



Positive Outcome for Ireland at Final Fisheries Council Negotiations

In October last the EU Commission issued its proposals for setting fishing opportunities for 2017 (COM (2016) 698 final) for the majority of demersal and some pelagic stocks. This followed a period of public consultation over the summer months. The proposals issued were worrying in that many severe cuts to TAC were proposed which, if implemented, could have had very negative consequences for the Irish industry, with reductions in fishing opportunities of up to 19 per cent in the whitefish and prawn sector alone. These would have translated into a financial loss of €14.7 million for the industry and anything up to 400 jobs lost. Fortunately, after lengthy, intensive negotiations, the proposals were amended to finish with an overall positive outcome for the Irish fishing industry.

Pelagic Quotas 2017

There are increases in three of our important pelagic stocks: mackerel, blue whiting and Atlanto-Scandia herring. Following the trend of recent years, many of the pelagic quotas are negotiated and confirmed well in advance

of the December Fisheries Council. In October this year representatives of the European Union, Norway, the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland met in Clonakilty; as a result of these successful talks, Ireland has an increased mackerel quota for 2017 of 86,426 tonnes - an increase of over 10,500 tonnes from 2016. There is also an increase to 45,547 tonnes for

(continued on page two)

PELAGIC STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2016 (t)	Quota 2017 (t)2	Diff. %
Mackerel ¹	VI, VII	75837	86426	14%
H. Mackerel ²	Ila, IVa, VI, VIIa-c, VIIe-k, VIIla,b,e	27064	20839	-23%
H. Mackerel ³	IVb, IVc, and VIId	347	438	26%
Blue Whiting ⁴	I, II,III, IV,V, VI, VII, VIII a,b,d,e XII,XIV	24550	45547	86%
Herring ⁵	I, II	1830	3731	104%
Herring ⁶	VIaN	630	630	0%
Herring ⁷	VIaS, VIIbc	1482	1482	0%
Herring	VIIa	1191	1074	-10%
Herring	VII ghjk	13345	12502	-6%
Tuna ⁸	north.atl	2584	2514	-3%
Argentines	III, IV	7	7	0%
Argentines	V, VI, VII	305	276	-10%
Boar Fish	VI, VII,VIII	29464	18858	-36%
Total		178636	194324	9%

Footnotes for 2017 pelagic quotas

- 52,161 tonnes of the mackerel quota may be fished EU waters IIa; EU and Norwegian waters of IVa during the periods from January 1 to February 15, 2017 and from September 1 to December 31, 2017. 7,028 tonnes of the quota may be fished in Norwegian waters of IIa and 7,192 tonnes in Faroese waters.
- 5 per cent of this horse mackerel quota fished in division IIa or IVa before June 30, 2017 may be accounted for as fished under the quota concerning the zone of Union waters of IVb, IVc and VIId. Catches of boarfish, whiting and mackerel may be counted against up to 5 per cent of this horse mackerel quota, provided that not more than 9 per cent in total of this quota for horse mackerel is accounted for by these catches and by-catches of those species.
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- Within a total access blue whiting quota of 21,500, Ireland can fish 9.2 per cent of its quota in Faroese waters.
- EU vessels have access to 37,853 herring tonnes in Norwegian waters north of 62° and the fishery zone around Jan Mayen. Ireland has access to 532 tonnes herring II, Vb north of 62° N (Faroese waters)
- It shall be prohibited to target any herring in the part of the ICES zones subject to this TAC that lies between 56° N and 57° 30' N with the exception of a six nautical miles measured from the baseline of the United Kingdom's territorial sea.
- Reference is to the herring stock in VIa south of 56° 00' N and west of 07° 00' W.
- Ireland has a maximum of 50 licences.

