

Information for the fishing industry on changes to the technical and gear rules

What is the Technical Conservation regulation?

This regulation aims to reduce unwanted catches, including juvenile fish, in line with the newly introduced Landing Obligation (discard ban). It also updates measures to enhance protection of protected species and habitats. The regulation allows for more fishery-specific detailed rules to be introduced.

Why is it being changed now?

The original technical conservation regulation ([EC850/98](#)) came into force in 1998. The Landing [Obligation](#) (discard ban) was introduced in 2015 and the technical conservation regulation needed to be changed to further reduce unwanted catches.

When will it come into force?

We expect that the new technical conservation regulation will come into force in either the end of June or July in 2019. However, the exact date is to be confirmed.

What is staying the same?

Many of the rules which you have to comply with will not change with the introduction of the new Technical Conservation regulation. For example, [most minimum sizes](#) of fish and most [areas where fishing is restricted](#) remain the same.

How does this affect fishing operations?

The new regulation is separated into regions. For most English vessels, “North Sea” and “North Western Waters” will be most relevant. These regions are the same as for the [Landing Obligation](#) (discard ban).

The new regulation removes the complicated catch composition tables which set out the percentage of target species allowed for each net mesh size. These rules have become outdated because they led to wasteful discarding of fish.

In general, the aim is to encourage the use of more selective gears and to allow fishermen more flexibility in what gear they use. Larger regional baseline mesh sizes will be introduced. Smaller mesh sizes for certain fisheries are allowed, providing certain gear selectivity and bycatch requirements are met.

For example, smaller mesh fisheries are only allowed where escape panels are fitted for some gears and where whitefish bycatches are small.

What else do I need to know?

At the end of last year, the MMO put out guidance for changes to the [Landing Obligation rules](#) in 2019. Requirements for selective gear came in as part of this in the Irish Sea (VIIa) on 1st January. However, further selective gear requirements for the Celtic Sea will be introduced from 1st July. Guidance on the Celtic Sea gear

requirements has been available for several months but we will be working to remind fishermen working in that area of these changes.

What are you doing to ensure that the fishing industry knows about this?

Clearly, there are a number of changes coming from different regulations. So we are aiming to combine the rules into one set of regional guidance with links to the relevant legislation.

The MMO will be issuing public guidance on the gov.uk website. In addition, we will send copies of this guidance to major fishing stakeholders including producer organisations so that they can keep their members informed. At a local level, MMO officers will speak to affected fishermen and also be available to them to answer questions on the changes.