

**ATTENTION**  
**ALL SALTWATER PRODUCTS**  
**WHOLESALE AND RETAIL DEALERS**

**RULE CLARIFICATIONS FOR REEF**  
**FISH SIZE LIMITS**  
**EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2003**

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has approved rule changes to clarify that **imported reef fishes must comply with Florida's legal minimum size limits.** Current rules already prohibit possession of snappers, groupers and other reef fish species that do not conform to established size limits. However, there has been confusion as to whether these provisions also apply to imported reef fishes such as red grouper, yellow-tail snapper and red snapper. The rule changes make it clear that all reef fish size limits apply regardless of where the fish were caught.

All imported reef fish that are fresh or frozen and in a whole condition are covered by this rule. Imported reef fish fillets are not affected as long as they are clearly identifiable as imports.

These rule changes also resolve inconsistencies between state and federal reef fish size limits. In addition, these new rule changes **reduce** the minimum size limit of **red snapper** commercially harvested from Gulf state waters from 16 to 15 inches total length and **reduce** the minimum size limit for all **scamp** harvested from Gulf state waters from 20 inches to 16 inches total length.

Please note that the harvest regulations for the Atlantic Ocean or Gulf of Mexico may specify a larger minimum size limit, and those size limits have not changed. Where there is a difference between the two coastal size limits, **Florida regulations now specify that imported fish must meet the lesser of the two size limits.**

The following chart shows the minimum size limits for importation of 19 reef fish species. All size limits are expressed in "total length" unless indicated otherwise. A check mark (✓) indicates that the harvest minimum size limit in the Atlantic Ocean or the Gulf of Mexico columns is the same as the import minimum size limits. Where a size limit is shown, that minimum size applies to the harvest of that particular species in waters of the Atlantic Ocean or the Gulf of Mexico.

Species		Minimum Size Limit		
		Import Length	Harvest from the Atlantic Ocean	Harvest from the Gulf of Mexico
(1)	Black sea bass	10 inches	√	√
(2)	Greater amberjack	36 inches fork length	√	√
(3)	Gray triggerfish	12 inches	√	√
(4)	Black grouper	24 inches	√	√
(5)	Gag grouper	24 inches	√	√
(6)	Red grouper	20 inches	√	√
(7)	Scamp	16 inches	20 inches	√
(8)	Yellowfin grouper	20 inches	√	√
(9)	Hogfish	12 inches fork length	√	√
(10)	Cubera snapper	12 inches	√	√
(11)	Dog snapper	12 inches	√	√
(12)	Gray (mangrove) snapper	12 inches	√	√
(13)	Lane snapper	8 inches	√	√
(14)	Mahogany snapper	12 inches	√	√
(15)	Mutton snapper	16 inches	√	√
(16)	Red snapper	15 inches	20 inches	√
(17)	Schoolmaster snapper	10 inches	12 inches	12 inches
(18)	Vermilion snapper	10 inches	12 inches	√
(19)	Yellowtail snapper	12 inches	√	√

Minimum size limits do not apply to the possession, purchase, sale, or exchange of the following species that have been imported from another state, or foreign country: banded rudderfish, lesser amberjack, yellowmouth grouper, blackfin snapper, queen snapper, silk snapper, or red porgy.

The possession, purchase, sale, or exchange of any Nassau grouper or goliath grouper is prohibited.

A person may possess any reef fish that has been imported into Florida from another state or foreign country, provided that those species comply with established minimum size limits if applicable, and the purchaser possesses a receipt(s), bill(s) of sale, or bill(s) of lading to show that the fish were harvested and purchased in another state or foreign country and are entering the state in interstate or international commerce. Such documentation shall accompany the fish through retail or restaurant sale. Failure to maintain or promptly produce such documentation at the request of any authorized law enforcement officer shall constitute violation of FWC rules.

You may contact our office by telephone at (850) 487-3122 or by mail at Commercial Saltwater Licensing, P.O. Box 6150, Tallahassee, FL 32399-32314. You may also e-mail our office at [MARINE@fwc.state.fl.us](mailto:MARINE@fwc.state.fl.us)

**ATTENTION**  
**Wholesale Dealers,**  
**Retail Dealers and Restaurants**

- **A commercial wholesale dealer, retail dealer, or restaurant facility shall not purchase from an unlicensed person, firm, or corporation or sell for public consumption any saltwater product known to be taken in violation of constitutional net fishing provisions, or any statute or Fish and Wildlife Conservation (FWC) rule implementing these provisions.**
- **An illegal purchase from an unlicensed person, firm or corporation who does not hold a current license with the required endorsements is considered a major violation carrying a minimum administrative penalty of \$2,500 and a suspension of the wholesale, retail, and/or restaurant license(s) for up to 90 days.**
- All saltwater products received by a **wholesale dealer** are presumed by law to have been purchased, for purposes of determining compliance with fisheries and licensure regulations.
- Regarding the sale of saltwater products to a **retail dealer or any restaurant**, all saltwater products received by a retail dealer or restaurant are presumed by law to have been purchased.
- Florida also requires fishermen to have the appropriate federal permits when selling snappers and groupers, even if those fish were harvested in Florida waters. Furthermore, Florida law also specifies that no wholesale dealer shall purchase any of these species without confirming that the seller possesses the appropriate state and federal licenses and permits.
- Spiny lobster tails may now be legally imported into Florida during the closed season, provided that they are accompanied with the appropriate receipts, bills of sale, or bills of lading to show they were harvested and purchased in a foreign country and are entering Florida in international commerce. This documentation must accompany the lobster through retail or restaurant sale, and must be produced promptly at the request of a law enforcement officer. Each imported lobster must comply with the minimum size limit and the prohibition relating to egg-bearing females.

**New on the Internet**

- To better serve you, you can now check the status of your Saltwater Products License(s) online at [www.marinefisheries.org](http://www.marinefisheries.org).
- Wholesale dealers can also visit this website to check a license prior to a purchase.
- You may e-mail the licensing office at [SPLMAIL@fwc.state.fl.us](mailto:SPLMAIL@fwc.state.fl.us).
- You may also contact our office by telephone at (850) 487-3122 or by mail at Commercial Saltwater Licensing, P.O. Box 6150, Tallahassee, FL 32399-32314. You may also e-mail our office at [MARINE@fwc.state.fl.us](mailto:MARINE@fwc.state.fl.us)