AREA VI WHITEFISH STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2016 (t)	Quota 2017 (t)	Diff. %
Cod ¹	VIa	0	0	0%
Cod	VIb	16	16	0%
Megrim	VI	675	736	9%
Monkfish	VI	638	765	20%
Haddock	Vb VIa	1008	495	-51%
Haddock	VIb XII XIV	353	410	16%
Whiting	VI	64	64	0%
Plaice	VI	261	261	0%
Pollock	VI	56	56	0%
Saithe	VI	384	433	13%
Sole	VI	46	46	0%
Nephrops	VI	223	222	0%
Total		3724	3504	-5.9%



blue whiting and a very welcome and substantial increase in the quota for Atlanto-Scandia herring with a total of 3,731 tonnes, but herring in other areas such as the monitoring programme in Area VIa are lower. Due to on-going issues of scientific assessment, the quotas for horse mackerel and boarfish are reduced as industry expected; it is hoped these issues will be addressed satisfactorily in the coming year.

Whitefish Quotas 2017

Forecasts of drastic cuts in many of the demersal species critically important to the Irish fishing industry were not as stringent as initially feared. There are increases in monkfish (+20 per cent), megrim (+9 per cent), Rockall haddock (+16 per cent) and saithe (+13 per cent) in Area VI; there is also a much needed and scientifically justified increase in Nephrops of 9 per cent. The 20 per cent reduction in haddock is not justified as it is a result of scientific error and changing fishing mortality rate; it could possibly create problems during 2017 due to impact on the landings obligation. The Celtic Sea, where the threat of a 68 per cent cut in cod quota was significantly reduced to 15 per cent, saw increases in haddock (+7 per cent), whiting (+21 per cent) and no change to monkfish. In both areas the hake quota was increased by 9 per cent.

Deepwater Quotas 2017/2018

The biennial setting of quotas for Deepwater Stocks highlights the year-on-year erosion of available fishing opportunities for these stocks. However, Ireland does not have a direct interest in deep-water quotas and their value remains their availability for "swapping" regarding other species.

Finally, a word of thanks to Minister Creed and his team, BIM, the Marine Institute and to all the officials for their efforts before and during the Council and for fully engaging with the industry in addressing out concerns.

Donegal Well Represented at Inaugural BIM National Seafood Awards



Donegal led the way at the recent BIM National Seafood Awards, with eight of the finalists in sectors such as fishing, seafood processing and retail and aquaculture. Each were selected for their outstanding contributions in the areas of Skills, Sustainability, Innovation and Competitiveness. Pictured here being congratulated on their success by Sean O'Donoghue, KFO, are (left to right) Colm O'Brien, finalist, Student of the Year; Hugh McBride, Mc Bride Fishing Co. Ltd., finalist, Fishing Enterprise of the Year; Patrick McClenaghan, MFV *Foyle Warrior*, Winner of Best New Fishing Practice; Frances O'Dwyer, Fisheries Development Office, BIM; Marty McGing, MFV *Olgary*, finalist, Responsible Fishermen of the Year; William Spence, MFV *Amy Jane II*, finalist, Responsible Fisherman of the Year; Michael O'Donnell, Island Seafoods, Killybegs, Winner of the Green Processor Award; Barry Shaw, Killybegs, winner of 2016 Student of the Year Award, and Sean O'Donoghue, KFO.

AREA VII WHITEFISH STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2016 (t)	Quota 2017 (t)	Diff. %
Cod	VIIa	97	97	0%
Cod	VII b-k	864	738	-15%
Megrim ²	VII	3021	2266	-25%
Monkfish ³	VII	2540	2540	0%
Haddock	VII b-k	1613	1722	7%
Haddock	VIIa	716	898	25%
Whiting	VIIa	46	46	0%
Whiting	VIIb-k	6333	7651	21%
Plaice	VIIa	768	768	0%
Plaice	VII bc	63	63	0%
Plaice	VII fg	200	200	0%
Plaice	VII hjk	59	56	-5%
Pollock	VII	1030	927	-10%
Saithe	VII	1491	1491	0%
Sole	VIIa	17	17	0%
Sole	VII bc	36	36	0%
Sole	VII fg	24	26	8%
Sole	VII hjk	171	171	0%
Nephrops	VII	8610	9350	9%
Nephrops ⁴	VII Functional Unit 16	671	1124	68%
Total		27699	29063	5%

