cataetys laticeps (TVY)
Knifetooth dogfish (SYO)	Silver roughy (Pink) (HPR)
Greenland shark (GSK)	Macrouridae other than Coryphaenoides rupestris
Smoothheads (Slickheads) (ALH)	Macrourus berglax (RHG)
Baird's smoothhead (ALC)	Grenadiers (rattails) other than roundnose grenadier and roughhead grenadier
Risso's smoothhead (PHO)	Black gemfish (NEN)
Black scabbardfish (BSF)	Snubnosed spiny eel (ASQ)
Greater silver smelt (BVR)	Round skate (RJV)
Alfonsinos (ALF)	Arctic skate (RJG)
Deep-water red crab (KEF)	Norwegian skate
Rabbitfish (rattail) (CMO)	Spiny (deep-sea) scorpionfish (TZY)
Eelpout (ELP)	Silver scabbardfish (Cutlass fish) (JAD)
Small redfish (Norway haddock) (SFV)	Greater eelpout (LXK)

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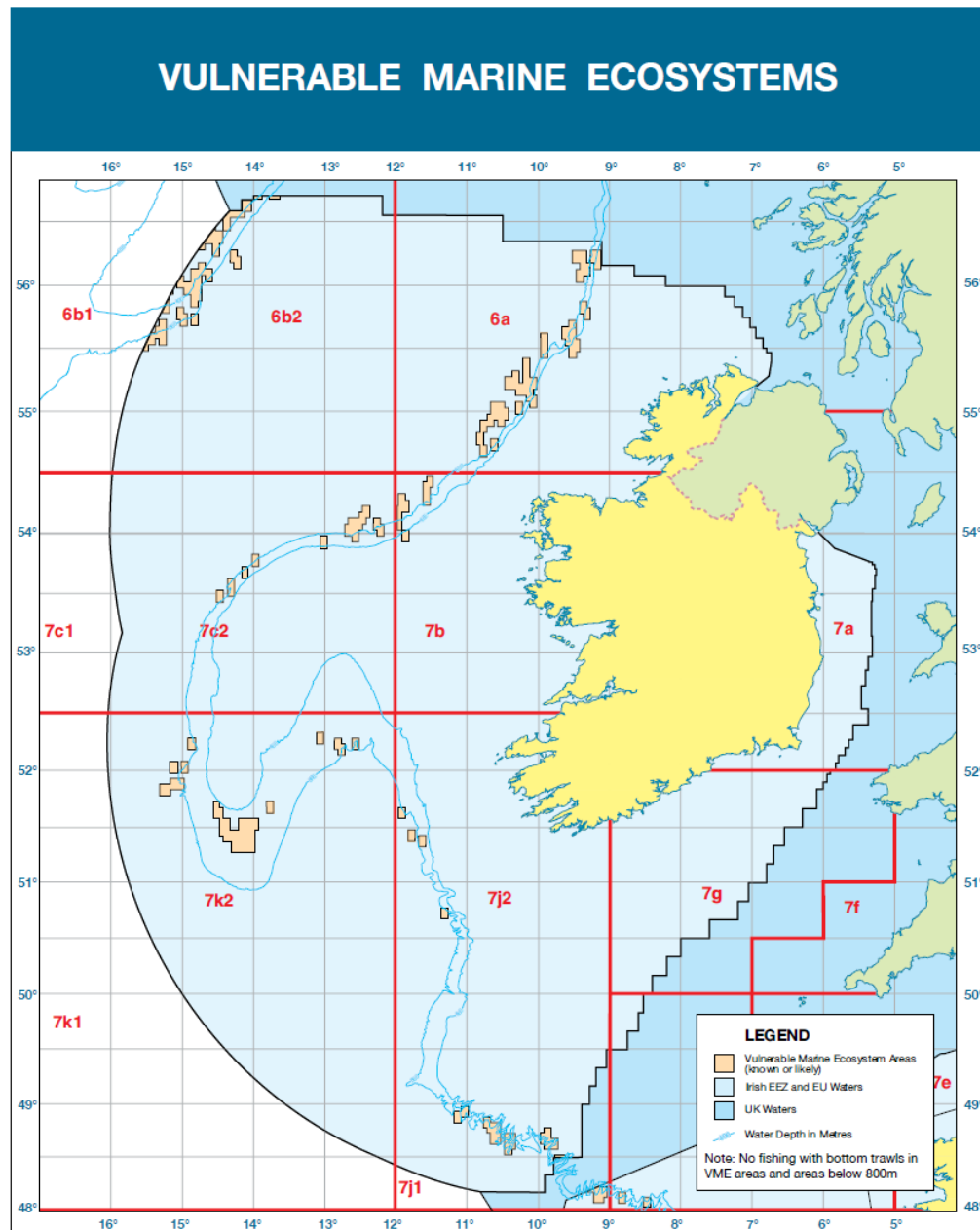
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Annex II - Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (Annex II Reg. (EU) 2022/1614) where VMEs are known to occur or are likely to occur.



