



**EU IUU FISHING COALITION**

IUUwatch.eu

# **The Fisheries Import Control Scheme Handbook (FICSH)**

***A guide to designing and implementing import controls that close markets to illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing***

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# EU IUU Fishing Coalition

## About us

The EU IUU Fishing Coalition — the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), Oceana, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), The Pew Charitable Trusts and WWF — has been working since 2014 to fight IUU fishing practices in the EU and around the world.

## Our mission

The EU IUU Fishing Coalition aims to combat IUU fishing by promoting transparency, accountability and advocating for measures to detect and prevent IUU fishing. We do this by conducting research and by providing evidence-based recommendations in relation to policies, technology and tools for decision-makers. We work closely with EU institutions to help leverage the EU's diplomatic and market power to halt the trade in products stemming from IUU fishing and promote fisheries reforms globally, while ensuring that EU Member States adhere to their own rules.

## Our vision

We want to see a world where global collaboration and improved fisheries management practices protect marine ecosystems and sustain global fisheries. By reducing the impact of IUU fishing, and its associated crimes, we aim to support biodiversity, food security, and the livelihoods of fishers and coastal communities for the benefit of present and future generations.

# Our Collaboration

## Co-produced by:

- EU IUU Fishing Coalition
- US IUU Fishing and Labor Rights Coalition
- IUU Forum Japan



## Core joint objectives:

- Promote greater engagement among EU-US-Japan governments to combat IUU fishing
- Improve **harmonisation** among EU-US-Japan import control requirements
- **Assist market states** considering development/updating of import control rules/catch documentation schemes

## The Fisheries Import Control Scheme Handbook

A guide to designing and implementing import controls that close markets to illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing

### EU IUU FISHING COALITION



UNITED STATES  
IUU Fishing &  
Labor Rights  
COALITION




NOVEMBER 2025



## European Union

In 2008, the EU introduced the world's first import control scheme—the Catch Certification Scheme—through the adoption of the EU IUU Regulation. It covers all marine wild caught fish (with some exemptions) traded by non-EU countries into the EU market.

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In January 2026, following revision of the EU's fisheries control regulation, the data requirements in the EU's catch certificate was expanded, and an IT System for the management of all procedures linked to the EU catch certification scheme was established, "**IT CATCH**".

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## United States of America

The US introduced its own import control scheme—the Seafood Import Monitoring Program—in 2016, covering 1,100 species within 13 species groups that were identified as the most vulnerable to IUU fishing and seafood fraud.

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# Japan

In 2022, Japan established a catch documentation scheme based on the EU's system, which currently covers seven species/species groups deemed the highest risk for IUU fishing: four imported species groups\* and the domestic catch of three others.

\* Squid, cuttlefish, pacific saucy, mackerel, and sardines. Squid and cuttlefish are collectively counted as one species group.

A dark silhouette map of East Asia, including the Korean peninsula, Japan, and parts of China. A small white dot is placed on the Korean peninsula. Two horizontal white lines are positioned above and below the text.

## Republic of Korea

The Korean Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF) adopted a country-level CDS in 2017 targeting three species, namely bobo croaker, longneck croakers and Pacific saury.

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# United Kingdom

Following the UK's withdrawal from the EU, with a view to stemming the flow of seafood caught through IUU fishing to the UK market, the UK has retained the EU's catch certification scheme (under the UK IUU Regulation). This requires that all seafood consignments falling within the scope of the UK IUU Regulation be accompanied by a catch certificate validated by the flag State of the fishing vessel that caught the fish.

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# Comparative Study

- Updated report published on IUUWatch.eu - April 2025
- 17 **Baseline** Key data elements (KDEs):
  - Who, what, where, when, how
- Compares KDEs in:
  - European Union (EU)
  - United States
  - Japan
  - Republic of Korea



**Import control schemes in major seafood markets: a comparative study of key data elements in the European Union, the United States, Japan and the Republic of Korea**

April 2025



OCEANA



Pew



<https://www.iuuwatch.eu/2025/04/new-report-comparison-of-major-seafood-markets/>

# 17 Key Data Elements

Who, what, when, where, how - The baseline

## What

- Product type
- Species name - ASFIS 3-Alpha Code
- Estimated live weight (kg)
- Processed weight (kg)
- Transshipment: Declaration and authorisation of transshipment at sea, IMO number and vessel master information

## Who

- Vessel name
- Unique vessel identifier (IMO number)
- Vessel flag
- International Radio Call Sign (IRCS)
- Information on exporter/re-exporter
- Identify of import company

