

EU legislation: Fish and aquaculture products

Introduction

In the European Union legislation relevant to fishery products, including aquaculture animals and products, is laid down in numerous Directives and Regulations. A key issue in the EU legislation for fish is food safety. For fish imported to the EU, there are also requirements set for establishments which produce and export fish. The EU fish legislation has been revised. This new, revised legislation entered into force 1 January 2006.

Outline of the legislation



The key feature of the current EU Directives is that all fishery products imported from third countries into the EU must come from a preparation, processing, packaging or storage facility ('establishment') which is approved by the EU recognised competent body in the country concerned. The reason for these strict requirements is that the EU wishes to ensure that the level of safety from imported animal products is of the same level as that of animal products produced within the EU.

Before exports from a certain country are allowed, several requirements need to be fulfilled on a country level. These are:

1. The animal health situation in non-EU countries satisfies EU requirements for imports of the animals or products in question.
2. National authorities in non-EU countries can provide rapid, regular, information on the existence of certain infectious or contagious animal diseases on their territory.
3. There is effective legislation in the non-EU country on the use of substances (e.g. hormonal, thyreostatic, veterinary medicines) in particular concerning the prohibition or authorisation of substances, their distribution, release onto the market and their rules covering administration and inspection.
4. There is an acceptable programme in the non-EU country to monitor the presence of certain substances (e.g. veterinary medicines) and the residues thereof in live animals and animal products, including fish, for which export approval is sought.
5. The veterinary services in the non-EU country are capable of enforcing the necessary health controls.
6. There are effective measures in the non-EU country to prevent and control certain infectious or contagious animal diseases.

If these requirements are met, the country can be included on a positive list of countries that can export fishery and aquaculture products to the EU.

➔ [For more information](#) on the list of countries that have been approved to export animal products (including fish), see the external links.

In addition, and more relevant to the *producers* of fish and fishery products in developing countries, the national authorities in the country of origin must guarantee that the processing establishment where products intended for human consumption are produced satisfies EU requirements. A national authority in a third country can put forward a specific establishment for approval, if the national authority is confident that the EU requirements are met. In practice this means that establishments where animal and animal products are produced need to comply with the same requirements as establishments within the EU. This is done to ensure that imported animal products (including fish) meet the same standards as products produced in the EU.

If you are a producer and would like to export your fish products to the EU, you need to contact the national authority in your country to get the approval for EU exports.

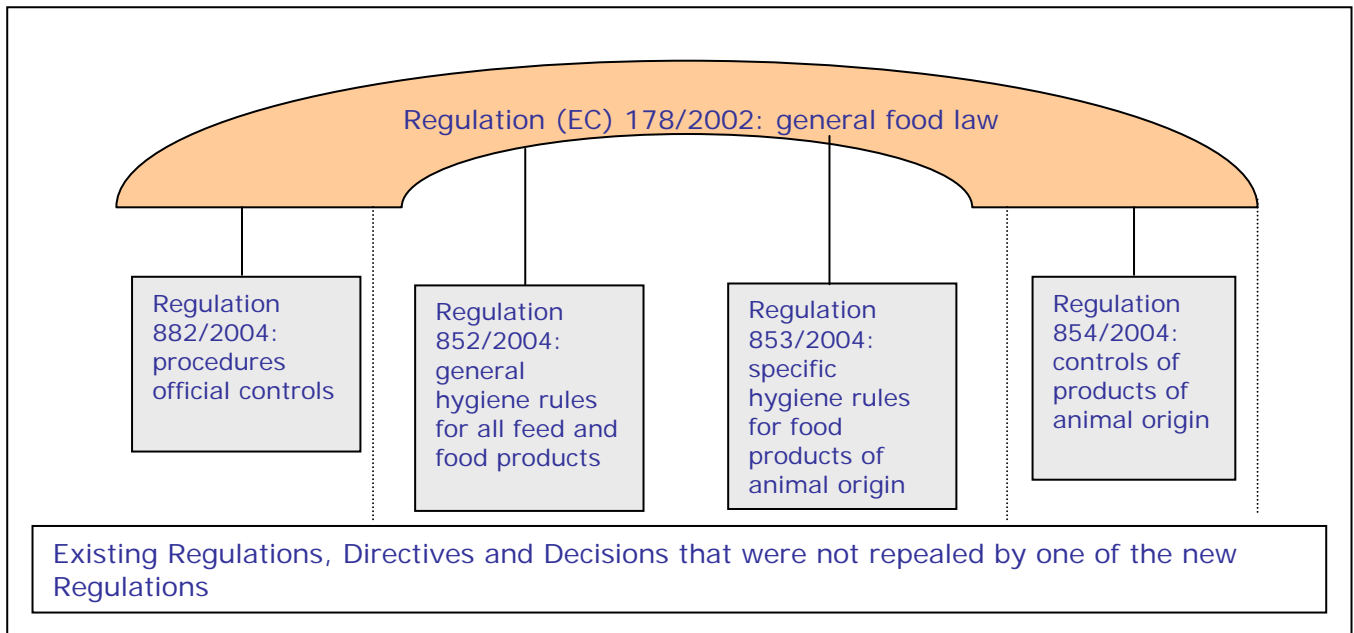
➔ [For more information](#) on the list of EU Representations in non-EU countries, please see the external links.