AREA VI, VII AND OTHER WHITEFISH STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2016 (t)	Quota 2017 (t)	Diff. %
Cod ⁵	I,II	263	344	31
Hake ⁶	VI, VII	3415	3732	9%
Redfish	Int waters V, XII, XIV (Shallow)	0	0	0%
Redfish	International waters V, XII, XIV	0	0	0%
Ling	VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	758	1008	33%
Blue Ling	II,IV international waters	4	4	0%
Blue Ling	Vb,VI,VII	14	32	129%
Tusk	V, VI, VII	53	53	0%
Greenland Halibut	IIa, IV, VI	16	16	0%
Snow Crab	Greenland Waters	0	0	0%
Porbeagle	I, II, III, IV, V, IV, IVV, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	0	0	0%
Skate & Rays ⁷	Vla, VIb, VIIa-c and VIIe-k	1048	1100	5%
Spur Dogs ⁸	I, II, III, IV, V, IV, IVV, VIII, XII, XIV	0	0	0%
Basking Shark	EU Waters	0	0	0%
Total		5571	6289	13%

Footnotes for 2017 whitefish quotas

1. Zero cod TAC with maximum 1.5 per cent cod retained on board.
2. 5 per cent megrim quota may be used in area VIIIabde for by-catches in directed fisheries for sole.
3. 10 per cent monkfish in VII may be fished in area VIIa,b,d,e.
4. Nephrops quota in the Porcupine Bank functional unit 16 is part of the VII nephrops quota. It is not additional. Closure period one month, May 1-31, 2017. It is prohibited to have on board cod, megrims, anglerfish,

5. Ireland has access to 491 tonnes other Member States quota in I and II b.
6. No more than 402 tonnes hake VI & VII maybe fished in ICES area VIII a,b,d,e.
7. Separate reporting of seven species of ray. Prohibits catches *raja undulata*. 5 per cent may be fished waters VIId.
8. In addition to Zero TAC, there is an amount of 53 tonnes for a scientific fishery. Conditions will apply.

DEEPWATER STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2016 (t)	Quota 2017 (t)	% Diff	Quota 2018 (t)	% Diff ¹
Black Scabbard	V, VI, VII, XII	96	84.5	-12%	73	-24%
Roundnose Grenadier	Vb, VI, VII	265	199	-25%	203	-23%
Roundnose Grenadier	VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	5	4	-20%	3	-40%
Orange Roughy	VI	0	0	0%	0	0%
Orange Roughy	VII	0	0	0%	0	0%
Orange Roughy	I, II, III, IV, V, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIV	0	0	0%	0	0%
Red Seabream	VI, VII, VIII	5	4.5	-10%	4	-20%
Alfonsinos	I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	9	8.55	-5%	8.55	-5%
Forkbeards	V, VI, VII	312	278	-11%	244	-22%
Deep Sea Sharks	V, VI, VII, IX	0	0	0%	0	0%
Deep Sea Sharks	XII	0	0	0%	0	0%
Total		692	579	-16.4%	536	-23%

Footnote

1. Difference compared with 2016.

Successful Gear Trials Point the Way to Rational Implementation of the Landings Obligation

The BIM technology team continues to produce very valuable information for fishermen with results of recent trials on a dual codend with net separator panel in the Nephrops fishery. They demonstrated how it is possible to optimise size grades and quality of Nephrops and fish catches, greatly reduce catch sorting times, while also meeting legislative restrictions on discarding. The preliminary trials were already reported in the KFO October issue (BIM Gear Trials on Dual Codend Separator Show Some Promising Results) but since then more extensive trials have been run.

