

The Responsible Fishing Ports Scheme

This factsheet 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 good 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.

Where did the idea for the scheme originate?

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.

Following discussions between BPAFPG and Seafish in 2015, the concept of the RFPS was identified. A scoping exercise was then commissioned by Seafish 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.

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.

How is the RFPS being developed?

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. Following the development of a draft Cop and Standard by the TC and other stakeholders during late 2016, the plan, during 2017, is to undertake development audits and a public consultation in order to produce a final version of the Standard for approval by the OB and Seafish Board. Following the Standard's final approval in March 2018, the plan is to have the scheme ready to receive an application from an applicant port.

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.

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.

What is the objective of the RFPS?

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

“The Responsible Fishing Ports Scheme 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 sold through UK fishing ports.”

What does the RFPS include?

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	Criteria
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 Food protection - site security, protection from malicious damage, and extraneous factors (e.g. dog fouling)
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	Promote and encourage a positive approach to 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) • Temperature Insulation/Control
Module 5 Traceability	Provide provenance for all the seafood handled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traceability systems in place • Food authenticity

What other modules have been considered?

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 types of fishing port. These areas are deemed aspirational and are designed to offer guidance to ports and harbours that offer these additional services to the supply chain. The content of the aspirational modules are currently:

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
Module 7 Live Holding	Promote and encourage a positive approach to the handling of live animals (crustacea)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live crustacea

What is the definition of a fishing port?

The TC has defined four categories (levels) of port which are defined as either 'small' or 'large'.

Small 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.
Large Port	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 types of fishing ports are included within 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. However, during the development process it became evident that all types of fishing port could not be covered by a single standard due to the varied nature of UK fishing ports and their associated activities.

Standard (large port)

The scope of the scheme is currently limited to ports/harbours with direct sales or auction facilities (levels 3 and 4). The rationale behind this decision is that these will have 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.

Standard (small port)

A separate standard for small ports without direct sales or auction facilities is to be developed after April 2018. This approach has been agreed by the OB to ensure the RFPS is fit for purpose and covers the requirements of all types of fishing ports/harbours in the UK.

What is the 'unit of certification'?

The OB and TC have agreed that, for large ports, the unit of certification is the port as defined by regulation and approved by the relevant authority for that purpose. The port / port authority would be 'the Applicant', if a port is to be eligible to be certified to the RFPS Standard.

How much will it cost a port to apply for certification?

As we are still developing the Standard, we haven't yet finalised any audit costs. Current estimates are that it will take around 1.5 days of auditor time to undertake an audit of a large port. Smaller ports should require less time to audit; however, we won't know estimated costs until we develop the small ports standard and a costing framework that might reduce costs further.

What are the 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;
- 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

Will any port be disadvantaged by the RFPS?

The scheme has been developed by industry to be an achievable approach to raising standards across the fishing port sector. It is a voluntary scheme designed to be open to all fishing ports, starting initially with larger ports. The scheme for smaller ports will follow soon after.

What is Seafish's 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.

How can I find out more about the scheme?

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

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

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