



Update regarding the European Union's catch certification scheme – requirement for licence holder signature

Purpose

This notice is to inform users of the Fisheries Certificate System (FCS) and their suppliers of upcoming changes to the European Union's (EU) Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing Regulation, which will include the requirement for the licence holder's signature to appear on catch certificates for each vessel.

Background

Recent amendments to the EU IUU Regulation came into force on January 10, 2026. However, a grace period of six months was provided for the phasing in of some new requirements applicable to catch certificates. This includes the requirement for the vessel master or licence holder to sign each catch certificate on which their vessel is named. All imports of fisheries products to EU Member States, must be accompanied by a catch certificate, issued by the competent authority of the flag state. In Canada, catch certificates are issued by Fisheries and Oceans Canada's Catch Certification Program (CCP).

Following extensive engagement with the EU, the CCP has developed a solution which will allow FCS registered companies who purchase product from vessels to sign catch certificates on behalf of the licence holder or vessel master, as their duly authorized representative.

Context

The EU requirement for a vessel master or licence holder to sign for their vessel's catch information on each catch certificate, is intended to ensure that catches reported on a catch certificate have been verified by the harvester at its source.

In the Canadian context, harvesters do not typically use the Fisheries Certificate System, which is a traceability system used for the purpose of obtaining certification to support trade. Canadian catch certificates for the EU are issued at the point of export, making it unfeasible in most scenarios for the document to be signed by all licence holders prior to shipments taking place, especially during busy fishing seasons.

To simplify this process, DFO will put in place a process allowing licence holders to duly authorize their fish buyers to sign catch certificates on their behalf. For catches to be eligible for export to the EU market, licence holders are required to provide information to buyers about where their catches were harvested, including licence number, catch dates and fishing management area. When the buyer



enters this information into FCS along with the net weight that they purchased from the vessel, they will attest to having provided accurate information in the catch certificate on behalf of the licence holder. Their signature will appear next to the vessel's entry, as the duly authorized representative for the licence holder.

Process

Licence holders will be able to designate buyers as their duly authorized representative by logging into their National Online Licensing System (NOLS) account. NOLS is the online system used by licence holders to pay for and receive their fishing licences and associated documents. Within NOLS, a new request type will be available for licence holders to submit a request to DFO. This request type will be called "Catch Certificate Signatory Request". Using this request type, each licence holder will be able to select the company that they sell product to, and they will be able to designate the Applicant Manager for that company to sign for their catch information on catch certificates. Harvesters who sell to buyers that are not registered in FCS will need to submit a request for the company that the buyer is associated with that is registered in FCS.

Once a licence holder has authorized a buyer to sign on their behalf, the buyer will then be able to add that vessel and the licence holder to their groupings, with that representative relationship established. Each certificate that a first buyer creates in FCS that names that vessel, will contain the name of the licence holder and the signature of the Applicant Manager for the FCS registered company (signing as the representative for the buyer).

This process will avoid the need for catch certificates to be circulated to harvesters for their signature prior to export.

Changes to FCS

An upcoming update to the FCS will include new features integrated into the Grouping Request and Standard application processes. These features will make it necessary to have the authorization in place for each vessel being added to a grouping or a Standard application. After this update to FCS, only vessels whose licence holders have designated your company's Applicant Manager as their representative will be available for selection in your grouping request or Standard application.

How to Prepare

Beginning in spring of 2026, licence holders will be able to designate buyers as their authorized representative for catch certificates. Leading up to this, the CCP recommends that you begin discussing with the harvesters you purchase from to ensure that they understand this requirement and are prepared to follow the process to designate your company as an authorized representative, by logging



into their NOLS account and following the instructions provided for the Catch Certification Program request type. You can provide licence holders that you purchase fish and seafood products from the following documents to help guide them in this process:

- Catch Certification Program: Designating an authorized representative to sign catch certificates on behalf of a licence holder – step by step instructions
- Catch Certification Program: Designating an authorized representative to sign catch certificates on behalf of a licence holder – Questions and Answers

These documents will be sent out in the coming weeks. In the meantime, the CCP recommends that you become familiar with the changes to the EU catch certification scheme and that you discuss these changes with the companies and/or vessels that you buy product from, as well as those companies that you sell product to. Advance planning between you and your business partners, will allow for a smooth and efficient transition.

Additional Information

It is the responsibility of the exporter to be familiar with the requirements of the destination market for their exports and to ensure that they meet all requirements at the time of export.

Information about the EU IUU Regulation can be found [here](#). Additional information about the recent amendments to the EU IUU Regulation can be found [here](#).

The Catch Certification Program Operations Centre is available to answer your questions and provide assistance. You can [contact](#) the Catch Certification Program as follows:

Availability (Eastern Time - ET)

- Weekdays: 7:00 am to 5:00 pm
- Weekends: 7:00 am to 3:00 pm

Toll-free: 1-888-641-6464

Telephone: 902-775-7103

Email: DFO.CCP-PCC.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca