

## FAQ – What minimum legal size limits apply to commercial and recreational fishing?



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For over 100 years there have been minimum legal size (MLS) limits for some species taken by commercial fishers. All commercial catch has to be landed for species in the quota management system unless it is below the MLS. A few species can be released alive if they are likely to survive.

In February 2019 the Minister of Fisheries released a discussion document proposing a review of Minimum Legal Size for commercial fishers. Clearly the authors of the document favour removing all the size limits and a requirement for commercial fishers to land all catch (LAC). The theory is that this will encourage fishers to avoid small fish to get the best value from their catch. However, it does not address other problems in the quota system such as the economic incentive to dump low value fish, balancing catch against quota held, and the use of destructive fishing gear in sensitive areas.

Species of fish	Commercial minimum legal fish length (cm)	Recreational minimum legal fish length (cm)
Blue cod	33	30 to 33
Blue moki	40	40
Butterfish	35	35
Flatfishes	23 to 25	23 to 25
Kingfish	65	75
Red cod	25	25
Red gurnard	none	25
Red moki	40	40
Snapper SNA1	25	30
Snapper other areas	25	25 to 27
Tarakihi	25	25
Trevally	25	25
Trumpeter	none	35
Other species	Size (mm)	Size (mm)
Crayfish Male	52 to 54	54
Crayfish Female	60	60
Packhorse crayfish	216	216
Scallop Coromandel	90	100

### Species that can be released live

Schedule 6 of the Fisheries Act lists the legal sized fish that commercial fishers can release alive if those fish are likely to survive. The estimated weight of released fish need to be recorded, but they are not counted against quota (ACE).

Schedule 6 species:

Kingfish; Southern Bluefin Tuna; Swordfish smaller than 125 cm lower jaw fork length; and Toothfish. Also a number of shark and ray species: Mako; Porbeagle; Blue; Rig; Spiny dogfish; School Shark and Rough Skate.