Food safety requirements

Safety legislation for fish products can be divided into two categories:

1. General food safety requirements established by the EU which is applicable to all food products marketed in the EU
2. Legislation established specifically for fish products

The general food safety requirements apply to all aspects for which there are no specific requirements for fish. This document only presents legislation specific for fish products.



➤ [For more information](#) on the general food safety requirements, see the related documents. Note that these include legislation on contaminants and microbiological contamination.

Regulation (EC) 853/2004 and its amendments, laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin, is complementary to the general hygiene legislation and includes fish-specific requirements.

Specific hygiene requirements for fishery products cover the following:

- Equipment and facilities on fishing vessels, factory vessels and freezer vessels: areas for receiving products taken onboard, work and storage areas, refrigeration and freezing installations, pumping of waste and disinfection.
- Hygiene onboard fishing vessels, factory vessels and freezer vessels: cleanliness, protection from any form of contamination, washing with water and cold treatment.
- Conditions of hygiene during and after the landing of fishery products: protection against any form of contamination, equipment used, auction and wholesale markets.
- Fresh and frozen products, mechanically separated fish flesh, endo-parasites harmful to human health (visual examination), and cooked crustaceans and molluscs.
- Processed fishery products.
- Health standards applicable to fishery products: evaluation of the presence of substances and toxins harmful to human health.
- Wrapping, packaging, storage and transport of fishery products.

➔ [For more information](#) on Regulation (EC) 853/2004, please see the external links. Also see Regulation (EC) 854/2004 for the implementation of official controls of the requirements laid down in Regulation (EC) 853/2004.

In addition to the general safety requirements, certain specific substances are restricted in specified fish and fishery products:

- **Directive 96/22/EEC and its amendments prohibit** the use of certain substances with hormonal and thyreostatic performance, including β -antagonists, in aquacultural products.

➔ [For more information](#) on restricted substances in specified fish and fishery products please refer to the full text of the Directive in the external links.

- **Regulation (EC) 2377/90** and its amendments lay down maximum residue limits (MRLs) of veterinary medicinal products in foodstuffs of animal origin, including fish.

➔ [For more information](#) on MRLs for fish species, please refer to the full text of the Regulation in the external links.

- **Regulation (EC) 2074/2005** fixes the total volatile basic nitrogen (TVB-N) limit values for certain categories of fishery products and specifying the analysis methods to be used. The limits set are:
 - 25 milligrams of nitrogen/100 grams of flesh for *Sebastes* spp. *Helicolenus dactylopterus* *Sebastichthys capensis* (point 1 of Chapter II);
 - 30 milligrams of nitrogen/100 grams of flesh for Species belonging to the Pleuronectidae family (with the exception of halibut: *Hippoglossus* spp.) (point 2 of Chapter II);
 - 35 milligrams of nitrogen/100 grams of flesh for *Salmo salar* Species belonging to the Merlucciidae family Species belonging to the Gadidae family (point 3 of Chapter II).

Placing fish on the EU market

The EU has also established legislation for the placing of fish on the market and the actual marketing thereof, including labelling requirements. The most important legislative texts for producers and exporters from developing countries are here presented.

- **Directive 2006/88/EC** concerns the animal health conditions governing the placing on the market of aquaculture animals and products.

What are aquaculture animals and aquaculture products?

'aquaculture animals` are defined as live fish, crustaceans or molluscs coming from a farm, including those from the wild intended for a farm;

'aquaculture products` are defined as products derived from aquaculture animals, whether intended for farming, such as eggs and gametes, or for human consumption.

The Directive lays down the procedures for importing fish, in accordance with previously stated requirements.

➔ [For more information](#) on Directive 2006/88/EC, please refer to the external links. Rules governing imports from third countries are established in Chapter IV of the Directive.

- **Council regulation (EC) no 1093/64** sets the terms under which fishing vessels of a third country may land directly and market their catches at Community ports.

Summary

Substance	n/a
Products:	Fish and fishery products
Requirement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A number of requirements for establishments which produce and export of fish and fish products• Food safety requirements• Requirements related to the placing of fish and fish products on the EU market
Status:	In force
Source:	EU legislation

Last updated: April, 2007