

The Responsible Fishing Ports Scheme

This factsheet provides an overview of the Responsible Fishing Ports Scheme (RFPS), how it is being developed and useful information about the application process.

What is the scheme?

The Responsible Fishing Ports Scheme is a voluntary programme to certify responsible food safety and operational practices within fishing ports. It is an independently audited scheme to demonstrate that a fishing port and those organisations that operate within it are following good practice in relevant core areas which include:

- Food Safety and Structural Integrity,
- Port and the Working Environment,
- Care for the Environment,
- Care of the Catch, and
- Traceability.

Where did the idea for the scheme originate?

Members of the British Ports Association Fishing Ports Group (BPAFPG) have become increasingly aware that the multitude of legislative, environmental and operational procedures carried out by each fishing port around the UK has led to different interpretations of how they should be implemented. This may have resulted in potential inconsistencies within the sector. The BPAFPG recognises these differences can reflect individual, local port requirements; however, there is an opportunity to harmonise certain operations through the RFPS.

Following discussions between BPAFPG and Seafish in 2015, the concept of the RFPS was identified. A scoping exercise was then commissioned by Seafish to assess the need and support for such a scheme. This included engagement with fishing ports and the wider supply chain to canvass ideas for requirements that should be included in the RFPS Standard.

The main conclusions of the scoping exercise were:

- the ports and wider supply chain were in favour of developing a RFPS to promote the fishing industry brand and bridge the perceived gap in chain of custody assurance of the catch from the vessel to the buyers;
- the RFPS Standard should be developed so that it would comply with ISO 17065 accreditation requirements on how to certify a product, service or process and be capable of future ISEAL recognition.
- The RFPS should be stand-alone but able to link in with the Responsible Fishing Scheme (RFS).

How is the RFPS being developed?

The development of the RFPS began in January 2016 with the formation of a multi-stakeholder Oversight Board (OB) to which the Standard Holder (the Seafish Board) delegated the task of agreeing the overall strategic direction and objectives for the scheme.

In February 2016, the OB agreed the main areas of concern that needed to be addressed by the Code of Practice (CoP) and a Standard, and delegated the function of developing the CoP and Standard to a Technical Committee (TC), a multi stakeholder group with specific expertise within port operations and food safety, traceability and supply chain requirements. The TC and other stakeholders started development of the Standard and CoP in 2016. Later in the development process the OB and TC were combined to form the Oversight and Technical Board (OTB) tasked with carrying out the combined duties of the two original groups.

During the early development of the RFPS, it was recognised that the degree of potential risk at individual ports varied depending on the scale and nature of activities. As such, initial work focussed on developing a standard for ports and harbours with direct sales or auction facilities, and the first version of the RFPS standard, developed to apply to ports with a sales facility (referred to as 'Large Ports'), was launched officially in 2018.

It had been agreed initially by the OTB that a standard for ports without sales or auction facilities was to be developed separately: however, following the development of the standard for 'large ports', it was agreed that most appropriate way forward would be to develop a single standard applicable to any size or nature of UK fishing port. The revised scheme, designed to include all fishing ports, started development in autumn 2018 and is expecting to launch summer 2020.

Throughout the development of the RFPS, a robust process is followed to ensure that stakeholders will have had an opportunity to provide input to the scope and content of the scheme; and that a full, transparent and credible Governance Structure has been adopted to ensure the scheme aligns fully with ISO 17065 accreditation requirements for the certification.

What is the objective of the RFPS?

“The Responsible Fishing Ports Scheme will promote and encourage responsible operating practices within UK fishing ports and harbours, to give greater assurance and transparency to buyers and users of seafood sold through UK fishing ports.”

What does the RFPS include?

At its core, the Scheme has a standard which forms the basis for certification decisions. Fishing ports are assessed against the core principles within the Standard.

The Standard is supported by a Code of Practice (CoP) that provides guidance on operational practices, which align to the requirements of the standards.

In order to be certified to the RFPS Standard, an applicant fishing port must be able to demonstrate compliance with relevant core principles, which include:

Core Principle	Aim	Criteria
Core Principle 1 Food Safety and Structural Integrity	Promote food safety and mitigate contamination risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hygiene levels • Structural Condition - inside and out • Temperature Insulation/Control • Food protection - site security, protection from malicious damage, and extraneous factors (e.g. dog fouling)
Core Principle 2 Port and the Working Environment	Provide a safe working environment through enhanced operating and welfare practices and provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due Diligence and Compliance with Legislation • Improve Skills and Knowledge, Training Provision • Health and Safety, and Welfare of port operatives

Core Principle 2 Care of Environment	Promote and encourage a positive approach to the protection of the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste management • Recycling • Environmental controls
Core Principle 4 Care of the Catch; Fish is Food	Promote and maintain food protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grading • Quality Maintenance - temp control (Ice, chilled) • Temperature Insulation/Control
Core Principle 5 Traceability	Provide provenance for all the seafood handled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traceability systems in place • Food authenticity

What other areas have been considered?