Disclaimer
This chart is provided as a guide only. While every effort is made in preparing material for publication no responsibility is accepted by or on behalf of the SFPA for any errors, omissions or misleading statements on this chart. Fishers should make reference to Commission Implementing Regulation EU 2022/1614



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Annex III - Indicator species of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems

1. Cold water coral reefs	
a) <i>Lophelia pertusa</i> reef	<i>Lophelia pertusa</i>
b) <i>Solenosmilia variabilis</i> reef	<i>Solenosmilia variabilis</i>
2. Coral gardens	
a) Hard-bottomed gardens	
	<i>Anthothelidae</i>
	<i>Chrysogorgiidae</i>
	<i>Isididae, Keratoisidinae</i>
	<i>Plexauridae</i>
(i) Black coral and hard-backed gorgonian gardens	<i>Acanthogorgiidae</i>
	<i>Coralliidae</i>
	<i>Paragorgiidae</i>
	<i>Primnoidae</i>
	<i>Schizopathidae</i>
(ii) Colonial scleractinians on rocky outcrops	<i>Lophelia pertusa</i>
	<i>Solenosmilia variabilis</i>
(iii) Clusters of non-reef scleractinians	<i>Enallopsammia rostrata</i>
	<i>Madrepora oculata</i>
(b) Soft-bottomed coral gardens	
(i) Gardens of black coral and soft-bottomed gorgonians	<i>Chrysogorgiidae</i>
(ii) Crown coral fields	<i>Caryophylliidae</i>
(iii) Cauliflower coral fields	<i>Flabellidae</i>
	<i>Nephtheidae</i>
3. Deep-sea sponge clusters	
(a) Other sponge groupings	<i>Geodiidae</i>
	<i>Ancorinidae</i>
	<i>Pachastrellidae</i>
	<i>Axinellidae</i>
b) Hard-bottom sponge gardens	<i>Mycalidae</i>
	<i>Polymastiidae</i>
	<i>Tetillidae</i>
(c) Crystal sponge communities	<i>Rossellidae</i>
	<i>Pheronematidae</i>
	<i>Anthoptilidae</i>
	<i>Pennatulidae</i>
	<i>Funiculinidae</i>
	<i>Halopteridae</i>
	<i>Kophobelemnidae</i>
	<i>Protoptilidae</i>
	<i>Umbellulidae</i>
	<i>Vigulariidae</i>
4. Sea feather fields	<i>Cerianthidae</i>
5. Small areas of tube anemones	<i>Bourgetcrinidae</i>
	<i>Antedontidae</i>
6. Fauna emerging from sand and mud	<i>Hyocrinidae</i>
	<i>Xenophyophora</i>
	<i>Syringamminidae</i>
7. Small bryozoan areas	

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