## When

- Event date

## How

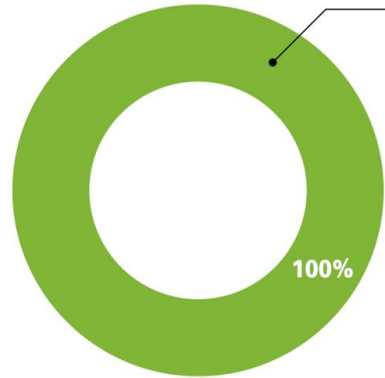
- Fishing gear type or catch method

## Where

- Catch area (with a clear distinction between the EEZ and the high seas)
- Authorisation to fish
- Port of landing
- Processing location

# Results

## The European Union



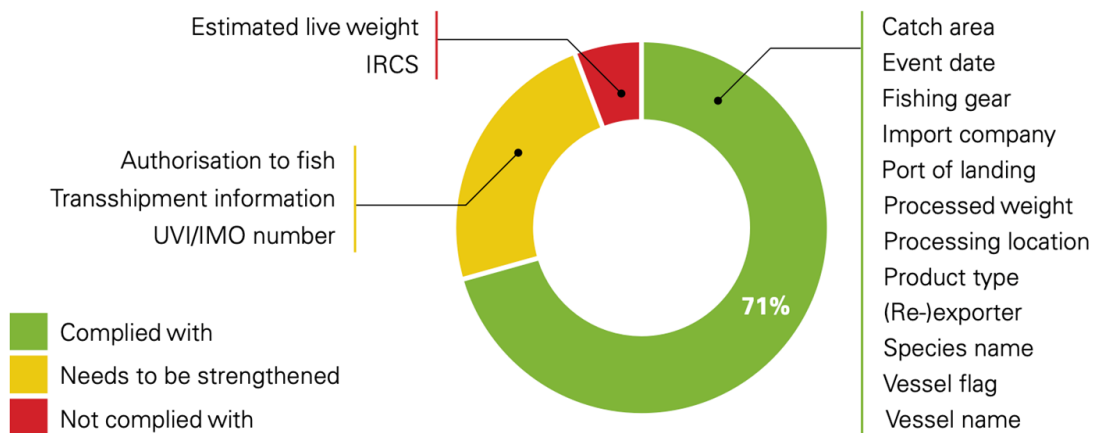
- Complied with
- Needs to be strengthened
- Not complied with

- Authorisation to fish
- Catch area
- Estimated live weight
- Event date
- Fishing gear
- Import company
- IRCS
- Port of landing
- Processed weight
- Processing location
- Product type
- (Re-)exporter
- Species name
- Transshipment information
- UVI/IMO number
- Vessel flag
- Vessel name

- > From 10 January 2026, the EU catch certificate requires **all of the 17 recommended KDEs (100%)**.
- > All wild-caught seafood imports (with some exceptions)
- > Digitisation (January 2026)

# Results

## The United States of America

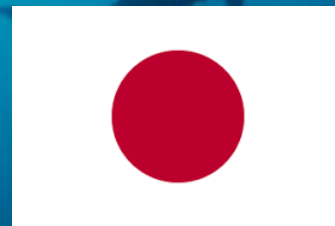


> The US currently requests **12 out of the 17 KDEs (71%) recommended** in this report.

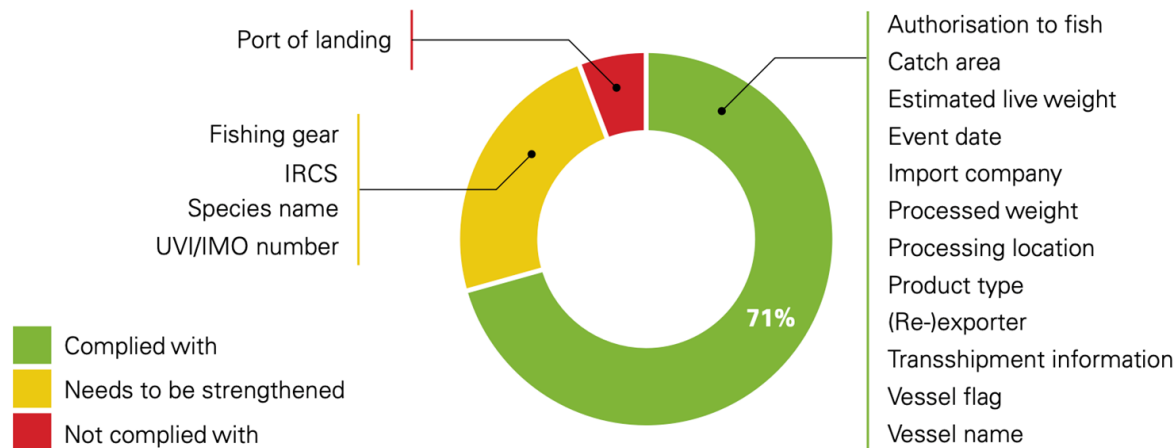
> SIMP establishes reporting and record-keeping requirements for imports of seafood products for the 13 types of seafood identified as the most vulnerable to IUU fishing and/or seafood fraud.

