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Rheynn Chymmyltaght, Bee as Eirinys
The Department of Environment, Food
And Agriculture

Fisheries Division, Thie Slieau Whallian, Foxdale Road, St. Johns, Isle of Man, IM4 3AS
T: (01624) 685857 | E: fisheries@gov.im

SPURDOG 2023 - GUIDANCE DOCUMENT



1. Background

As per the Fisheries Management Agreement 2012 (FMA2012), the Department maintains alignment with the UK Fisheries Authorities on quota management in Area VIIa for stocks subject to international agreements. For more information on the FMA2012 and Quota Management in the Isle of Man territorial sea, go to www.gov.im/fisheries.

2. UK-EU Agreement

In accordance with the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), delegations from the United Kingdom and the European Union met between November and December 2022 to consult on fishing opportunities for 2023, and for certain deep-sea stocks for 2023 and 2024. The Heads of Delegations agreed to recommend to their respective authorities the fishery arrangements such as Spurdog.

Formal written record: Fisheries: consultations between the UK and the EU - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

3. De-listing Spurdog from the UK Prohibited Species List

Following [ICES advice](#) that the Northeast Atlantic Spurdog stock is recovering and can support a significant level of landings for 2023 and 2024, the UK, EU agreement allows for a Spurdog fishery to commence in UK and EU waters.

The UK Statutory Instrument – [The Sea Fisheries \(Amendment\) Regulations 2023](#) – were laid before Parliament on 01 Mar 2023 and came into effect from 01 April 2023. Separate total allowable catches have been agreed for the North Sea (UK share 2,781 tonnes, to be managed through sectorial FQA allocation) and Western waters, which includes the Isle of Man territorial sea, (UK share 4,825 tonnes, managed by monthly limits set through licence variations).

4. Management

4.1 Maximum Size & Landing Obligation

When operating in the Isle of Man territorial sea from the 01 Apr 2023:

- The landing obligation will apply to specimens 100cm or less.
- **You must discard spurdog above 100cm in length** as measured from the end of the tail to the tip of the snout.
- Spurdog over 100 cm in length should be carefully returned to the sea as soon as practicably possible. See the below images for measurements and best-practice handling guidance.



100 cm Max. Size

SPURDOG BYCATCH MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

Discarding SPURDOG

DGS



Always lift a Spurdog to move it

Grip shark behind head - in front of pectoral fins, but avoiding gills



Dragging or lifting a Spurdog solely by its tail can damage the animal

Avoid contact with the gills which are easily damaged

GOOD PRACTICE

1

Increase chance of survival by removing live Spurdog carefully from fishing gear and avoid dropping them onto the deck.

2

As quickly as possible, clear fishing gear and return live Spurdog back to the sea.

3

Return Spurdog to the sea by hand, not by foot through the vessel's scuppers.

4

Record estimated weight (kg) of live and dead discarded Spurdog.

4.2 Catch Reporting

As with all species, separate catch reports (FARs) must be made for catches inside the Isle of Man territorial sea. See [here](#) for the Guidance Note on “Completion of Logbooks inside the Isle of Man territorial sea”.

4.3 Quota Management

The UK Government has not ‘allocated’ Spurdog quota. Instead, the quota will remain unallocated.

Quota uptake will be managed through monthly tonnage limits. The MMO and the UK Fisheries Administrations will monitor uptake against the agreed Total Allowable Catch and may adjust the monthly limit accordingly.

From the 01 Apr 2023, the initial monthly limit is set at 5 tonnes (and is subject to adjustment).

In accordance with the FMA2012, the Department has extended the effect of these conditions to the Isle of Man Sea Fishing Licence. **Note** that the monthly quota limits apply concurrently with, and not in addition to, the limits set on a UK vessel licence.

4.4 Isle of Man Sea Fishing Licence

The Isle of Man sea fishing licence carries these Spurdog measures into effect in the **Schedule – Section H**. Please go to www.gov.im/fishing/conditions to download the latest version of the Isle of Man Sea Fishing Licence documents.

5. Additional Conditions

This species is highly vulnerable to overexploitation, and the fishery has been re-opened by the UK under a precautionary approach based upon the best available evidence.

The Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture reserves the right to apply additional conditions in relation to this fishery at any time, and will be engaging with stakeholders following the initial opening of the fishery to identify whether improvements / additional conditions are required in order to sustainably manage the fishery.

For information, contact the Fisheries Division at:



+441624 685 857



fisheries@gov.im



www.gov.im/fisheries