



STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS.

S.I. No. 446 of 2025



SEA-FISHERIES (SPRAT FISHING) REGULATIONS 2025

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I, TIMMY DOOLEY, Minister of State for Fisheries in 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, commencement and cessation

1. (1) These Regulations may be cited as the Sea-Fisheries (Sprat Fishing) Regulations 2025.

(2) These Regulations shall come into operation on 11 October 2025 and 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;

“Council Regulation” means Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 of 20 November 2009¹ (as amended by Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013², Council Regulation (EU) No 1385/2013 of 17 December 2013³, Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014⁴, Regulation (EU) No 2015/812 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2015⁵, Regulation (EU) 2019/473 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 March 2019⁶, Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019⁷, Regulation (EU) 2023/2842 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 November 2023⁸ and Regulation (EU) 2024/2594 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 September 2024⁹);

¹ OJ L 343, 22.12.2009, pp. 1

² OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, pp. 1

³ OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, pp. 86

⁴ OJ L 149, 20.5.2014, pp. 1

⁵ OJ L 133, 29.5.2015, pp. 1

⁶ OJ L 83, 25.3.2019, pp. 18

⁷ OJ L 198, 25.7.2019, pp. 105

⁸ OJ L, 2023/2842, 20.12.2023, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/2842/oj>

⁹ OJ L, 2024/2594, 8.10.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/2594/oj>

“Electronic Recording and Reporting System” means a system onboard a sea-fishing boat used for the electronic completion and transmission to a competent authority, as required by law, of data included in the fishing logbook and landing declaration, (for Irish sea-fishing boats, such requirements are those referred to in Articles 15, 17 and 23 of the Council Regulation);

“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;

“herring” means *Clupea harengus*;

“Irish Fisheries Monitoring Centre” means the monitoring system operated in accordance with Article 9 of the Council Regulation by the Naval Service of the Irish Defence Forces;

“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.

Obligations on Master before entering six nautical mile zone

4. The Master of a sea-fishing boat to which these Regulations apply shall not engage in trawling activity within the six nautical mile zone unless he or she has first provided, to the Irish Fisheries Monitoring Centre, 4 hours’ notice prior to the commencement of the fishing trip.

Fishing Trips

5. The master of a sea-fishing boat to which these Regulations apply shall engage in trawling activity either—

- (a) exclusively inside the six nautical mile zone, or

(b) exclusively outside of the six nautical mile zone
in any one fishing trip where he or she has catch of sprat onboard.

By-catch of Herring

6. (1) The Master of a sea-fishing boat to which these Regulations apply shall, while engaging in trawling activity within the six nautical mile zone, take all necessary measures to avoid by-catch of herring.

(2) Where, after having engaged in trawling activity in the six nautical mile zone, the herring by-catch in one haul, taken onboard a sea-fishing boat to which these Regulations apply, exceeds 5% of the total quantity of the catch of sea-fish in that haul, the Master shall not engage in trawling activity in the ICES statistical rectangle in which such by-catch was caught, for the remainder of the fishing trip and shall immediately move to one or more alternative ICES statistical rectangles.

(3) 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 by-catch of Herring exceeds 5% of the total quantity of the catch of sea-fish on board, the sea-fishing boat shall not engage in trawling activity for sprat in the ICES statistical rectangles in which the sea-fishing boat fished during the trip in which its by-catch of herring exceeded 5%, for 3 consecutive days from the start of the next fishing trip.

(4) Paragraphs (1) to (3) do not apply to—

- (a) Irish sea-fishing boats engaged in trawling activity in accordance with an authorisation to fish for Herring issued under Section 13 of the Act of 2006, or
- (b) Sea-fishing boats, owned and operated in Northern Ireland, engaged in trawling activity in accordance with a permission or licence to fish for Herring in accordance with the law in effect in Northern Ireland.

Advance notification of landing

7. (1) The Master of a sea-fishing boat to which these Regulations apply, having catches onboard of sprat taken in the six nautical mile zone, shall, at least 4 hours before the estimated time of entering a port in the State, notify the Irish Fisheries Monitoring Centre of their intent to land such catches, and at which port in the State the landing is due to take place.

(2) The notification shall be made to the Irish Fisheries Monitoring Centre and shall include the following—

- (a) the name of the boat,
- (b) the designated port of landing,
- (c) the estimated time of arrival in the designated port,
- (d) the intended time of landing the catch,

- (e) the quantities in kilograms live weight of all species retained on board,
- (f) the ICES statistical rectangles from where the catch was taken, and
- (g) the master and owner's contact details.

(3) A sea-fishing boat with a fully functioning Electronic Recording and Reporting System should submit these requirements through a Prior Notification (PNO) function message.

(4) The Irish Fisheries Monitoring Centre shall, without delay, forward such notification to the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority.

Designated ports and times for landing

8. (1) The master of an Irish sea-fishing boat to which these Regulations apply shall, where they intend to land any catches of sprat within the State, only land such catches where a Sea-Fisheries Protection Officer has provided prior written authorisation to the master of such a sea-fishing boat to commence the landing operation.

(2) The Master of an Irish sea-fishing boat, landing sprat in the State shall only land catches of sprat at one of the following ports or landing places—

- (a) An Daingean,
- (b) Baltimore,
- (c) Castletownbere,
- (d) Dunmore East,
- (e) Howth,
- (f) Killybegs,
- (g) Port of Cork, or
- (h) Ros an Mhíl.

(3) Landings referred to in paragraph (2) may only take place at the following times—

- (a) Mondays to Fridays, between 08:00 and 00:00 hours, or
- (b) On Saturdays, Sundays, and Public Holidays, between 08:00 and 18:00 hours.

(4) The Master of a Northern Irish registered and licensed sea-fishing boat landing sprat in the State shall only land the sprat at one of the following ports in accordance with the Sea-Fisheries (Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing) Regulations 2010 (S.I. No. 554 of 2010)—

- (a) Castletownbere, or
- (b) Killybegs.

Notifications

9. Notifications required to be made to the Irish Fisheries Monitoring Centre, in accordance with these Regulations, shall be made to the Irish Fisheries Monitoring Centre by telephone at 00 353 21 4378752, or by email to: fmcireland@defenceforces.ie.

Report of the landing of 2,000 tonnes of sprat

10. The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority shall provide a report to the Minister at such time as 2,000 tonnes of sprat have been landed by sea-fishing boats to which these Regulations apply having engaged in trawling activity inside the six nautical mile zone in the period between 11th October 2025 and 30th September 2026.

GIVEN under my hand,
30 September 2025

TIMMY DOOLEY,
Minister of State for Fisheries 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 the monitoring of sprat fishing by sea-fishing boats that are over 18 metres in length overall engaging in trawling activity within the six nautical mile zone in the period commencing on 11th October 2025 and ceasing on the 1st October 2026. Regulations setting out herring by-catch avoidance measures for this period for sea-fishing boats that are over 18 metres in length overall engaging in trawling activity within the six nautical mile zone are included.

The Minister intends, by means of another statutory instrument, to close the waters inside the six nautical mile zone to sprat fishing by sea-fishing boats that are over 18 metres in length overall engaging in trawling activity at such time as the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) has reported that, starting from 11th October 2025, 2,000 tonnes or more of sprat have been landed from the six nautical mile zone by sea-fishing boats that are over 18 metres in length overall having engaged in trawling activity.

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