

The Sea Fish Industry (Coronavirus) (Fixed Costs) (Amendment) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2020

SR 2020 No. 95

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (the Department) to accompany the Statutory Rule (details above) which is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Statutory Rule is subject to confirmation by the Northern Ireland Assembly within three months of the date on which it is made.
- 1.2. The Statutory Rule is made in exercise of the powers conferred by section 15(1) and (2) of the Fisheries Act 1981, as read with paragraph 2(1) of Schedule 2 to the Sea Fisheries (Northern Ireland) Order 2002.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. The purpose of this Statutory Rule is to amend S.R. 2020 No.76, the Sea Fish Industry (Coronavirus) (Fixed Costs) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2020 (the “Principal Scheme”) to update the definition of “length overall” for a fishing vessel.
- 2.2. The Principal Scheme provides a financial support scheme in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic to assist with the fixed costs of sea fishing vessels in the Northern Ireland fleet whose incomes have been significantly affected. The amendment substitutes a reference to Regulation (EU) 2017/1130 (which provides for characteristics of fishing vessels) for the repealed Council Regulation (EEC) No 2930/86.

3. Background

The Principal Scheme

- 3.1. The unprecedented global COVID-19 pandemic had an immediate and significant financial impact on the sea fish catching sector across the United Kingdom due to the collapse of key export markets and restrictions on movements for public health reasons. Each of the UK Fisheries Administrations considered financial support measures for their respective fishing industries as part of their COVID-19 response to the collapse in export and domestic markets for fish.
- 3.2. In Northern Ireland the COVID-19 crisis immediately affected high value shellfish

that would normally have been exported to Europe and the Far East. Demand for whitefish (cod, haddock) and prawn tails (scampi) then reduced significantly as the UK Government introduced restrictions on movements which meant that restaurants and other establishments in the hospitality and catering sectors closed.

- 3.3. In order to respond rapidly to the COVID-19 situation, on 3 April 2020 the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Edwin Poots MLA announced a £1.5M support package for the sea fishing fleet to assist with their fixed costs over a three month period.

4. Consultation

- 4.1. The Department consulted with key industry stakeholders in the sea fishing sector prior to making the Principal Scheme.

5. Equality Impact

- 5.1. The Department considers that the proposed Statutory Rule complies with section 75 of the NI Act 1998. The Principal Scheme was screened out of a full equality impact assessment.

6. Regulatory Impact

- 6.1. This Statutory Rule amends the Principal Scheme which provides financial support for those fishing vessels in the sea fish catching sector that need it most during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. The financial assistance available is based on 4 separate length bands of fishing vessels, under 10m, 10-11.99m, 12-14.99m and 15m+ respectively
- 6.2. This Statutory Rule simply updates a reference to the EU legislation which defines the length of a fishing vessel and has no material effect on the administration of the Principal Scheme.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. This Statutory Rule provides for a minor technical amendment to include the latest EU regulation which defined the length of a fishing vessel and has no further financial implications for the Principal Scheme which is estimated to cost £1.5 million and the funding for which has been agreed with the Minister of Finance and the Northern Ireland Executive as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

8. Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

- 8.1. This Statutory Rule complies with the provisions set out in Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

9. EU Implications

- 9.1. This Statutory Rule substitutes Regulation (EU) 2017/1130 (which provides for characteristics of fishing vessels) for the repealed Council Regulation (EEC) No 2930/86. Article 2 of Regulation (EU) 2017/1130. Both regulations contain the same definition of the length of a fishing vessel.

10. Parity or Replicatory Measure

- 10.1. N/A

11. Additional Information

- 11.1. For further information contact Paddy Campbell (02844618007) or Patrick Smith (Tel. 028448618111) at the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs or e-mail patrick.smith@daera-ni.gov.uk or seafisheries@daera-ni.gov.uk.