

THE EU IUU FISHING CARDING PROCESS

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing undermines global efforts to sustainably use marine resources and protect our oceans.

As one of the world's largest importers of fisheries products, the European Union (EU) has a responsibility to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing activity around the globe.

The EU IUU Regulation ([No 1005/2008 of 29 September 2008](#)) has been the EU's answer to this responsibility — world-leading legislation designed to curb IUU fishing and block illegal catch from entering the European Union.



HOW IT WORKS

At the centre of this legal instrument is the EU's continuous cooperation with "third countries" (non-EU countries) to tackle IUU fishing and ensure their compliance with international regulations.

In most cases, when the European Commission identifies a country is failing to sufficiently prevent IUU fishing, an informal dialogue is enough to resolve any issues.

PRE-IDENTIFICATION (YELLOW CARDS)

Countries that fail to cooperate or act to deter IUU activity are issued a formal warning or "yellow card". At this stage, the Commission has identified serious shortcomings in a country's performance tackling IUU fishing and it is at risk of being considered a "non-cooperating third country" (Article 32).

Since 2010, 28 countries have received yellow cards. Two countries, Ghana and Panama, have received them twice.

The main reasons a country can receive a yellow card include:

- Inadequate control of fishing fleets and processing plants
- Lack of effective vessel monitoring/record keeping/registration
- An unreliable seafood traceability system
- Weak legal system and lenient sanctions for IUU fishing cases
- Non-compliance with international agreements
- Failure to cooperate with the EU to address issues





IDENTIFICATION (RED CARDS)

Countries that still fail to reform their fisheries management practices and effectively fight IUU fishing are officially added to the list of “non-cooperating third countries” (Article 33) and issued a “red card”.

At this stage, a series of sanctions (Article 38) are applied to the offending country, including, but not limited to, bans on:

- Imports of fish products to the EU
- EU citizens purchasing vessels flying that country flag
- Country vessels reflagging to EU Member States
- The export of EU fishing vessels to the country
- EU citizens from owning vessels flagged to the country (2024 revision – Article 38[10])

Eight countries have been identified as non-cooperating since 2010. As of September 2024, five remain on red cards and three (Belize, Sri Lanka and Republic of Guinea) have been delisted.

GREEN CARDS

Yellow and red cards can be lifted once there is clear evidence that a country has resolved the issues that led to the initial carding (Article 34). After a country has received a “green card”, dialogue remains open with the European Commission.

Countries can and have been re-carded where necessary, repeating the whole process again.

As of September 2024, 15 countries have successfully received and remained on green cards.

IMPACT

The results of the structured dialogues between the EU and third countries include:



Improved monitoring, control and surveillance measures

Example: The Republic of Guinea installed two coastal radar stations to track shipping activities and steadily increased sea patrols in its waters.



Increased scale and severity of sanctions

Example: Belize’s ‘High Seas Fishing Act 2013’ introduced sanctions up to US\$3,000,000 for serious IUU fishing violations.



Overhauled fisheries legislation

Example: Thailand, Solomon Islands, Belize and Guinea all updated their fisheries legislation within one year of receiving yellow cards.

These results are detailed in an [EU IUU Coalition study](#) published in 2022. Sustaining global change means sustaining global action. Eradicating IUU fishing demands continued vigilance, innovation and cooperation at every level to ensure our oceans remain healthy, sustainable and protected.

An interactive map of all country cardings is available at: www.iuuwatch.eu/map-of-eu-carding-decisions