



2025/2169

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COMMISSION DELEGATED REGULATION (EU) 2025/2169

of 16 June 2025

amending Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards an increase of the minimum mesh size when fishing for squid in the North Sea and North Western Waters

(Text with EEA relevance)

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the conservation of fisheries resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1967/2006, (EC) No 1224/2009 and Regulations (EU) No 1380/2013, (EU) 2016/1139, (EU) 2018/973, (EU) 2019/472 and (EU) 2019/1022 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 894/97, (EC) No 850/98, (EC) No 2549/2000, (EC) No 254/2002, (EC) No 812/2004 and (EC) No 2187/2005 ⁽¹⁾, and in particular Article 15(2) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) Annexes V and VI to Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 provide for specific regional technical measures for the North Sea and North Western Waters of Union waters. Part B, point 1 of those Annexes provide baseline mesh sizes for towed gear in those waters. Point 1.2 of those Annexes allows the use of smaller mesh sizes under certain conditions.
- (2) Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, the Netherlands and Sweden ('the North Sea Member States') have a direct fisheries management interest in the North Sea; Belgium, Ireland, France, the Netherlands and Spain ('North Western Waters Member States') have a direct fisheries management interest in the North Western waters.
- (3) On 20 and 28 June 2024, the regional groups submitted to the Commission two joint recommendations proposing to amend the table below point 1 of Annex V, Part B and the table below point 1 of Annex VI, Part B to Regulation (EU) 2019/1241. The North Sea Member States requested to increase the minimum mesh size for directed fishing for squid (*Loliginidae*, *Ommastrephidae*) from 40 mm to 80 mm in ICES subarea 4 and remove the possibility of using at least 40 mm in ICES division 3a (Skagerrak and Kattegat); the North Western Member States requested to increase the minimum mesh size from 40 mm to 80 mm in ICES divisions 7a, 7b, 7c, 7d, 7e, 7g, 7h, and 7k. A minimum mesh size of 40mm is maintained in ICES division 7e regarding directed fishing for squid with midwater otter trawls (OTM) in the 12 nautical miles zone of the coast of France.
- (4) According to the Joint Recommendations, increasing the minimum mesh size to 90 mm in ICES division 3a (Skagerrak and Kattegat) and 80 mm for directed fishing for squid in ICES subarea 4 and divisions 7a, 7b, 7c, 7d, 7e, 7g, 7h, and 7k for directed fishing for squid, intends to optimise the exploitation patterns to provide protection for juveniles and spawning aggregations of marine biological resources and reduce the catches of marine species below the minimum conservation reference sizes. It further intends to enhance the enforcement of mesh size specifications.
- (5) The North Sea Advisory Council and the North Western Waters Advisory Council were consulted on the two joint recommendations in March 2024 and April 2024, respectively.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 198, 25.7.2019, p. 105, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2019/1241/oj>.

