



STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS.

S.I. No. 501 of 2025

SEA-FISHERIES (SPRAT FISHING CLOSURE) REGULATIONS 2025

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I, TIMMY DOOLEY, Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, in exercise of the powers conferred on me by sections 3 and 15 of the Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006 (No. 8 of 2006) and the Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Delegation of Ministerial Functions) (No. 2) Order 2025 (S.I. No. 368 of 2025), hereby make the following regulations:

Citation and cessation

1. (1) These Regulations may be cited as the Sea-Fisheries (Sprat Fishing Closure) Regulations 2025.
- (2) These Regulations shall cease to have effect on 1 October 2026.

Interpretation

2. In these Regulations:

“Act of 2006” means the Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006 (No. 8);

“baseline” has the same meaning as it has in Section 2 of the Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2021;

“fishing trip” means any voyage of a sea-fishing boat during which fishing activities are conducted that starts at the moment when the fishing boat leaves a port and ends on arrival in port;

“section 10 of the Act of 2006” means section 10 of the act of 2006 as amended by the Sea-Fisheries (Amendment) Act 2019 and the Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2021;

“six nautical mile zone” means—

- (a) the internal waters, as construed in accordance with section 8 of the Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2021, and
- (b) the area between 0 and 6 nautical miles as measured seaward from the baseline;

“sprat” means *Sprattus sprattus*;

“Trawling activity” means fishing by means of the operation of trawl or seine nets.

Application

3. (1) These Regulations apply to an Irish sea-fishing boat, or to a sea-fishing boat owned and operated in Northern Ireland in accordance with section 10 of the Act of 2006, that is over 18 metres in length overall.

(2) For the avoidance of doubt, these Regulations are subject to subsection (2) of section 10 of the Act of 2006.

Prohibition on sprat fishing

4. (1) The Master of a sea-fishing boat to which these Regulations apply shall not fish or attempt to fish for sprat by means of trawling activity within the six nautical mile zone.

(2) The owner of a sea-fishing boat to which these Regulations apply shall not cause or permit the boat or any person onboard the boat to fish for, or attempt to fish for, sprat by means of trawling activity within the six nautical mile zone.

Sprat by-catch avoidance measures

5. The master of a sea-fishing boat to which these Regulations apply shall:

- (a) while engaging in trawling activity within the six nautical mile zone, take all necessary measures to avoid by-catches of sprat, and
- (b) where the sprat by-catch in any haul exceeds 5% of the catch overall in that haul, immediately move to one or more alternative ICES statistical rectangles for the purposes of engaging in trawling activity for the remainder of the fishing trip.

Sprat by-catch and subsequent trip

6. Where, upon the return to port by a sea-fishing boat to which these Regulations apply, having engaged in trawling activity in the six nautical mile zone, the sprat by-catch exceeds 5% of the total catch of fish on board, the vessel shall not engage in trawling activity in the statistical rectangles in which the vessel fished during the trip in which its by-catch of sprat exceeded 5%, for 3 consecutive days from the start of the next fishing trip.

Revocation

7. The Sea-Fisheries (Sprat Fishing) Regulations 2025 (S.I. No. 446 of 2025) are revoked.

GIVEN under my hand,
23 October 2025

TIMMY DOOLEY,
Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the
Marine.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Instrument and does not purport to be a legal interpretation.)

These Regulations are to provide for a prohibition on the fishing of sprat by means of trawling activity by sea-fishing boats that are over 18 metres in length overall within the six nautical mile zone. Regulations setting out sprat by-catch avoidance measures are included.

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