

Development of the Responsible Fishing Ports Scheme

This guide outlines how the Responsible Fishing Ports Scheme (RFPS) is being developed and describes the process by which fishing ports (and fishing harbours) would be certified against its requirements.

What is the scheme?

The Responsible Fishing Ports Scheme will be a voluntary programme that will certify responsible food safety and good operational practices within fishing ports. It will be an independently audited scheme to demonstrate that a port and those organisations that operate within it are following best practice in five core areas: Food Safety and Structural Integrity, Port and the Working Environment, Care for the Environment, Care of the Catch and Traceability.

Why is the scheme being developed?

Members of the British Ports Association Fishing Ports Group (BPAFPG), over recent years, have become increasingly aware that the multitude of legislative, environmental and operational procedures carried out by each fishing port around the UK has led to different interpretations of how they should be implemented. This may have resulted in potential inconsistencies within the sector. The BPAFPG recognises these differences can reflect individual port requirements; however, there is an opportunity to harmonise operations through the development of the RFPS. The scheme will be underpinned by a Code of Practice (CoP) that details good operational practices and a Standard against which a port will be assessed in context of demonstrating the good operational practices detailed in the CoP.

The potential benefits for each fishing port engaged within the RFPS will be the development of good practice to bring uniformity and structure to their relevant operations.

A scoping exercise, funded by Seafish, was commissioned in 2015 to assess the need and support for such a scheme. This included engagement with the ports and wider supply chain to canvass ideas for the requirements for the CoP that can be verified by the RFPS Standard. Upon completion, the RFPS will complement the revised Responsible Fishing Scheme (RFS) by covering similar areas (traceability, care of the catch, worker's health and safety and environmental controls) to develop confidence in auctions and fish markets.

Findings of the scoping exercise

The main conclusions of the scoping exercise were:

- the ports and wider supply chain were in favour of developing a RFPS to promote the fishing industry brand and bridge the perceived gap in chain of custody assurance of the catch from the vessel to the buyers.
- the RFPS Standard should be developed so that it would comply with ISO 17065 accreditation requirements on how to certify a product, service or process and be capable of future ISEAL recognition.
- to avoid confusion, the RFPS CoP and Standard should be stand-alone but able to link in with the RFS vessel standard and associated Supply Chain of Custody standards.

Development of the RFPS

The development of the RFPS began in January 2016 with the formation of a multi-stakeholder Oversight Board (OB) to which the Standard Holder (the Seafish Board) delegated the task of agreeing the overall strategic direction and objectives for the scheme.

In February 2016, the OB agreed the main areas of concern that needed to be addressed by the CoP and Standard, and delegated the function of developing the CoP and standard to a Technical Committee (TC), a multi stakeholder group with the specific expertise within port operations and food safety, traceability and supply chain requirements.

Since April 2016, the TC and other stakeholders have been developing the CoP and have produced a 'working draft' of the Standard. The plan, during 2017, is to undertake pilot audits and a public consultation in order to produce a final version of the Standard for approval by the OB and Seafish Board. Following final approval, the plan is to take a sample of 'potential applicant ports' through the application process. The full certification model development process will begin in March 2017 and ensure that the Standard can be certified to ISO 17065 requirements.

Throughout the development of the RFPS a robust process is being followed to ensure that all stakeholders potentially affected by the new scheme will have an opportunity to provide input to the scope and content; and a full, transparent and credible Governance Structure has been adopted to ensure that the new scheme aligns fully with ISO 17065 accreditation requirements for the certification.

What is key objective of the RFPS?

The Oversight Board have agreed that the key objective of the RFPS will be as follows:

“The Responsible Fishing Ports Standard programme will promote and encourage responsible operating practices within UK fishing ports and harbours, to give greater assurance and transparency to buyers and users of seafood landed in the UK.”