# Results

Japan



## > Influence of the EU - others are following



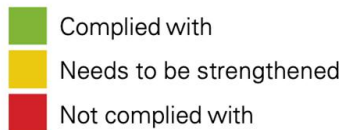
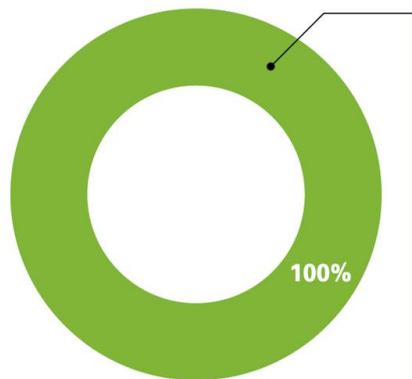
> Japan currently requests **12 out of the 17 KDEs (71%) recommended** in this report.

> Covers imported squid and cuttlefish, Pacific saury (*Cololabis* spp.), Mackerel (*Scomber* spp.) and Sardine (*Sardinops* spp.).

> Following a review of the system in 2024, candidate species for the first round of coverage expansion were identified.

# Results

## Republic of Korea

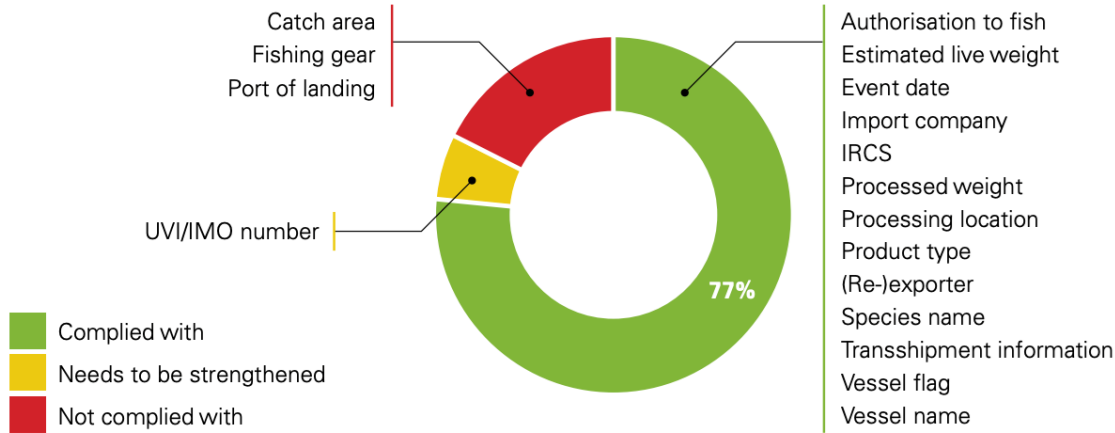


Authorisation to fish  
Catch area  
Estimated live weight  
Event date  
Fishing gear  
Import company  
IRCS  
Port of landing  
Processed weight  
Processing location  
Product type  
(Re-)exporter  
Species name  
Transshipment information  
UVI/IMO number  
Vessel flag  
Vessel name

> As of October 2024, the Republic of Korea is currently requiring **all 17 KDEs (100%) recommended** in this report

> Covers imported pacific saury, bobo croaker and longneck croaker caught by vessels over 20 tons

# United Kingdom



> The UK is currently requiring **13 out of the 17 KDEs (76%) recommended**

> The old EU catch certificate

> All wild-caught seafood imports (with some exceptions)

## 5. Results of KDE comparative analysis

In this section, the EU, US, Japan and South Korea are compared against the EU IUU Fishing Coalition's recommended KDEs. The existing unilateral schemes are also compared against each other to determine how aligned the systems are in relation to the above KDEs. The results of this analysis are displayed in Figure 1.

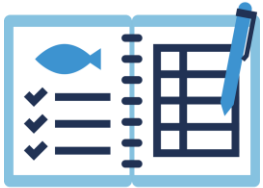
	Best practice
	Optional or needs to be strengthened/improved
	Not required

\*For IOTC the KDEs refer to the bigeye tuna statistical document which is required to accompany any shipments of tuna in order to be considered legitimate.

