

Put and take fishery

Key points to consider

- Angling contributes an estimated £10m annually to the Northern Ireland economy.
- All types of fishing continue to rise in popularity.
- Planning consent is required to open a 'put and take' fishery.
- The proprietor must have fishing rights to the water.
- A feasibility study and careful budgeting is essential.



Market overview

Generally speaking the popularity of all types of fishing is growing and there appears to be a shortage of fish and waters available to cater for the ever-increasing numbers of anglers.

The market advantage of 'put and take' fisheries in Northern Ireland is that they can remain open all year, provided they are designated as 'rainbow trout only' waters. 'Put and take fishing' refers to waters into which catchable-sized fish are regularly released, or 'put'. Anglers pay to fish the waters, attempting to 'take' a catch up to pre-determined number or weight, according to the limits on a ticket they purchase.

The market is segmented into fisheries catering for:

- Local angling clubs or syndicates which may be prepared to take on some management responsibilities in return for good quality fishing;
- Inexperienced anglers who want to take home some easily caught fresh fish, often from suburban locations;
- The tourist market, which seeks pleasant surroundings, complimentary facilities and good quality fishing.

Service delivery requirements

Fishing waters

This enterprise requires a natural source of water usually in the form of an existing lake. Anglers are more attracted to large expanses of water – say a few hectares. The lake's overall size and shape will determine the number of anglers that can cast lines at any one time. Water should have a high level of dissolved oxygen (pH 6.5–8.0) and be pollution free.

Facilities

Consideration should be given to the provision of a reception area as well as good facilities for anglers to gain access, say a footpath around the water's edge. Stiles at fences, footbridges over open drains, angling stands, shelters and moorings for boats can be constructed as required.

Management

Management of the fishery can be by lease of the water to an angling club or hiring out on a day-to-day basis. The proprietor or manager is responsible for selling tickets, recording the number and weight of fish caught, stocking of the water as well as planning promotional events. An integral part of management is to discourage poachers.

Stocking the water

Fish should generally be within the weight range 0.5kg – 0.75kg and reach up to 5kg. Good sport can be provided by initially releasing 100kg of catchable sized fish, around 0.5kg each in weight, per hectare of water. Thereafter stocking levels need to be monitored to ensure the number of fish caught satisfies anglers and fishery manager.

Legal requirements

Fishing rights

Proprietors must ensure they have fishing rights to the water. These may or may not be attached to the land rights. If the owner of the rights cannot be found, the prospective developer should

apply to the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Inland Fisheries Branch.

Fish culture licence

Where fish are kept in a holding facility and fed for a short period prior to release, a fish culture licence is required. In addition, all fish deliveries need to be accompanied by a movement permit. It is the responsibility of the person delivering the fish to have this documentation.

Rod licence

All anglers over 18 years of age are required by law to hold a rod licence to fish legally in Northern Ireland. In the Foyle area, under 18's require a rod licence for game fishing. If a 'put and take' fishery is kept open all year the proprietor should apply to the Fisheries Conservancy Board to have the water designated a 'rainbow trout only' water.

Planning

Changing a natural or artificial source of water to a fishery will require consent under the Planning Order (Northern Ireland) 1972. It is also advisable to consult the local planning authority regarding the erection of signs.

Health and safety

When a 'put and take' fishery is established as an additional farm enterprise, the farmer should ensure that their whole business, including the new development, complies with health and safety regulations.

Financial considerations

Capital investment

The capital required to set up a 'Put and Take' fishery will vary according to matters such as pond excavation or the extent of improvements required to an existing lake, anticipated stocking levels and the availability of skilled family labour. Cost of landscaping, providing access, car parking and toilet facilities as well as fencing, gates and signage should also be considered. Outlay may need to include the costs of tanks to retain and feed fish before release.

Income

Expected income from a 'put and take' fishery includes:

- Ticket sales – fish limit, no fish limit, hourly tickets etc
- Hire of boats
- Sale or hire of fishing tackle
- Tuition fees for novices – courses are held at regular intervals
- Refreshments

Rateable value

Fishing rights are no longer rateable. However, facilities such as covered reception, shop and car park are liable.

VAT

If the annual turnover from this activity is below the VAT registration threshold of £54,000 you do not need to register for VAT. However, you can choose to register below this threshold.

Insurance

To cover accidents which may occur it is essential to have public and any employers' liability required. In addition, cover to replace buildings in the event of an outbreak of fire is advisable.

Further contacts

For more information and advice contact:

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Website: www.doeni.gov.uk/planning

This information sheet has been compiled by Rural Enterprise Advisers.

For advice and guidance on your farm diversification idea contact your local Rural Enterprise Adviser. For details of the adviser in your area:

Tel: 028 9052 4406.

E-mail: ruralenterprise.afds@dardni.gov.uk

Website: www.ruralni.gov.uk/farmdiversification

Note: the information provided herein is for general information only. It is not necessarily complete and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any proposed enterprise. The market and circumstances may change substantially. Further research will be required before embarking on any new enterprise.

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