In order to be certified to the RFPS Standard, any applicant fishing port must be able to demonstrate compliance with the five core modules of the CoP. These core modules are:

Core modules	Aim	Content
Module 1- Food Safety and Structural Integrity	Promote food safety and mitigate contamination risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hygiene levels • Structural Condition - inside and out • Temperature Insulation/Control
Module 2 -Port and the Working Environment	Provide a safe working environment through enhanced operating and welfare practices and provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due Diligence and Compliance with Legislation • Improve Skills and Knowledge, Training Provision • Health and safety, and welfare of port operatives (welfare)
Module 3- Care of Environment	Encourage a culture of respect for the protection of the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste management • Recycling • Environmental controls
Module 4- Care of the catch; Fish is Food	Promote and maintain food protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grading • Quality Maintenance - temp control (Ice , chilled) • Food protection - site security, protection from malicious damage, and extraneous factors (e.g. dog fouling)
Module 5 – Traceability	Provide provenance for all the seafood handled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traceability systems in place • Food authenticity

In addition, the CoP contains additional requirements deemed **not to be** core; these areas will not be assessed in the RFPS Standard certification model because, in the view of the OB, they are not applicable to all fishing ports. These areas are deemed to be aspirational and are designed to offer guidance to ports and harbours that can offer these additional services to the supply chain. The aspirational module is:

Aspirational module	Aim	Content
Module 6 – Port Service	Provide good quality services to the Fishing sector and Supply Chain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electricity and water • Ice • Net making/mending

What is the definition of a fishing port?

In considering which fishing ports (and harbours) should be eligible to be certified to the scheme, the TC has defined four categories (levels) of port.

Level 1	Fishing ports that are registered with the local authority and only have facilities such as a quay to allow fishers to land their catch.
Level 2	Fishing ports that are registered with the local authority, have facilities such as a quay to allow fishers to land their catch and facilities to store the catch.
Level 3	Fishing ports that are registered with the local authority, have facilities such as a quay to allow fishers to land their catch, have facilities to store the catch and conduct sales directly to the supply chain.
Level 4	Fishing ports that are registered with the local authority, have facilities such as a quay to allow fishers to land their catch, have facilities to store the catch and conduct sales by auction (and direct sales) to the supply chain.

What is the scope of the RFPS?

The TC agreed that the CoP will comprise a set of ‘good practices’ that exceed minimum legal requirements and will assist all port categories (levels 1 to 4) enhance their own operations.

For certification to the RFPS Standard, the TC agreed this will focus on designated ports defined as category levels 3 and 4. The rationale behind this decision is that in these levels (3 and 4) there will be organisations (e.g. fish selling companies and agents) that will **take control** of the catch from the fishers and sell this on their behalf to the supply chain.

Port category levels 1 and 2 will not be certified to the RFPS Standard as no other organisation other than the fishers will have control of the catch; as such the catch handling embarkation/ disembarkation processes would be covered by the Responsible Fishing Scheme.

The proposed RFPS Standard ‘unit of certification’

The OB and TC have agreed that the port authorities and the agents/selling company should be assessed jointly within a client group formation along with ‘associated operators’ involved in fish handling operations, if a port is to be eligible to be certified to the RFPS Standard.

Perceived benefits of the RFPS to the port sector and wider supply chain

- Improve and maintain hygiene levels – internal and external to meet with sector and supply chain expectations;
- Maintain and determine a minimum structural condition - inside and outside the market selling hall, fish landing and loading area to ensure good food safety requirements;
- Care of the landed seafood to enhance its quality maintenance, to reassure both the catching sector and the wider supply chain;
- Where applicable, ensure that the grading compliance of landed seafood is consistently met and adhered to;
- Promote and ensure that the seafood traceability documentation trail is maintained from the catching vessel to the first stage in the fish processing sector;
- Provision of waste management and recycling facilities and processes for both the catching and supply chain sectors that use the port facility;
- Creation of environmental controls to mitigate any risk of pollution that may emanate from a port's operations; and
- Worker rights and welfare are protected and respected in order to ensure a highly qualified and motivated workforce

Seafish role

Seafish is facilitating and funding the development of the CoP and Standard, working in conjunction with a diverse stakeholder group to ensure this is an industry led initiative that will benefit the ports and harbour sector and wider supply chain.

Further information

As the work progresses, further information will be available on the website;

<http://www.seafish.org/responsible-sourcing/responsible-fishing-ports-standard-rfps->

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