

Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS NEW IN THE EU CATCH CERTIFICATION SCHEME AFTER THE AMENDMENT OF THE EU IUU REGULATION

1. GENERAL QUESTIONS ON CATCH

Q1. What is CATCH?

CATCH is an EU-wide real-time IT system for the management of all information, data and documents linked to the EU catch certification scheme. It allows for the submission of catch certificates and related documents accompanying the fishery products to be imported into the EU in accordance with the EU IUU Regulation (Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008).

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

CATCH is intended to improve the effectiveness of the EU IUU Regulation's catch certification scheme by ensuring a centralised digital management environment with the objective to identify and prohibit importation into the EU of fishery products obtained from IUU fishing.

CATCH offers the possibility to generate, validate and submit catch certificates and related documents by third countries' operators and authorities.

Q2. Who are the users of CATCH?

According to the revised IUU Regulation, as of 10 January 2026, importers and competent authorities of EU Member States will be subject to the mandatory use of CATCH in the context of the catch certification scheme.

For the importation of consignments of fishery products into the EU, importers shall submit to the competent authorities in the EU Member States the required documentation through CATCH, and Member States' authorities shall process such submission through CATCH.

However, CATCH also allows third 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).

Q3. Is the use of CATCH compulsory?

The use of CATCH for the submission of the catch certificates and related documents by EU importers to the EU Member States' authorities will be compulsory from 10 January 2026.

Third countries' exporters and authorities will be able to use the system on voluntary basis. It is not compulsory for them, but strongly recommended.

Q4. When will CATCH become compulsory?

After a transitional period of two years following the entry in force of the new legal basis, so from 10 January 2026, importers of fishery products in the EU will have to submit catch certificates and related documents to the authorities in the Member States through CATCH.

Third countries' operators and authorities can decide to continue using paper-based certificates or to use directly CATCH to generate and validate catch certificates and related documents (direct use is strongly recommended). In certain cases, the Commission will be able to facilitate the direct use of CATCH by engaging with third countries in discussions on interoperability between those countries' existing IT systems (generating catch certificates for the exports to the EU) and CATCH.

Q5. If I am an EU importer, can I start using CATCH before the entry into force of the new legal provisions?

Yes, the system is already up and running, which means that catch certificates, processing statements and importer declarations can be created via CATCH. However, its use is not mandatory yet. Moreover, today the system reflects the current catch certification scheme and its templates without the changes introduced by the amendment of the IUU Regulation.

For the time being, CATCH is accessible only to EU Member States authorities and EU importers. Access of third countries' operators and authorities is expected after the transitional period of two years from the entry into force of the relevant legal provisions, (from 10 January 2026). It is not excluded that such access could be provided, on a voluntary basis, even before the end of the transitional period, should the digital developments allow for that.

Q6. How can I gain access to CATCH?

CATCH is a web-based digital environment which is part of TRACES NT. New users (for the time being only EU importers and Member States' competent authorities) can apply for access directly through the system.

The first step is to create your EU login identifier if you do not already have one. This is a mandatory security layer. Once you have created your EU login, you must request a role to have access to TRACES NT, as **Operator** or **Authority**.

The Commission provides access only to the notified central competent authorities in Member States and third countries. Subsequently the process follows a delegated access management model (central competent authorities granting access to other relevant authorities and operators).

This means that an operator (importer) will have to be linked and validated by its responsible authority. It should select in the system the central competent authority with CATCH domain in its country. The central competent authority should validate the request in TRACES NT.

Q7. What languages will CATCH be available in?

CATCH is currently available in 37 languages¹ (all official European languages plus Albanian, Chinese, Georgian, Norwegian, Vietnamese, Bosnian, Icelandic, Korean, Macedonian, Russian, Turkish, Serbian and Ukrainian).

¹ The user documentation/handbook is only in English.

Q8. Will CATCH ensure a paperless workflow in the EU catch certification scheme?

This depends on the use of the system by third countries' operators and authorities. The obligation to submit the documents via CATCH rests with the EU importer; the direct use of CATCH by third countries' operators and authorities, although highly recommended, is voluntary.

If the EU importer continues receiving the documents on paper, he will need to enter the data manually in CATCH.

To have a fully paperless environment, third countries' administrations, as well as exporters, will have to use the system directly.

In this context, it should be noted that 60 non-EU countries already use the TRACES NT platform for submission of certificates required for the importation of animals, animal products, food and feed of non-animal origin and plants into the EU, and some of them have already shown interest in CATCH.

The Commission will promote the direct use of CATCH by third countries, highlighting the benefits for trade facilitation, like speeding up the administrative procedures at the border, increasing the reliability of data, the fact that the use of the tool is free of cost, the system is available in all the EU official languages and some other languages, etc.

The Commission will also encourage the EU importers to promote the direct use of CATCH with their third country suppliers.

Q9. What are the benefits of the CATCH system for EU Member States' authorities?

CATCH enhances cooperation and coordination between the competent authorities of the EU Member States and between economic operators and their competent authorities. The main objectives of CATCH are:

- To allow for the detection of fraudulent catch certificates.
- To prevent overuse of catch certificates through quantity management when catch certificates are used several times in relation to different consignments destined to the EU market.
- To support risk management applied to controls.
- To harmonise the documentary workflows.

Q10. What are the benefits of the CATCH system for the operators?

