



**Circular No. 6/2021**

**23 December 2021**

To: All Organic Aquaculture Operators and Organic Control Bodies (OCBs)

**Water Quality – Organic Bivalve Molluscs**

In relation to water quality for bivalve molluscs, Regulation 848/2018 (Organic Production and Labelling), which come into effect on 1 January 2022, states;

*‘With regard to bivalve molluscs and other species which are not fed by man, but instead feed on natural plankton, the following rules shall apply: (a) such filter-feeding animals shall receive all their nutritional requirements from nature, except in the case of juveniles reared in hatcheries and nurseries; (b) the growing areas shall be suitable from a health point of view and shall either be of high ecological status as defined by Directive 2000/60/EC or of good environmental status as defined by Directive 2008/56/EC or of equivalent quality to:*

*the production zones classed as A in Regulation (EC) No 854/2004, until 13 December 2019, or the corresponding classification areas set out in the implementing acts adopted by the Commission in accordance with Article 18(8) of Regulation (EU) 2017/625, from 14 December 2019.’*

From 01 January 2022 water quality for organic bivalve molluscs must comply with one of the three categories below;

- be of high ecological status under the Directive 2000/60/EC (Water Framework Directive)
- **or** be of good environmental status under the Directive 2008/56/EC (Marine strategy Framework Directive)
- **or** be of equivalent quality to zone A of Regulation (EU) (2019/627)

Regarding the first two categories, only such waters which are fully categorised as being either of Good Environmental Status or High Ecological Status, in accordance with the relevant directives, meet those particular eligibility criteria.

Regarding the final category, the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) is the Competent Authority for awarding Classification of production areas in Irish waters, according to 2017/625 as implemented particularly by 2019/627. Classifications are available for viewing at

**Eastát Chaisleán Sheonach, Contae Loch Garman, Y35 PN52**

Johnstown Castle Estate, Co. Wexford, Y35 PN52

T +353 53 9163400

[www.agriculture.gov.ie](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie)

<https://www.sfpa.ie/What-We-Do/Molluscan-Shellfish/Classified-Areas> from which one can deduce Class A and B waters.

Before issuing organic licences to relevant operators, OCBs are obliged to check water status to ensure compliance with legislative requirements. Where there is a change, including a seasonal change in classification, subsequent to the annual organic recertification then OCBs are obliged to amend the organic licences impacted as appropriate.

*Any queries please contact:*

*Organic Unit, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Johnstown Castle Estate, Wexford*

*Tel: 053-9163400*

*email: [OrganicInspector@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:OrganicInspector@agriculture.gov.ie)*

*Kevin McGeever*

---

Kevin McGeever  
Assistant Principal  
Organic Unit  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine

*Seamus Barron*

---

Seamus Barron  
Agricultural Inspector  
AES Division  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine