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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB for the meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council of 23-24 June 2025: 10 January 2026: Mandatory use of IT CATCH to fight illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing - Information from the Commission

10 JANUARY 2026: MANDATORY USE OF CATCH TO FIGHT ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED FISHING

INFORMATION NOTE

Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008¹ (hereafter the “IUU Regulation”) established a Catch Certification Scheme to ensure that fishery products stemming from illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing do not reach the EU market. This scheme is part of the EU policies contributing to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) “Life below water”, in particular SDG 14.4.

Regulation (EU) 2023/2842² as regards fisheries control entered into force on 9 January 2024. It amended, among other Regulations, the IUU Regulation by introducing important changes to the

¹ Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 of 29 September 2008 establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, amending Regulations (EEC) No 2847/93, (EC) No 1936/2001 and (EC) No 601/2004 and repealing Regulations (EC) No 1093/94 and (EC) No 1447/1999.

² Regulation (EU) 2023/2842 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 November 2023 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009, and amending Council Regulations (EC)

Catch Certification Scheme. Most of the changes will be applicable 24 months after the entry into force of Regulation (EU) 2023/2842, i.e. from 10 January 2026.

The modifications to the Catch Certification Scheme focus on ensuring the traceability along the supply chain, amongst others by digitising the paper-based system through CATCH.

CATCH is an EU-wide real-time IT platform for the management of all information, data and documents linked to the EU Catch Certification Scheme. It is available in all EU official languages and some other languages, and allows for the submission of certificates and related documents accompanying the fishery products to be imported into the EU in accordance with the IUU Regulation.

No 1967/2006 and (EC) No 1005/2008 and Regulations (EU) 2016/1139, (EU) 2017/2403 and (EU) 2019/473 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards fisheries control.

The main objective of CATCH is to streamline the catch certification procedures and to offer a fully digitised and paperless workflow. It will facilitate the exchange of data, information and documents between all involved trading parties and control authorities and therefore will simplify and speed up the administrative procedures.

Concretely, CATCH will:

- allow for the detection of fraudulent catch certificates;
- prevent the repeated use of catch certificates for multiple consignments intended for the EU market;
- support risk management applied to controls;
- harmonise the documentary workflows; and
- ease the exchanges between economic operators and competent authorities and between the competent authorities of the EU Member States, hence reducing administrative burden.

The use of CATCH becomes compulsory for EU importers and Member States' authorities on 10 January 2026. It complements the EU carding system for a more effective fight against IUU fishing and is also one of the flagship actions under the European Ocean Pact.

The Commission would like to recall to the Member States the need for effective and timely enforcement of the mandatory use of CATCH and for ensuring preparedness of their respective authorities. We are at a critical juncture, with a six-month window for Member States to intensify training, operationalise CATCH effectively, and continue comprehensive outreach to their relevant operators. Political support will be essential to facilitate a smooth and successful transition.

In 2024 and 2025, the Commission focused its work on the preparation for the mandatory use of this system, together with the competent authorities in Member States and the European Fisheries Control Agency. This included, among other, preparation of amendments to the IUU Implementing Regulation³ to detail the basic general rules for functioning of CATCH, training events for Member States' authorities, publication of training material and continuous technical improvements of the system.

³ Commission Regulation (EC) No 1010/2009 of 22 October 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, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2009/1010/oj>.

The Commission will continue working with the Member States' authorities to ensure a full, seamless and correct implementation of CATCH as of 10 January 2026. This includes finalising the IT developments and further facilitating Member States' authorities' preparedness to use the system.

Although the use of CATCH will be mandatory only for the EU operators and Member States' authorities, the system will also allow non-EU countries' operators and authorities to create, validate, and transfer catch certificates and related documents directly in CATCH. As such, the production flow of relevant data and documents can become digital from the origin of the product (exporting flag State) to the final destination (importing Member State)⁴.

The Commission has been promoting CATCH to non-EU country authorities since its establishment in 2019, through bilateral contacts, and intensified its promotion in 2024 by organising an information meeting for all non-EU country missions to the EU, followed by several regional seminars. Furthermore, the Commission has been working on interoperability solutions for priority non-EU countries that already have IT systems for validating catch certificates.

The Commission will continue to promote the direct and free of charge use of CATCH to non-EU countries, highlighting its benefits for trade facilitation, like speeding up the administrative procedures at the border. The Commission will also continue to work with priority non-EU countries on interoperability between CATCH and their IT systems.

⁴ Please note that non-EU countries can have access to the TRACES NT platform where CATCH is available. Non-EU countries already use this platform for other certificates.