

IUU REGULATION – Requirement of a validated EU catch certificate for processing activities carried out in a third country, different from the flag State

This note deals with landings of catches from a fishing vessel in a non-EU port State, different from the flag State of the vessel, and where the fish will be processed.

The Commission has become aware that the authorities in the third countries where processing takes place request at the moment of landing a validated EU catch certificate. Due to this erroneous procedure, processing third countries are faced now with quantities of fish not covered by a valid catch certificate that cannot be exported to the EU. This creates threatens both financial and operational for all parties involved in the processing chain.

In these cases, the catches of fishing vessels will be transported, either by the fishing vessels or by a reefer, directly from the fishing grounds to the processing non-EU port State. If the EU catch certificate is requested prior to or upon landing then the EU catch certificate is not validated according to the rules of the competent authorities and the legal conditions are not fulfilled to authorise the import of processed products into the EU. Under such circumstances, the flag State authorities of the catching vessels will not have available the statements of landing to verify the actual quantities and species landed which is an essential condition for the validation of a catch certificate.

It should be also stressed that Article 14(2) does not give competence to third countries to introduce procedures or deadlines for the submission of catch certificates validated by another flag State, regardless of whether or not it is a third country or a Member State of the European Union.

Third countries are kindly invited to take all necessary measures to ensure that the submission of catch certificates in their territory is required **only when the process of validation is finished** by the competent authorities of the flag State.

In order to be able to re-export processed products to the EU, **the catch certificate validated by the flag State authorities should be submitted to the competent authorities in the processing country together with the processing statement.**