



AN t-ÚDARÁS UM  
CHOSAINT  
IASCAIGH MHARA

SEA-FISHERIES  
PROTECTION  
AUTHORITY

## Press Release

Issued by the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority's Press Office

13<sup>th</sup> November 2024

### **Guilty Pleas to Offences of Obstruction of, and Provision of False Information, to Sea-Fisheries Protection Officers**

In 2024, two separate prosecutions, undertaken by the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA), in cooperation with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), were concluded in cases involving the obstruction of, and provision of false information to, Sea-Fisheries Protection Officers in the course of official duties.

On 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024, the case involving Richard Branagan of Skerries, County Dublin was finalised. The Master of the Fishing Vessel "Nausicaa", Mr. Branagan entered a guilty plea to a charge of Obstruction, during a food safety inspection onboard a fishing vessel, contrary to the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act 1998. His actions resulted in the forced abandonment of the Inspection by Officers. In that instance, the Court directed the payment of a charitable donation and a contribution towards the costs of the SFPA totalling €1,200 before dealing with the matter under the Probation Act. This was the second judgment of this nature in 2024. In a separate prosecution, John Hayes, of Bettystown, Co. Meath was charged with, and pleaded guilty to, knowingly providing false information to a Sea-Fisheries Protection Officer, an offence under the Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act 1998. The case was finalised before Judge Anthony Halpin in Dublin District Court on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024. In his ruling, Judge Halpin underscored the seriousness of the offence, noting that "all requirements must be met to uphold the integrity of the product, as failure to do so could damage the reputation of Irish produce on the international stage."

A spokesperson for SFPA commented: "The SFPA acknowledges the Court's strong stance on the severity of these offences. Food safety laws are essential for protecting consumer health and maintaining trust in the seafood sector. We commend the Sea-Fisheries Protection Officers involved for their diligent work and dedication in carrying out these investigations. Their work reflects the SFPA's role in the enforcement of food safety laws and underscores the importance of cooperation, and transparency in order to maintain Ireland's high standards and respected reputation in the global market."

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## **Further Information**

### **About the SFPA**

The Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) is the independent statutory body responsible for the regulation of the sea-fisheries and the sea-food production sectors. It promotes compliance with the EU Common Fisheries Policy, sea-fisheries law and food safety law relating to fish and fish products, verifies compliance and, where necessary, enforces it. Its mandate covers all fishing vessels operating within Ireland's 200-mile limit, over 2,000 Irish registered fishing vessels wherever they operate, and all seafood produced in Ireland's seafood processing companies. The SFPA operates through a network of regional port offices situated at Ireland's main fishery harbours. For further information visit: [www.sfpa.ie](http://www.sfpa.ie)