A range of measures were recently tested by BIM in collaboration with the Irish fishing industry to reduce unwanted catches and provide options to address landing obligation requirements in the Nephrops fishery. In relation to the main target species, an increase in minimum mesh size from 70mm to 80mm was found to substantially reduce catches of undersize Nephrops, and a new regulation in that regard is due to come into force in January 2017. For fish species, measures such as the 300mm square mesh panel, SELTRA panel, and rigid sorting grid have all been shown to substantially reduce catches of whiting and haddock while retaining Nephrops. However, the latter gears are not size selective i.e. they reduce catches of big as well as small fish, nor are they species selective, in that valuable catches such as flatfish can also be substantially reduced.

Tested by BIM in early October 2016 on board the *MFV Stella Nova* at the Smalls ground in the Celtic Sea, the dual codend with separator panel demonstrated an effective solution to these challenges. This gear, designed by Mike Montgomerie from Seafish, in collaboration with the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, works by guiding fish to the top codend, while Nephrops pass through the net panel into the bottom codend. BIM sought to build on Mike and the Scottish industry's good work by optimising selectivity of the separated species in the two codends.

The key findings were:

- Catches of undersize whiting and haddock in the dual codend with net separator panel were reduced by 72 and 49 per cent respectively, compared with a standard trawl.
- Aside from a 37 per cent reduction in marketable whiting, no reductions of marketable catch occurred for any other species.
- Separation of key retained fish species by weight into the top codend consisted of 82 per cent of flatfish; 83 per cent of haddock; 90 per cent of cod and hake; 94 per cent of whiting, and 98 per cent of monkfish.
- Selectivity of different fish species can effectively be altered without reducing Nephrops catches.
- By removing the top codend, the gear can be used as a fish exclusion device when fish quotas are low.
- Automated species separation greatly reduced catch sorting times and improved fish quality.

The full details of the trials can be found in the recently published BIM report titled, 'Assessment of a dual codend with net separator panel in an Irish Nephrops fishery'.

Herring Stock Identification Project Promising

The April newsletter reported on the initiation of the herring stock identification project, which aims to develop a genetic based method for splitting catches and survey samples of 6aS & 7b,c and 6aN herring. It is hoped that this method may be introduced on a large scale and help to improve the assessment data for these stocks. The collaborative project between UCD, the Irish, Scottish and Dutch industries and the Marine Institute and Marine Scotland is now entering its tenth month and is on schedule to deliver results in February 2017.

A considerable amount of work has taken place since the last project update, with all of the laboratory work being completed by the end of August and the next generation sequencing being conducted in September. During this time, significant effort has also been directed towards further developing the new genetic techniques in order to make them faster and cheaper to use and to facilitate higher-throughput of samples. To this end new, simple and repeatable methods of on-board sample collection and preservation are being investigated and were trialled during the Marine Institute WEPAS survey. This proved successful and it is hoped that these methods will start to be introduced on a wider scale for future sampling. These methods would also enable a transition to automated DNA extraction from all samples using robotics, which would remove a large bottleneck from the processing of samples and increase the throughput of samples. Further optimisation of sample processing is also possible and a number of areas are being investigated. These are important considerations if the new genetic identification methods are to be used regularly on a large scale to monitor the mixing or division of the stocks.

Since October, the focus has been on analysing the sequence data and putting together preliminary results for the Pelagic AC, 6a Herring meeting on December 9. The primary objective of Stage 1 of the project is to test for contemporary genetic differences between the 6aS & 7b,c and 6aN stocks and to develop a genetic baseline on which to compare future survey and commercial catches. An important aspect of this is to make sure that any differences detected are temporally stable i.e. if a difference is detected between the southern and the northern stocks then this difference must be present in multiple years of samples.

A number of potential differences between the stocks have been identified and analyses are now concentrated on confirming the robustness of these. Future analysis of the samples collected during the recent industry spawning surveys will also feed into this aspect of the project which underlines the importance of these samples.

Whilst only preliminary results are currently available, the outlook is promising. There have also been other recent developments in the genetics of herring with Swedish scientists identifying a genetic component to spawning season in Baltic Herring. The 6a herring project is in close contact with these scientists and efforts are underway to test if these findings are also relevant to the efforts to split the 6a stocks.

