

[News story: Forthcoming changes to fisheries rules highlighted](#)

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is providing advance notice of changes to fisheries laws it expects will affect the English/UK fishing industry throughout 2019.

The MMO, whose remit includes enforcing EU and UK fisheries regulations in English waters, is providing insight into its work in order to give industry as much certainty as possible and to help them prepare for changes. In response to discussions in the media and online, this guidance is being published to clarify that current fisheries laws will continue to apply immediately after the UK leaves the EU.

What is happening

The full Landing Obligation (discard ban) will come into force on 1 January 2019. This means that for all fisheries, species with catch limits (quota species) will have to be landed and counted against quota. This includes undersize fish.

There are exemptions to this requirement subject to certain conditions. These are based on either the ability of the fish to survive capture and release (“survivability”); or on the difficulty of preventing capture of unwanted fish; or disproportionate cost of handling, (de minimis). For example, it is proposed that from 1 January 2019 plaice will be able to be discarded in certain fisheries due to its ability to survive capture and release.

In the new regulations there are also requirements for vessels to use more selective fishing gear. These will apply to parts of the Celtic Sea (from 1 July 2019) and area VIIa in the Irish Sea (from 1 January 2019).

Defra is working with the MMO and the fishing industry to identify ways to limit the risk of ‘choke’ species closing fisheries in 2019. A choke species is one for which there is not enough quota; when this runs out it may restrict opportunities to carry on fishing for other key species for which more quota is available.

The UK is also working with the European Commission and other Member States to develop other ways of limiting choke for the most high risk fisheries. These are likely to be agreed at December Council when the annual Total Allowable Catch and Quota Regulation is finalised.

The regulations are currently in draft form and may be subject to change. The MMO will issue more detailed guidance once the regulations for 2019 are finalised. However, if you want to view the draft recommendations as they stand currently, they are available here: [North Sea](#), [North Western Waters](#).

The technical conservation regulation is the legislation that aims to reduce

the capture of juvenile fish and minimise environmental harm. A new regulation is currently in draft and it is likely to come into force in the first half of 2019.

The new draft technical conservation regulation is more streamlined than the original regulation. It aims to simplify the rules.

What the Marine Management Organisation is doing

As explained in its [compliance and enforcement strategy](#) the MMO will provide guidance and raise awareness of the rules as a first step to achieving compliance.

Work being carried out by the MMO so that it can support industry to understand and comply with the changes includes:

- Working with the EC and Defra to gain understanding of the implications of legislation changes by location of fishing activity, sector and gear type
- Training staff so that they can provide advice and guidance to fishermen in person
- Working with fishing industry representatives to understand the best way to provide guidance to fishermen and help spread the word about the changes
- Producing tailored guidance and materials to help people understand how the changes may affect them
- Working with Devolved Administrations to send out clear and consistent information

How the changes relate to the UK leaving the EU

UK fishermen will still need to comply with the changes despite the UK leaving EU. This is because the Government will be bringing EU rules into UK law as 'retained EU law' and so existing fisheries arrangements will continue to operate in the period following the UK leaving the EU. Retained EU law will then be replaced in time with domestic legislation but until then the existing rules apply and will be enforced by the MMO and other UK fisheries administrations.