



International Marine Mammal Bycatch Criteria for U.S. Imports

The Import Provisions aim to reduce marine mammal bycatch associated with international commercial fishing operations, requiring foreign fisheries exporting fish and fish products to the United States to have standards comparable in effectiveness.



The United States is a global leader in marine mammal conservation and sustainable fisheries, with U.S. fisheries abiding by some of the world's most robust conservation practices, including measures to reduce [marine mammal bycatch](#)—a global threat to many populations of marine mammals.

The import provisions implement aspects of the Marine Mammal Protection Act that aim to [reduce marine mammal bycatch associated with international commercial fishing operations](#), by requiring nations exporting fish and fish products to the United States to be held to the same standards as U.S. commercial fishing operations.

The import provisions also establish the criteria for evaluating a harvesting nation's regulatory program for reducing marine mammal bycatch and the procedures required to receive authorization to import fish and fish products into the United States. To ensure effective implementation, the import provisions established a five year exemption period to allow foreign harvesting nations time to develop, as appropriate, regulatory programs that compare in effectiveness to U.S. programs. Comparability findings ensure that foreign nations' bycatch programs meet U.S. standards as a condition to allow import of the fish and fish products from these fisheries.

Extension of Deadline

NOAA Fisheries is reviewing applications from more than 130 nations representing more than 2,500 exempt and export fisheries. On October 20, 2022, NOAA Fisheries issued a final rule to provide an additional one-year extension to foreign nations to receive a comparability Finding for their commercial fishing operations to export fish and fish products to the United States. (We previously extended the exemption period for an additional year due to the COVID pandemic.)

NOAA Fisheries needs additional time to review and evaluate these applications, correspond with nations, make its final determination, and notify nations of its findings. With this extension, nations will have until December 31, 2023, to receive a Comparability Finding for their commercial fishing operations in order to export fish and fish products to the United States.

No further action is required by nations that have submitted their application. NOAA Fisheries will continue working with its international trading partners to ensure they come into compliance with the MMPA Import Provisions.

List of Foreign Fisheries

NOAA Fisheries' [List of Foreign Fisheries](#) contains foreign commercial fisheries that export fish and fish products to the United States and that have been classified as either “export” or “exempt” based on the frequency and likelihood of incidental mortality and serious injury of marine mammals.

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