

News story: Undulate ray by-catch allowance in the eastern English Channel

From 1 September English fishing vessels in ICES Area VIIId will have a 50kg by-catch allowance for undulate rays.

- Undulates must be landed whole or gutted and must not measure less than 40cm or more than 60cm between wing tips.
- Landings of undulate ray will also be counted against Area VIIId skates and ray quota as a whole.

In previous years the quota for this stock has been allocated to individual fishermen for use in scientific trials run by CEFAS. There is to be no scientific trial this year and therefore to ensure equal opportunities for all vessels who may experience a by-catch of this species the 50kg per month is open to all vessels with an English licence.

This 50kg forms part of the total monthly allowance for skates and rays in area VIIId. A vessel may not catch more than the total allowance for skates and rays in VIIId, inclusive of any undulate catches. For example, if an under-10m non-sector vessel lands 400kg of thornback ray and 50kg of undulate ray, the vessel will have landed 450kg of its monthly quota allocation for skates and rays in VIIId which for September is set at 500kg.

While undulate ray is classed as a [near-threatened species in Europe](#) it is also recognised as locally common in the eastern English Channel (area VIIId) which is why the EU allows a small quota each year. It has also been [removed as a feature of Defra's recommended Studland Bay Marine Conservation Zone](#).

This year the UK allocation for area VIIId is 3 tonnes with an additional flexibility allowance of 5% of the quota in the Western English Channel (VIIe) which brings the total available quota in VIIId to a maximum of 6 tonnes as a total for the whole of the UK fleet.

Undulate ray caught in this area are under a restrictive management framework, and the following regulations below must be followed:

- To be consistent with Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA) by-laws in some parts of the stock range, no undulate ray measuring less than 40 cm between the extreme tips of the wings should be landed.
- Following STECF guidelines, no undulate ray measuring greater than 60 cm between the extreme tips of the wings should be landed.
- No undulate ray may be transhipped.
- Undulate ray may only be retained on board or landed whole or gutted.

In order to prevent an over-fish of this small quota and protect the long term population it may be necessary to close this allowance at any point during a given month.