

How to Sell Your Catch Direct:

A simple guide for fishermen in Northern Ireland wanting to sell their catch to consumers for personal consumption

Businesses including fishing vessels are classed as food business operators (FBOs) and must comply with the relevant legislation. Seafood businesses have a duty to register with their local authority to ensure the food they are selling is safe. They must also register with DAERA as a buyer or seller of fish to ensure the fish they are selling is legally caught. Both registrations can be carried out from forms available online. **Where sales are direct to the consumer, small and local and therefore the risk is considered to be low, there are some exemptions in place from this requirement.** This guide is to help you identify the regulations you need to comply with:

Fish Buyers and Sellers Regulation: exemptions

- Individuals can buy up to 30kg of seafood directly from a fisherman for their own personal consumption. There is a limit of up to 30kg per transaction. So, fishermen can sell multiple lots up of 30kg each day providing that the buyer is only purchasing for personal consumption, without needing to be a registered fish seller.
- Any single sale that exceeds the 30kg limit, or any transaction below 30kg for commercial purposes, can only take place if there is a registered buyer/seller as part of the transaction.
- We recommend that fishermen create invoices for each sale. This will be expected for tax purposes anyway. This also acts as a record of who the fish has been sold to and prevents fishermen from being at risk if the buyer then sells on to another person, or business.
- Fishermen can only sell fish their own catch caught from the vessel they work on. It is not possible for a fisherman to buy or take from another or multiple vessels and then sell direct to the public without being a registered fish buyer or seller (see footnote¹).
- Fishermen should still complete and submit any catch and landing documentation within timeframes, and weigh their catch before sale.

¹ Complete the form at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/828722/RBS1_Appl_for_registered_status_as_a_buyer_or_seller_of_first-sale_fish_including_shellfish_and_nephrops_in_the_UK.pdf, scan and email to clare.mcclean@daera-ni.gov.uk and gareth.fullerton@daera-ni.gov.uk **and** post a hard copy to Clare McClean, Marine and Fisheries Division, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Rathkeltair House, Market Street, Downpatrick, Co Down, BT30 6AJ.

Food Hygiene Regulations

All food businesses including fishing vessels must register with their local authority to receive advice on operating safely. Direct sales to the final consumer may be exempt from some of regulatory controls:

- Fishermen can directly supply local retail shops who sell to the final consumer or local restaurants where these are within the same or neighbouring local authority area, or up to 30 miles from landing port (whichever is greater), not further afield.
- Fishermen can directly supply the final consumer within Northern Ireland (not limited to the same or adjacent local authority area) if this does not pose a food safety risk - the fish must be transported at the correct temperature and be protected from contamination during transportation.
- Total amount of direct sales cannot exceed 25 tonnes in a calendar year.
- Live bivalve shellfish (mussels and oysters) and scallops can be at risk of contamination if not handled correctly. These products can only be sold to the public if they have come from an approved premise. You must not sell these species direct to consumers. You can sell live crustacean shellfish (crabs, lobsters, langoustines etc.) direct to the public from your fishing boat.
- If making deliveries, you will be operating as a food business and you need to register with your local authority² and comply with food safety and hygiene requirements, with guidance provided here: https://seafish.org/media/Guidance_for_mobile_fishmongers_final_version.pdf
- If you are processing the fish in any way (e.g. fileting) prior to sale you must be registered as a food business – fish can only be gutted on board vessels if selling directly to the public and not via a registered food business.
- When selling your catch at the quayside please ensure you and your customers follow Covid-19 social distancing requirements.

Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority instructions:

1. No direct selling to the public within any of the fish markets.
2. If transactions occur within Harbour Authority property fishermen must choose a location which minimises risk to the public from hazards arising in a working harbour (primarily trip hazards)
3. Fishermen undertaking direct selling must take sensible precautions to ensure compliance with social distancing.

² Register for free as a food business at: <https://www.gov.uk/food-business-registration>

If you are deaf or have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via the Next Generation Text Relay Service by dialling 18001 + telephone number.

