

European fishing, processing, aquaculture and trading sectors call for urgent corrective action on EU Fisheries Control Regulation

- Joint Press Release -

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European organisations representing the fishing, fish processing, aquaculture and trading sectors are calling on the European Commission to urgently correct and recalibrate the implementation of the EU Fisheries Control Regulation, including the CATCH IT system. In line with the joint statement submitted by Member States to the Agriculture and Fisheries Council¹, the sectors urge swift, targeted actions to address provisions that are proving unworkable in practice and that risk undermining safety at sea, legal certainty and the competitiveness of EU operators.

The progressive entry into force of the new control rules is creating disproportionate administrative and operational burdens that are not aligned with actual control needs and that undermine the principles of proportionality, efficiency and effectiveness. Certain obligations, including recording catches from zero kilograms together with the strict application of margins of tolerance, are technically impossible to comply with under real fishing conditions, particularly in mixed fisheries and on smaller vessels. This increases safety risks and leads to unintentional infringements and heavy sanctions.

Serious technical and operational shortcomings in the CATCH IT system are already disrupting supply chains and increasing costs for operators. *‘The current approach places a disproportionate administrative burden on EU operators, including our importers and exporters, while participation by third-country authorities remains voluntary,’* the organisations declare. Unclear responsibilities for the completion of catch certificates and duplicative controls further increase processing times and legal uncertainty. These challenges are compounded by the fact that the system is not yet fully technically operational in practice.

The sectors therefore jointly call on the European Commission to take urgent corrective action, including:

- amending the Regulation to ensure that estimation deviations below 100 kg are not considered non-compliance;
- ensuring such deviations are not treated as serious infringements;
- postponing full implementation of the CATCH system until January 2027, allowing the coexistence of current and digital systems in the meantime;
- clarifying reporting obligations for fishing operations;
- postponing the application of digital traceability requirements after first sale until January 2029.

¹ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5587-2026-INIT/en/pdf>

'These targeted and pragmatic adjustments are essential to ensure fisheries control rules remain enforceable, credible and workable in practice, without undermining safety at sea or the economic viability of EU operators,' the organisations state. They stand ready to work constructively with the European Commission, Member States and the European Parliament to achieve a balanced and effective implementation of the Regulation.

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