

Detailed guide: Manage and Lease fishing quota

Updated: Details on page updated

Quota allocations

MMO divides up England's fishing quotas across the 3 fishing industry groups:

- sector – fish producer organisations that manage quota for their members
- 10-metres-and-under pool – vessels 10 metres or under that are not members of a producer organisation
- non-sector – vessels over 10 metres that are not members of a producer organisations

The number of fixed quota allocation (FQA) units held by the individual vessels in each group, or by a group collectively, establishes what [proportion of the EU quota is allocated to each group](#).

The quota assigned to the non-sector and 10-metre-and-under pools may be adjusted in line with underpinning arrangements – this is where there are guaranteed minimum levels of allocated quota. The minimum level for each stock will be a percentage of the UK quota equal to the average percentage share of initial allocations made to the 10-metres-and-under fleet from 1991 to 1993.

For vessels over 10 metres, FQA units are associated with the licence of the vessel. For vessels 10 metres and under, FQA units are held centrally by MMO.

FQA units

It is important that you are clear about your own FQA units and those associated with any licence or licence entitlement you buy. Statements of the FQA units associated with individual licences are issued to licence holders each year, usually in May.

As the holder of a licence you can request details of the FQA units associated with your licence at any time from MMO.

You can:

- transfer FQA units from a licence entitlement
- apply for a replacement FQA holding statement

Read more about [FQA units and get the application forms](#).

Quota swaps

Producer organisations can swap quota with other groups within the UK and MMO approves these swaps. The PO submits the [Domestic Quota Swap Form](#) to quotaswap.dqs@marinemanagement.org.uk.

MMO negotiates quota swaps with other EU member states.

Leasing extra quota

You can apply to lease extra quota from a producer organisation (PO), to supplement your catch limits or to keep fishing a stock where the 10-metres-and-under or non-sector pool allocation has been used.

If quota allocations have not been confirmed it is still possible to lease quota from a PO. Each PO should submit a leasing request to the MMO using the supplied letter template.



[Leasing scheme letter](#)

PDF, 241KB, 2 pages

You should follow the following steps once quota allocations have been issued.

Step 1

Contact the MMO fisheries management team to find out if the extra quota you need can be made available by an increase in the catch limit for the stock in question. Telephone 0300 123 1032 or email quotaswap.dqs@marinemanagement.org.uk

Step 2

If the MMO is unable to meet your requested catch limit increase, contact a PO directly to agree a lease.

Step 3

The PO that you are leasing quota must complete a [Domestic Quota Swap Form](#) that includes your:

- vessel's name
- Registry of Shipping and Seamen (RSS) number
- port letters and numbers (PLN)
- name and contact details
- amount of quota requested for lease

The PO must submit the form to quotaswap.dqs@marinemanagement.org.uk.

A group application must detail the proportion of the leased quota for each vessel.

Step 4

MMO considers applications to lease quota on a case-by-case basis. MMO checks the licence and vessel details and considers the catch limits, amount of stock being leased and the overall UK uptake position for the stock.

MMO take up to 10 days to process the application.

Step 5

If the application is approved, MMO will send:

- an approved form back to the donor PO
- a permit letter confirming leased quota details to you naming the boat it applies to – the letter becomes part of your vessel's fishing vessel licence and will be sent to you by email or post if no email address is available
- a copy of the leasing letter to the vessel's administration port

Step 6

You can start fishing against the leased quota as soon as you receive the leasing letter either by email or post. You must comply with the leasing scheme requirements.

Scheme requirements

You must be the owner of a vessel that is:

- 10-metres-or-under or non-sector
- fishing against the English pool allocation for any stocks
- fishing in English waters in the current year

Quota can be leased by individuals or a group:

- in year only
- for a minimum of 100kg
- in multiples of 100kg
- only for the purpose of fishing against the leased quota

Unused leased quota will be carried forward into the next month and the licence holder will be permitted to fish the leased in quota, in addition to the monthly catch limit.

This applies from the date of the letter until such time as:

- the additional leased-in quota is exhausted
- the fishery is closed at UK level
- the fishery is closed by the 31 December

If you do not fish the quota by 31 December, the MMO may use unused quota to benefit the whole fishing industry including under 10 and non-sector pools or to swap with other countries.

Unfished leased quota may be returned to the producer organisation from which it was leased (if the producer organisation agrees) up to the year end, but not beyond 31 December.

You may not:

- fish against leased quota if the fishery is subject to a UK closure (all Fish Producer Organisations and non sector licences).
- transfer leased quota except by agreeing to return it to the PO it came from
- use leased quota to increase FQA units

You must complete and submit full European Union logbooks and landing declarations within 48 hours of landing to your [local MMO office](#) for all stocks that you retain on board, discard and land. If you don't, you may be prosecuted.

Your catch is counted against the pool allocation first and your leased quota once the pool allocation is used. For example, if a monthly pool catch limit for a stock is 1 tonne and you lease in an extra 2 tonnes, your first tonne of a 2-tonne catch will be recorded against the pool and the second tonne against your leased quota.

You must make sure your vessel does not exceed the total quota available to you. If you catch more than your limit, you may be prosecuted.

How we manage fisheries quota

European Union laws limit the amount of fish that may be landed each year – the total allowable catch (TAC) – to preserve fish stocks. Each member state, including the UK, receives an agreed share of the TAC as its quota.

The UK quota is divided between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. If the UK fishing fleet exceeds its quota, the quota may be reduced and there could be large fines.

All UK vessels are subject to detailed quota management rules, which are updated each year.

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is responsible for managing England's fishing quotas and publishes specific English quota management rules for English vessels.

MMO monitors landings of quota stocks and compares the amount caught and landed against total quota allocation. This is used to inform decisions about quota swaps, changes to catch limits and closing fisheries.