- (6) The Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) assessed the two joint recommendations at its plenary session from 8 to 12 July 2024 (STECF-24-02) ^(?). Although the STECF considered that the potential effects of the proposed increases in mesh size cannot be assessed due to insufficient data, it concluded that, in principle, increasing the minimum mesh size is one way to improve selectivity of the fisheries. Furthermore, the STECF noted that increased mesh size already applies in neighbouring third-country waters for the fisheries targeting squids (belonging to families *Loliginidae* and *Ommastrephidae*) from 40 mm to 80 mm. The STECF also concluded that the expected benefits in relation to optimising the exploitation patterns regarding the proposal of the North Western Waters Member States were not clear.
- (7) Following the STECF advice, the Commission invited the North Western Waters Member States to align the joint recommendation with the scientific evaluation. Accordingly, the North Western Waters Member States submitted an updated version of their joint recommendation with further supporting information in October 2024, which was transmitted to STECF.
- (8) In its plenary meeting on 11-15 November 2024, the STECF concluded that the elements contained in the updated version of the joint recommendation submitted by the North Western Waters Member States are unlikely to impact the current fishing patterns in these areas and are at least equivalent to current selectivity characteristics ^(?). Indeed the STECF indicates that the proposed minimum mesh size of 80 mm is already the dominant mesh size used by fisheries landing squid in ICES divisions 7a, 7b, 7c, 7d, 7e, 7g, 7h, 7k. Further, the STECF notes that there is evidence to support a minimum mesh size of 40 mm for directed squid fisheries in ICES division 7e for small-scale fleets currently targeting squid in this area. The STECF also notes that there is evidence to support a minimum mesh size of 40 mm for directed squid fisheries in ICES subareas 5 and 6 where the mesh size range is currently used to land squid as part of cephalopod targeted trips. The STECF concludes that there is evidence of a minimum mesh size of 40 mm being used by fisheries landing squid in ICES division 7j, with most of the squid landing coming in larger mesh size ranges (100-110 mm). Furthermore, the STECF notes that increased mesh size already applies in neighbouring third-country waters for the fisheries targeting squids (belonging to families *Loliginidae* and *Ommastrephidae*) from 40 mm to 80 mm.
- (9) Given that: (i) the amendments under the joint recommendations are coherent with the current fishing patterns and therefore are at least equivalent to current selectivity characteristics; (ii) the proposed measures enhance the enforcement of mesh size specifications; and (iii) the increase of the mesh size is a way to improve selectivity of the fisheries, the Commission considers that the requirements of Articles 15 and 18 of Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 are fulfilled.
- (10) Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 should therefore be amended accordingly.
- (11) The measures provided for by this Regulation applicable to Union waters are in pursuit of the objectives set out in Article 494(1) and (2) of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the other part ^(*), and have regard to the principles referred to in Article 494(3) of that agreement. They are without prejudice to any measures applicable in waters of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
- (12) As the measures provided for in this Regulation have a direct impact on the planning of the fishing season of Union vessels and on related economic activities, this Regulation should enter into force on the day following that of its publication,

^(?) Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – 76th Plenary Report (STECF-PLN-24-02). Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2024, doi:10.2760/1035959, JRC140570.

^(?) Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) – 77th Plenary Report (STECF-PLN-24-03). Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2024, doi:10.2760/2392535, JRC140580.

^(*) Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the other part (OJ L 149, 30.4.2021, p. 10, ELI: [http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2021/689\(1\)/oj](http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_internation/2021/689(1)/oj)).

HAS ADOPTED THIS REGULATION:

Article 1

Annex V and VI to Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 are amended in accordance with the Annex to this Regulation.

Article 2

This Regulation shall enter into force on the day following that of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

This Regulation shall be binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all Member States.

Done at Brussels, 16 June 2025.

For the Commission
The President
Ursula VON DER LEYEN

ANNEX

Annexes V and VI to Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 are amended as follows:

- (1) in Annex V, Part B, the sixth entry of the table after point 1.4 is replaced by the following:

'At least 80 mm	ICES subarea 4	Directed fishing for squid (<i>Loliginidae</i> , <i>Ommastrephidae</i>).'
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- (2) in Annex VI, Part B, the table after point 1.2 is amended as follows:

- (a) the fourth entry of the table is replaced by the following:

'At least 80 mm	ICES divisions 7d and 7e	Directed fishing for whiting, mackerel and species not subject to catch limits including squids (<i>Loliginidae</i> , <i>Ommastrephidae</i>) and which are not covered elsewhere in the table, using bottom trawls.'
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- (b) the fifth entry of the table is replaced by the following:

'At least 80 mm	ICES divisions 7a, 7b, 7c, 7d, 7e, 7g, 7h, 7k	Directed fishing for squid (<i>Loliginidae</i> , <i>Ommastrephidae</i>), using bottom trawls and seines.'
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- (c) the following entries are added to the table:

'At least 40 mm	ICES subareas 5, 6	Directed fishing for squid (<i>Loliginidae</i> , <i>Ommastrephidae</i>) using any towed gear in ICES subareas 5 and 6.
At least 40mm	ICES division 7e	Directed fishing for squid (<i>Loliginidae</i> , <i>Ommastrephidae</i>) using midwater otter trawls (OTM) within 12 nautical miles of the coast of France, measured from the baselines, in ICES division 7e.
At least 40 mm	ICES division 7j	Directed fishing for squid (<i>Loliginidae</i> , <i>Ommastrephidae</i>), using bottom trawls and seines in ICES division 7j.'