	Key data element (KDE)	European Union	United States	Japan	Republic of Korea	RFMO & CCAMLR Catch Documentation Schemes				Additional Information
						ICCAT	CCSBT	CCAMLR	IOTC* (Statistical Document)	
WHO	Vessel name									
	Unique vessel identifier (IMO number)	From 10th January 2026								EU: requests an IMO number and, if it is not applicable, another unique vessel identifier, if applicable. US: requests a UVI when available. Japan: IMO number or Lloyd's Register number required if issued. CCAMLR: the option to provide an IMO number is provided, but not mandatory.
	Vessel flag									
	International Radio Call Sign (IRCS)									Japan: call sign required if issued.
	Information on exporter / re-exporter									ICCAT: only requests company name.
	Identity of import company									
WHAT	Product type									
	Species name – ASFIS 3-Alpha Code									Japan: requires HS code of product, not ASFIS 3-Alpha code
	Estimated live weight (kg)									ICCAT: ICCAT requests "Total weight" and "Average weight". CCSBT: requests the net weight. IOTC: requests the net weight.
	Processed weight (kg)									ICCAT, CCSBT, CCAMLR and IOTC require the net weight of harvested or processed products to be re-exported from the territory of a contracting party where it has previously been imported.
	Transshipment: Declaration and authorisation of transshipment at sea, IMO number and vessel master information									EU: bans all transshipment at sea US: does not request vessel master information. Japan: IMO number or Lloyd's Register number only required if issued. CCSBT: does not require IMO number in the declaration.
WHEN	Event date									
WHERE	Catch area (better defined with a clear distinction between the EEZ and the high seas)	From 10th January 2026								CCSBT, ICCAT and IOTC: require the name of their own catch areas, which does not always distinguish between the EEZ and the high seas.
	Authorisation to fish									US: required if available.
	Port of landing	From 10th January 2026								
	Processing location									
HOW	Fishing gear type or catching method	From 10th January 2026								EU: fishing gear must be indicated. Japan: required fishing license number and licensed fishing method. This isn't as specific as the US which requires the fishing gear type specifically.

# The Need for Harmonisation

## Why harmonisation matters



Despite progress, there's a growing risk of creating a **patchwork of incompatible systems**. As more countries introduce catch documentation schemes, which are increasingly digitised, diverging standards can lead to **confusion, enforcement gaps, impeded interoperability and exploitation by bad actors**. Without harmonisation, these systems are at risk of falling short—allowing **IUU-caught seafood to slip through the cracks**.

- > **LEVEL PLAYING FIELD** - EU importers are required to collect a significant amount of data to meet the EU requirements. Harmonised import control schemes globally will help to level the playing field
- > **SUPPORTING THE SECTOR** - complying with the different systems globally with different requirements can prove tricky. Reduced compliance costs for international supply chains.

# Scope and operational best practices

<b>SCOPE</b>
<b>Species covered by the import control scheme</b>
<b>Import data captured in digital format</b>
<b>Authorities or stakeholders responsible for verification</b>
<b>Risk assessment to target at-risk imports</b>
<b>Data exchange between market States</b>

# Complementary developments

- > **Monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS).**

- Electronic log-books, vessel tracking, human observers, electronic monitoring (EM)

- > **Accurate and verifiable information** collected at the point of catch or harvest.

- > **Improved overall fisheries transparency**

- In line with the Global Charter for Fisheries Transparency\*

\*<https://fisheriestransparency.net/resources/a-global-charter-for-fisheries-transparency-a-framework-for-collaboration-justice-and-sustainability/>

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**Many large market states still lack  
catch documentation schemes to  
prevent the importation of illegal  
products**

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# Benefits of Import Control Schemes

1. Exclusion of products linked to IUU fishing
2. Sustainable resource management
3. Disincentivisation of human and labour rights abuses
4. Market integrity and consumer confidence
5. Increased coordination, cooperation, and accountability

**DATA!**

**Level playing field for domestic fleet**



# Import Control Scheme Development

## *Key stages*

- **Step 1:** Scoping
- **Step 2:** Design
- **Step 3:** Implementation
- **Step 4:** Assessment
- **Step 5:** Review

# Our call to action

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Together, the EU IUU Fishing Coalition, the US IUU Fishing and Labor Rights Coalition and the IUU Forum Japan call on all market States to:

1. Establish import control schemes in line with recommendations in the Fisheries Import Control Scheme Handbook (FICSH) to protect global markets and consumers from buying products of IUU fishing.
2. Ensure that any future import control scheme is harmonised with existing schemes to close loopholes for those seeking to trade IUU-caught seafood and relieve unnecessary burden on exporters.
3. Cooperate and share information with other market States to strengthen efforts in closing the net to IUU fishing globally.



**EU IUU FISHING COALITION**

[IUUwatch.eu](http://IUUwatch.eu)

# Thank you for listening

Contact us:

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