

Press release: £7,195 fine for fisheries offences in case brought by MMO

On 2 May 2017 S & P Trawlers (JACABEN) Limited, owner of the stern trawler Cerulean NN722, and its master Marcus White pleaded guilty to breaches of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1967 and the Fisheries Act 1981 at Barnstaple Magistrates Court.

The court heard how, during investigations including inspections of local fish merchants carried out by the MMO in 2015, it was identified that in July the Cerulean declared squid catches in their fishing vessel logbook when in fact no squid had been landed. Instead the actual catch for July was 2448.7kg of bass, some 648.7kg over the monthly limit of 1800kg. Two days following discovery of the error the vessel master contacted MMO to attempt to correct the error.

In August the Cerulean's logbook recorded a catch of 230kg of bass but on inspection by Marine Officers, the actual weight of bass landed was 367.5kg. This was an under-recording of 59.7%

The vessel owner S and P Trawlers (JACABEN) Limited were fined £3,200, with additional costs of £1,175 and a victim surcharge of £170.

The vessel master Marcus White was fined £1,500 with additional costs of £1,000 and a victim surcharge of £150.

A spokesman for the MMO said:

"In this case Marine Officers' inspections of local fish merchants and of the vessel itself revealed clear misreporting of the species and quantities of fish landed.

"The fact that the fish in question was sea bass, a species which not only commands a high market value but is also under severe pressure from potential overfishing and is, therefore, subject to increasing levels of regulation, was clearly an aggravating feature of these offences.

"The MMO recognises that the vast majority of fishermen operate lawfully and in compliance with regulations which exist to protect fisheries from overfishing and are in place to ensure healthy, sustainable fisheries for this and future generations of fishermen. In the rare instances that non-compliance is detected, we use a risk-based enforcement strategy and operate a graduated and proportionate system of sanctions, with prosecution reserved for the most serious offences."