



AN t-ÚDARÁS UM
CHOSAINT
IASCAIGH MHARA

SEA-FISHERIES
PROTECTION
AUTHORITY

Press Release

Issued by the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority's Press Office

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Man Convicted of Sea-Fisheries Offences relating to Exceeding Quota and Under-Recording Catches

Gerald Sharkey, from Clogherhead, County Louth, pleaded guilty at Dundalk Circuit Court on the 2nd of July 2024 to a charge of retaining catches of Nephrops* (prawns) in excess of the quota stipulated in a Fisheries Management Notice applicable to the regulated fishing grounds of Functional Unit (FU) 16**, during the course of a fishing trip in June 2017. Mr Sharkey also pleaded guilty to a charge of under-recording of catches of Nephrops caught in FU 16. The Court imposed fines totalling €20,000 for both offences and ordered forfeiture of €10,000 from the value of catch.

The Court heard evidence of how the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) conducted an inspection of fishing activity of a sea-fishing boat, *Saint Catherine Laboure*, in May and June 2017 in FU 16 and detected the recording of large quantities of catches outside the area. However, lower volumes were recorded as being caught within FU 16 notwithstanding the evidence of a greater amount of time spent fishing in that area. The Court heard evidence that the catches of Nephrops from FU 16 are subject to stricter quotas and attain a higher monetary value. It was alleged catches were taken from FU 16 however recorded as being taken from another fishing area. The Court noted the catch limit in place was exceeded by approximately 200%.

In giving its decision on the case, the Court remarked that observing quotas and the catch limits are necessary for the “protection of fishery stocks so that there is sustainability for fishing to continue for fishing stocks and for generations to come.” The Court further stated that the matter was a “serious offence” and that there were “stringent controls and penalties for breaches of the regulations so that people cannot make an economic benefit from ignoring important ecological regulations.”

An SFPA spokesperson commented:

“The SFPA notes the seriousness attached to these non-compliances by the Court, as reflected in the remarks made and sanctions imposed. The SFPA reiterates the comments made by the Court that compliance with the requirements for accurate logbook recording and fishing within applicable catch limits are key to the sustainability

of fishing for fishing communities. Accurate reporting of catches is essential in order to assess the extent of catches on an ongoing basis, ensuring catch limits are managed to allow for the sustainability of species and fishing for such stocks. The effectiveness of regulatory requirements of the prawn/nephrops fishery in FU 16, including catch limits and reporting, is particularly important having regard to the vulnerability of prawn stocks in that area and conservation measures to avoid serious stock depletion which occurred previously. The SFPA commends the Sea-Fisheries Protection Officers involved for this thorough investigation. “

Ends.

Note to Editor

*Nephrops are also known as Norway lobster, or Dublin Bay prawns.

**Functional Unit (FU) 16 is located west and southwest of Ireland and includes the Porcupine Bank.

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