



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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### **SFPA EMPHASISE SEAFOOD SAFETY & TRADE VERIFICATION ROLE & SEA-FISHERIES CONTROL ACTIVITIES IN 2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

- **2,222 Fishing Vessel Inspections, 85 Casefiles opened.**
- **1,343 Food Safety Official Controls carried out; 67 Food Safety Incidents/Complaints investigated.**
- **Processing of 3,802 Export Health Certificates for 49,782 tonnes of produce from 44 Irish Export Businesses and 744 Catch Certificates for 19,187 tonnes of Irish seafood export.**
- **1,585 Shellfish Samples taken.**

The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA), Ireland's competent authority tasked with protecting the sustainability of sea-fisheries in Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone and ensuring seafood safety for consumers as well as the verification of seafood trade has published its Annual Report for 2023.

The operational demands on the SFPA continue to increase in line with regulatory changes and the trade requirements of the UK and other trading partners. From a fisheries control perspective, 2023 was a significant year with the implementation of the European Commission approved Sea-Fisheries Control Plan. The functioning of the Control Plan progressed satisfactorily over the course of the year.

A new EU Fisheries Control Regulation completed its journey through the European Union's legislative process in 2023. The SFPA has monitored the implications of the new Regulation throughout and continue to appraise industry of what the new requirements will entail as the new measures take effect.

Protecting seafood safety is critical not only to the reputation of Ireland's seafood offering both home and abroad but ultimately the health and wellbeing of consumers of Irish seafood products. To this end, Sea-Fisheries Protection Officers (SFPOs) carried out 1,343 food safety official controls across 2,325 food premises under the

Authority's remit. The SFPA responded to 67 food incidents where there were concerns regarding the safety or quality of food which required examination in the interests of public health. Seafood safety enforcement measures in 2023 ranged from informal advisory measures to the service of Compliance Notices, as well as to the commencement of criminal prosecutions for serious non-compliances. In 2023, four prosecutions for offences under food safety legislation were initiated or underway before the courts, two of which concluded in 2023 with convictions and fines imposed on the food business operators for breaches of food hygiene, traceability and food premises requirements under EU food safety law.

As Ireland's competent authority for seafood trade compliance, the SFPA undertakes a range of activities critical to enabling Ireland's seafood economy. Irish seafood exports in 2023 were valued at €550 million. The SFPA's Trade Compliance Unit, supported by our SFPOs across the country, work tirelessly to support seafood producers to enable export internationally and the functioning of seafood production supply chains. There were further revisions to the United Kingdom's food import requirements in 2023. The SFPA's Trade Control Unit supported the seafood industry in preparing for these changes with proactive engagement and information sharing. 2023 also saw a revision of control measures for the export of live crab to China, which should see the reestablishment of this trade. In 2023, the SFPA enabled the export of 3,802 consignments of seafood totalling 49,782 tonnes and 23 species from 44 food businesses to 41 countries outside the EU through the provision of Export Health Certification. Furthermore, 744 catch certificates were issued for the export of 19,187 tonnes of Irish seafood produce to third countries, including the UK.

Protecting sea-fisheries sustainability and safeguarding against illegal fishing activity is one of the critical activities of the SFPA operating throughout the coast and at sea through our partnership with the Irish Naval Service and the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA). Throughout 2023, there was a total of 2,222 inspections of fishing vessels undertaken, an increase of 17% on the previous year (1,903 inspections). A total of 85 case files were opened, comprising of 63 sea-fisheries law enforcement cases and 22 food safety law enforcement cases. Nine points cases for serious infringements of fisheries regulations were initiated, with the findings anticipated in 2024. Increased inspection and enforcement provide an effective tool to protect against illegal fishing activity.

Commenting on the publication of the 2023 Annual Report, SFPA, Paschal Hayes, Executive Chairperson of the SFPA stated; *"I am pleased to publish our Annual Report for 2023 which details the extensive work programme the SFPA undertook across the year in fulfilment of our commitment to our statutory remit. In a challenging climate for Ireland's sea-fisheries and seafood sector in 2023, the SFPA*

*continued to provide regulatory oversight of our sea-fishing fleet and our seafood processing sector, underpinning the sustainability and safety of our internationally renowned seafood offering. The SFPA demonstrated its capacity as the effective, fair regulator and promoter of compliance with sea-fisheries and seafood safety law throughout the year.”*

Ends

**Note to Editor** - link to [SFPA 2023 Annual Report](#)

### **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](http://www.sfpa.ie)