EU CATCH certification scheme

Published by AGRINFO on 06 Aug 2025

CATCH system: EU adopts harmonised benchmarks for port inspections, simplified fishing certificates, and prior notification forms

Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2025/1522 of 28 July 2025 amending Regulation (EC) No 1010/2009 laying down rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing

Update

CATCH is the European Union (EU) database for the management of catch certificates and documents that must be provided by EU importers and Member State competent authorities from 10 January 2026 onwards to demonstrate that illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing has not taken place.

To ensure that this system will work efficiently, the EU has updated the:

- prior notification form
- benchmarks used by port inspections to assess the risk of IUU fishing
- criteria for determining which operators can use a simplified form of the catch certificate
- simplified catch certificate (compatible with the CATCH database)
- list of catch documentation schemes adopted by those regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) that meet EU IUU rules.

Existing administrative cooperation arrangements regarding catch certificates with countries such as South Africa will terminate in January 2026 as they are not compatible with the information required by CATCH.

Impacted products

Fishery products (wild catch)

Copyright © **COLEAD 2026,** *AGRINFO is funded by the European Union and implemented by COLEAD.*

What is changing?

CATCH (Regulation 2023/2842) is the EU's digital information system for the management of catch certificates and documents to be provided by EU importers and Member State competent authorities to demonstrate that IUU fishing has not taken place (see Revised EU rules and digitalisation of fisheries control).

To ensure this system will work effectively, the EU has updated the following.

Prior notification

Fishing vessels must notify EU Member State competent authorities of their arrival at port 3 working days before arrival (Regulation 1005/2008, Art. 6). This Regulation simplifies the form for prior notification (Regulation 1010/2009, Annex II).

Benchmarks

EU Member States must inspect at least 5% of imported fish consignments (Regulation 1005/2008, Art. 9) on the basis of risk assessment based on benchmarks set in Regulation 1010/2009 (Art. 4). This Regulation updates those benchmarks on the basis of Member States' experience in carrying out inspections.

The benchmarks for port inspections (Regulation 1010/2009, Art. 4) are being amended as follows:

(a) the species landed are subject to an inspection scheme or quotas established by RFMOs

(b) the fishing vessel has not been inspected at an EU port in the past 6 months

(c) inconsistencies between the catches and known fishing activities of a flag State (particularly regarding species, volumes, or characteristics of its fishing fleet)

(d) failure to comply with Regulation 1005/2008 (Art. 6) on prior notice; inconsistencies between catch data declared by the operator and information available to the competent authority

(e) vessel owner or operator suspected of being or having been involved in IUU fishing activities

(f) vessel having recently changed its name, flag, or registration number

(g) vessel currently flagged, or flagged in the past 5 years, to a State notified by the Commission as possibly being identified as "non-cooperating third country" in accordance with Regulation 1005/2008 (Art. 31)

(h) vessel flagged to a State not notified in accordance with Regulation 1005/2008 (Art. 20)

(i) information available on possible irregularities in the validation of catch certificates by a given flag State

Copyright © **COLEAD 2026,** *AGRINFO is funded by the European Union and implemented by COLEAD.*

(j) presumed deficiencies in the control system of a flag State

(k) operators have been involved in illegal activities constituting a potential risk of IUU fishing

(l) fishing vessel having been denied entry or use of port in accordance with relevant international, regional and/or national legislation (including fishing vessels eventually allowed entry or access to port due to *force majeure* or distress according to Regulation 1005/2008, Art. 4(2)).

Simplified catch certificates

Small fishing vessels may not have the capacity to implement the full certification scheme. Regulation 1010/2009 establishes a simplified form of catch certificate. To make it easier for EU Member State authorities to verify which operators may use the simplified certificates, the eligibility conditions have been amended (Art. 6): only vessels with overall length <12 m without towed gear or <8 m with towed gear will be able to use simplified certificates. The simplified catch certificate (Annex IV) has been amended to be compatible with CATCH.

RFMOs' catch documentation schemes

Catch documents which are validated by recognised regional fisheries management organisations are accepted as catch certificates (Regulation 1005/2008, Art. 13). This new Regulation (2025/1522) updates the list of recognised RFMO catch documentation schemes (Regulation 1010/2009, Annex V).

Administrative arrangements with non-EU countries

The EU currently cooperates with certain non-EU countries (listed in Regulation 1010/2009, Annex IX) in the validation of certificates, including South Africa. These administrative arrangements do not cover all the information that will be required by the new CATCH system, and will be terminated from 10 January 2026.

Why?

The European Commission wants to ensure a harmonised approach to port inspections in all EU Member States and establish a level playing field for all operators. The use of the CATCH database to manage catch certificates as part of the TRACES system will become compulsory for all EU importers and competent authorities in the Member States from 10 January 2026.

Regulation 1010/2009 needs to be adapted to reflect those changes.

Copyright © **COLEAD 2026,** *AGRINFO is funded by the European Union and implemented by COLEAD.*

Timeline

The Regulation applies from **10 January 2026**.

The simplified catch certificate and the corresponding form for prior notification apply from **10 January 2027** for non-EU fishing vessels.

Until 10 January 2028 importers may use simplified catch certificates that have been validated before 10 January 2027.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

Countries that have agreed administrative arrangements that are no longer compatible with CATCH will need to have alternatives in place by 10 January 2026 (South Africa is the only AGRINFO partner country with such an arrangement).

Background

Regulation 2023/2842 revised the rules on fisheries control, applicable to both EU and non-EU fishing vessels operating in EU waters, for better control and enforcement of the Common Fisheries Policy and to fulfil international obligations on IUU fishing. In particular, the CATCH digital information system will be compulsory for EU importers and competent authorities in Member States from 10 January 2026.

At least 5% of landing and transhipment operations by non-EU fishing vessels are inspected at ports of landing in EU Member States (Regulation 1005/2008, Art. 9(1)). The EU's catch certification scheme bases verification of compliance on systematic identification of risks according to criteria established in Regulation 1010/2009, Art. 31.

Resources

Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing

Commission Regulation (EC) No 1010/2009 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing

Regulation (EU) 2023/2842 amending Regulations […] as regards fisheries control

Copyright © **COLEAD 2026,** *AGRINFO is funded by the European Union and implemented by COLEAD.*

Sources

Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2025/1522 amending Regulation (EC) No 1010/2009 laying down rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing

Visit the AGRINFO website to view the latest AGRINFO Update newsletters and search the database.

Disclaimer: *Under no circumstances shall COLEAD be liable for any loss, damage, liability or expense incurred or suffered that is claimed to have resulted from the use of information available on this website or any link to external sites. The use of the website is at the user's sole risk and responsibility. This information platform was created and maintained with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents do not, however, reflect the views of the European Union.*

Copyright © **COLEAD 2026,** *AGRINFO is funded by the European Union and implemented by COLEAD.*