CATCH harmonises the procedures foreseen under the EU catch certification scheme. This has been requested for a long time by the industry.

In addition, it will speed up the administrative procedures, it will facilitate the submission of required data by providing a "copy as new" function that will allow the re-use of information previously introduced in the system and provide a multilingual environment.

Once third countries choose to use the system, it will also make the whole process easier as all the workflows will be electronic, and papers will be no longer required.

Q11. What training is needed to use CATCH? Will the Commission provide it?

The Commission is already providing trainings to the EU Member States' authorities on an ad hoc basis and will organise more in the next two years. In addition, there is an extensive set of online help material and a CATCH documentation web page (as part of the TRACES NT documentation).

As regards third countries, regional and bilateral trainings will be provided in due time together with users' guidance.

Closer to the date of effective application of the compulsory use of CATCH, a functional mailbox will be made operational to address questions.

Q12. What if the CATCH system does not work?

CATCH will be ready and operational well in advance of its mandatory use in accordance with the legislation. In any event, contingency measures will be laid down in the implementing provisions to address any particular situation (i.e., when the system is not available to users).

Q13. What will the Commission do to encourage third countries' operators and authorities to use CATCH directly?

The Commission is promoting the use of the CATCH by third country operators and authorities through seminars, trainings and exploring interoperability solutions for those third countries that already have IT systems for validating catch certificates.

CATCH is part of TRACES NT, an online platform, developed by the Commission in the early 2000's, for sanitary and phytosanitary certification required for the importation of animals, animal products, food and feed of non-animal origin and plants into the EU. TRACES NT is already used by 60 third countries and some of them have already shown interest in using CATCH for catch certificates and related documents.

The use of CATCH by third countries will provide more certainty to the data, and for them it will facilitate trade (continue using paper catch certificates will be a burden for EU importers, hence products accompanied by paper catch certificates would inevitably be subject to longer control procedures).

Q14. Will third countries be able to connect their IT systems to CATCH?

The Commission is available to engage in discussions about interoperability between CATCH and IT systems of interested third countries, developed and used for the generation and validation of catch certificates. This interconnection could be ensured through web services.

2. CHANGES TO THE CATCH CERTIFICATE, RELATED DOCUMENTS AND PROCEDURES INTRODUCED BY THE AMENDMENT OF THE IUU REGULATION

Q1. Will the content of the catch certificate change and from when?

Yes, the amendment of the IUU Regulation introduces some changes to the template laid down in Annex II. The new template for the catch certificate will provide more precise information to better identify fishing activities and products along the supply chain. Two years after entry into force of the amended legal text (i.e., 10 January 2026), the new template must be used when issuing catch certificates. Two years after that (i.e., 10 January 2028), only the new template will be accepted.

The changes apply to:

- Fishing vessel identification (it requires to provide the IMO number and, if it is not applicable, another unique vessel identifier, if applicable). (Box 2, box 6 and box 7)
- Fishing gear must be indicated. (Box 2)
- Fishing trips (the catch dates must indicate “from-to”). (Box 3)
- The weight boxes have also been amended for a clearer understanding of the quantities to be declared in each case. (Box 3)
- The name and signature of the master of the fishing vessel can be replaced by the name and signature of the fishing license holder. (Box 5)
- Box 7 completes the information of the landing / transshipment operations.
- The section with the importer declaration has been modified to ensure coherence with customs import procedures. (Box 11)
- Transport details have also been modified to enhance traceability. (Box 10)
- A new box 13 with the legal basis for refusal of the catch certificate has been added.

Q2. When CATCH becomes compulsory for EU importers, they will continue receiving catch certificates and related documents validated days, weeks or even months before, using the old templates (that were in force before the changes were introduced). How will importers be able to use CATCH if they receive these documents on paper using the old templates?

For a period of two years after the use CATCH becomes obligatory, the system will allow to introduce and submit catch certificates and related documents using both the old templates and the new templates.

The documents validated or endorsed before the obligation to use the new template will continue being accepted but the submission by the importer to the authorities in the Member States shall be done through CATCH. Therefore, during these two years CATCH will offer the possibility to choose between the old template and the new template. Thus, the application of the new legislation will not impact trade flows of fishery products obtained from catches having taken place before the application and accompanied by valid documents generated/issued at that time.

Q3. Will the processing statement change and from when?

Yes, the amendment of the IUU Regulation introduces an important change concerning the use of processing statement (Annex IV) that will be applicable two years after the entry into force.

To improve traceability, processing statements will be required for all processed fishery products imported into the EU, regardless of where the processing has taken place (in the flag State or in another third country). This means that processing statements should be endorsed also in cases where the flag State of the fishing vessels that caught the fish and the country where the processing operation took place are the same.

In addition, the template laid down in Annex IV will include the obligation to apply a unique document number, that will be provided by the authorities endorsing the statement (in case of direct use of CATCH, the system can generate such unique number directly).

Q4. Are there any other changes to the catch certification scheme?

Yes, to complement the amended IUU Regulation, the Commission will soon introduce a new template [called non-manipulation document] to ensure a consistent, uniform, and non-discriminatory implementation of the provisions of Article 14.1. It will apply to consignments that transit through a third country where the product is not manipulated.

CATCH will offer the possibility to complete and generate such document directly in the system with no additional paper generation, should the authorities of the transit country decide to use CATCH.