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SEA-FISHERIES
PROTECTION
AUTHORITY

Press Release

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Master of Fishing Vessel Pleads Guilty to Mis-Recording Catches and Fishing in Excess of Quota

The Master of a fishing vessel, Scott Farrow, from An Daingean, Co Kerry, pleaded guilty at Tralee Circuit Court today, the 13th of May 2025 to two fisheries offences including under-recording catches of Common Sole, and exceeding the monthly quota for Cod. The charges arose from an inspection by Sea-Fisheries Protection Officers (SFPOs) of the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) of a landing of the commercial fishing vessel “Adventurer” at Ballycotton, Co Cork in September 2021. The Court convicted Mr Farrow of the offence of mis-recording Common Sole and imposed a fine of €3,000. The Court further ordered forfeiture of the sum of €11,000 from the value of the catch.

The Court heard evidence that Mr Farrow submitted a prior notification of landing to the SFPA, indicating no catches of Cod and 21kg of Common Sole. During the landing process, officers observed and counted the boxed catch as it was transferred from the vessel to a transport truck. A subsequent inspection identified approximately 663kg of processed and boxed Cod, along with around 163kg of Common Sole.

Evidence was given that the vessel exceeded the quota of 500kgs for Cod, available to the vessel, for September 2021. The Court also heard the Master over-recorded boxed catches of hake and ling which are subject to higher quotas and of less commercial value. An SFPO confirmed that Mr Farrow had not corrected the logbook data since the detection of the mis-recorded catches.

The Court heard evidence that Cod stocks previously collapsed in the Irish waters where the vessel was fishing, giving rise to a small quota for Cod in this area. An SFPO gave evidence that the recording of quota uptake was important, and mis-recording of catches was serious. In addition, the available quota for vessels for Common Sole was low, due to the low stock level. Evidence was given that under-recording of stocks created an impression that stocks are healthier than they are and gives rise to skewed data for setting future quotas.

The Court commented that it was a “serious” and “deliberate” mis-recording, that was “profit driven at the expense of fish” and referred to the impact of fishing in excess of quotas and mis-recording catches. The Court stated a “headline figure” of a fine of

€10,000 was appropriate in the case for the offence of mis-recording catches. Taking account of Mr Farrow's lack of previous convictions and the credit for guilty pleas, the Court imposed a fine of €3,000.

Paschal Hayes, SFPA Executive Chairperson commented:

"I note the decision and the emphasis by the Court on the seriousness of mis-recording catches and fishing in excess of quotas. Fishing in excess of quota threatens stocks and efforts to ensure a sustainable economy for fishing communities into the future. Accurate catch data in EU waters is the basis for sustainable quota management and catch limits, in order to avoid serious depletion of stocks. Masters of fishing vessels must take measures to ensure accurate reporting of catches, in compliance with their obligations under law. I commend the Sea-Fisheries Protection Officers involved for their thorough investigation."

Ends

Further Information

About the SFPA

The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) is the independent statutory body responsible for the regulation of the sea-fisheries and the sea-food production sectors. It promotes compliance with the EU Common Fisheries Policy, sea-fisheries law and food safety law relating to fish and fish products, verifies compliance and, where necessary, enforces it. Its mandate covers all fishing vessels operating within Ireland's 200-mile limit, over 2,000 Irish registered fishing vessels wherever they operate, and all seafood produced in Ireland's seafood processing companies. The SFPA operates through a network of regional port offices situated at Ireland's main fishery harbours. For further information visit: www.sfpa.ie