

## How to handle 'undersize' or discard fish onshore – guide for fishermen

The demersal discard ban will be introduced from 1 January 2016 to 2019. Under the ban fish that is below Minimum Conservation Reference Size (MCRS) or 'undersize' will have to be landed and counted against quota.

If you handle this undersize fish well and according to food hygiene rules then you can increase the number of markets it can be sent to and maximise its value.

It should not be seen as 'waste' – it does not have to go to landfill. Some money can be made from this fish, although not as much as for food fish.

Undersize fish cannot go to 'direct human consumption' uses but can go to other uses:

- **Non-direct human consumption** – the fish is processed in particular ways before entering the human food chain. At the moment these uses are food additives, fish protein extracts and fish oil.

Fish going to these uses must be handled according to **food hygiene rules**. You will already follow these rules on your vessel and onshore for handling food fish.

- **Non-human consumption** – the fish does not enter the human food chain at all. These uses include fish meal, pot bait, animal feed, pet food, fertiliser, cosmetics, composting, digestion, incineration, silage and rendering.

Fish going to these markets must be handled according to **Animal By-Product (ABP) rules** – but only from the moment the owner decides the fish is going to non-human consumption uses. This fish must be handled and stored in ABP approved facilities and transported on ABP registered transport. ABP rules only apply on land, not on your vessel.

If you are not sure where undersize fish will be sent, then you should handle it according to food hygiene rules at first.

### Responsibility

You are responsible for the undersize fish you land until you give or sell it to another owner.

Undersize fish should not be dumped as this is an offence under the Environmental Protection Act.

## Onshore facilities for undersize fish

You might want to talk to ports, markets, agents or other local businesses in your area to see where undersize fish can be directed. Ideas that some areas are looking into are:

- Ports providing a collection facility where fishermen can place undersize fish until it is collected by a buyer e.g. fishmeal processor.
- Undersize fish could be directed to the same routes as fish offal produced after food fish is processed.
- You could pass your fish directly to another vessel to use as pot bait. The vessel who receives the bait will need to be a registered buyer.

There might be other ideas you can come up with together with others in your local area that take account of your specific fisheries, geographical location and the existing facilities in place.

### More information:

Information on the **landing obligation** is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fisheries-management-landing-obligation>

Information on **ABP rules** is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-ports-markets-agents-and-other-businesses/guidance-for-ports-markets-agents-and-other-businesses>

Information on **markets undersize fish can be sent to** is on the Seafish website at:

[http://www.seafish.org/media/1477052/defra\\_handlingundersizefishunderthelo\\_2015](http://www.seafish.org/media/1477052/defra_handlingundersizefishunderthelo_2015)

### Contact

Please contact your local MMO office if you have any concerns or queries that are not answered by the above information.