The standard is being developed with the consensus agreement of the governance groups. Over time, the standard may need to change to take account of future industry needs. Through the development process to date, areas for potential future inclusion within the standard have been identified. These have been included in a Strategic Development Plan: Large Ports, available from [Responsible Fishing Ports Scheme](#) , see [how can I find out more about the scheme](#)

What is the definition of a fishing port?

Fishing ports are defined as premises/entities that are registered with the local authority and provide some or all of the following:

- facilities such as a quay to allow fishers to land their catch.
- facilities to handle and/or store the catch; and
- facilities to conduct sales directly to the supply chain, either through direct sales or by auction

What types of fishing ports are included within the RFPS?

The Scheme comprises a set of 'responsible practices' that exceed minimum legal requirements and, in time, will assist all fishing ports to enhance their own operations .The RFPS is designed to cover any fishing port covered by the definition above.

What is the 'unit of certification'?

The OTB has agreed, that the unit of certification is the port as defined by regulation and approved by the relevant authority for that purpose. The port/port authority would be 'the Applicant'.

Depending on the specific circumstances at the port, the port authority may choose to remain the sole applicant and assume direct responsibility for ensuring all clauses of the standard are met. Alternatively, the port/port authority may choose to engage one or more other organisations (such as fish agents) as co-applicants.

What are the benefits of the RFPS to the port sector and wider supply chain?

- Improve and maintain hygiene levels, internal and external, to meet with sector and supply chain expectations;
- Maintain and determine a minimum structural condition, inside and outside the market selling hall, fish landing and loading area to ensure good food safety requirements;

- Care of the landed seafood to enhance its quality maintenance, to reassure both the catching sector and the wider supply chain;
- Promote and ensure that the seafood traceability documentation trail is maintained from the catching vessel to the first stage in the fish processing sector;
- Provision of waste management and recycling facilities and processes for both the catching and supply chain sectors that use the port facility;
- Creation of environmental controls to mitigate any risk of pollution that may emanate from a port's operations; and
- Worker rights and welfare are protected and respected in order to ensure a highly qualified and motivated workforce

Will any port be disadvantaged by the RFPS?

The scheme has been developed by industry to be an achievable approach to raising standards across the fishing port sector. It is a voluntary scheme designed to be open to all fishing ports. The scheme is currently open to fishing ports with a selling facility; however it is envisaged that after the initial development phase is completed in 2020, all fishing ports will be eligible to apply.

How does a port apply for certification?

Eligible fishing ports can apply to be certified. To start the application process, interested eligible fishing ports should contact the approved Certification Body ([Acoura Ltd.](#)) which will provide details on the requirements of the RFPS Standard, a copy of the application form, and a range of other useful information. The CB is an independent third-party organisation which will conduct the assessment of the port.

Contact details for Acoura are:

- Scheme Co-ordinator: Polly Burns
- ☎: +44(0)330 024 0255.
- ✉: rfps@acoura.com

Further details about the application process are provided on the RFPS webpages (see '[how can I find out more about the scheme](#)')

As of summer 2020, the scheme will be open to applicants for all ports. Until then, only ports with a sales facility can apply.

How much will it cost a port to apply for certification?

Fishing Ports with a sales facility (Large Ports)

The cost structure has been developed to be as competitive and cost effective as possible. The initial certification comprises two components, each costed separately:

1. an off-site application and pre-assessment stage, followed by;
2. a site visit which is expected to take one to one and a half days. This part includes additional costs i.e. the auditor's travel and subsistence.

A certification (certificate) lasts for three years; as such, there will be an additional annual cost in the second and third year for a surveillance audit that checks whether a certified port is operating as expected.

Cost Structure (2018, excluding VAT)

Fishing port with a sales facility	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Application and pre-assessment	£400	n/a	n/a
Initial on-site audit and certification	£800 per day	n/a	n/a
Surveillance audit	n/a	£825 per day	£850 per day
Travel and Subsistence (for auditors to attend on-site audits)	Costs charged at actual rate plus 10% admin fee		

After 2020, application costs will be subject to an annual 3% increase.

Fishing Ports without a sales facility

These operations should require less time to audit due to being less complex; however, estimated costs are unknown until after the development process is completed in 2020. Having a standard tailored to the activities carried out at a port will reduce the complexity of audits and hopefully reduce costs. .

There are other considerations for less complex ports; for example, whether group certification might be an option and how that may help manage application costs. This will be considered following the approval of the single standard for all fishing ports.

What is Seafish's role?

The Seafish Board is the RFPS Standard holder. Seafish is facilitating and funding the development of the Scheme, which has been developed by a diverse stakeholder group to ensure this is an industry led initiative that will benefit the ports and harbour sector and wider supply chain.

Seafish will continue to manage the RFPS through the development process.

How can I find out more about the scheme?

Further information about the scheme is available on the Seafish website:

- [Responsible Fishing Ports Scheme](#)

From the RFPS webpages you can find out more about the existing Standard for large ports and progress on the development of the single Standard for all fishing ports . You can also download copies of the Standard for large ports, the CoP, detailed information on how large ports can apply for certification to the Scheme, and more information about the stakeholders involved in developing the scheme itself.

Who can I contact at Seafish?

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