Genetics are likely to play a large role in the future of fisheries science and the KFO's continued support will place them at the forefront of these advances, as evidenced by the KFO-supported boarfish genetic project. The results of this project, which was completed earlier this year, have now undergone a full peer review and will be published in the prestigious journal of the Royal Society - Open Science (<http://rsos.royalsocietypublishing.org/>) on December 14. The newly developed methods described in the paper, entitled 'Next Gen Pop Gen: implementing a high-throughput approach to population genetics in boarfish (*Capros aper*),' are expected to have a significant impact on the way fisheries genetics data is generated and used in the future. This is an open access journal so the article is available for everyone to read and there is sure to be some interesting information for all in it. We welcome any questions and feedback on the paper and results too, so please do get in contact.

Editorial

by Sean O'Donoghue

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, KFO



This year we headed into the Fisheries Council with many proposed cuts looming over our industry. The overall outcome was better than expected with significant increases in three pelagic stocks mackerel +14%, blue whiting +85% and Atlanto Scandia herring +104% and an endorsement by Council of the expected 50% increase in the percentage share of blue whiting but the reductions in haddock in the North West and megrim in Celtic Sea are disappointing. I have already made it clear that the reduction in haddock is not justified as it is due to scientific error and changing the fishing mortality rate. It is likely that this reduction will cause problems with possible early closures of fisheries during next year in the North West as haddock is under the landing obligation.

The increases in whitefish quotas in the North West, monkfish + 20%, megrim + 9%, Rockall haddock +16% and saithe +13% and much needed 9% scientifically justified increase in nephrops are very welcome. Likewise, there were significant increases in the Celtic Sea quotas, namely haddock +7%, whiting +21%, a rollover of the monkfish while the hake quota in both areas was increased by 9%. The major proposed reduction of 68% in cod was significantly reduced to 15%. Once again the Hague Preferences were seriously challenged by other Member States but were allowed to stand. I have to give credit to Minister Creed for withstanding this onslaught.

Having survived the challenges of Landings Obligation, MSY deadlines, shrinking quotas and a myriad of lesser problems nobody expected the single most dangerous threat to the Irish fishing industry since it joined the EU would come from as a result of our neighbour, the United Kingdom, voting to "Brexit" the EU last June. The danger to Ireland is two-fold; firstly, access to UK waters for Irish vessels where we have a 38% dependency and, secondly, our percentage of jointly shared and widely distributed stocks. Once the UK leaves the EU it will become another Coastal State which will have huge implications for the management of the widely distributed stocks such as mackerel, blue whiting and Atlanto Scandia herring which are crucially important to Ireland. The negotiations at the Fisheries Council will be secondary in importance as the balance shifts to the bilateral EU-UK dialogue and will further complicate the EU-Norway negotiations as Norway's demand for access to EU waters is largely to UK waters except for blue whiting. Strategies for rational utilisation of quotas, such as swaps, with our nearest neighbour will no longer be an option and at this point we have no idea of how this may affect the Hague Preferences as we have already had to fight hard to maintain them as recently as this year.

Our recent experience of the *voisinage* issue highlights the legal minefield which may lie ahead. *Voisinage* was established in March 1964

when a number of European coastal countries signed an agreement to allow their co-signatories access to fish in their inshore waters. In Ireland's case this arrangement allowed Northern Ireland vessels access to Irish waters and vice versa. A series of court actions which culminated in a recent Supreme Court judgement has resulted in the *voisinage* arrangement being rescinded not because the March 1964 agreement is not valid but because the Irish state never entered it into law. We understand Minister Creed plans to bring a proposal to the Dáil as early as possible to remedy this anomaly; it is essential that the 75ft vessel limit is reiterated as part of any legal rationalisation.

It is more than a year since Indecon completed its report for the Department of Finance on marine taxation. This was a very comprehensive report on a wide spectrum of taxation issues but, as had been urged by industry representatives for many years, a major recommendation was that the Seafarers' Tax Allowance be extended to fishermen. It has taken longer than we hoped but we are delighted that Minister Noonan announced in the October Budget that this would happen in 2017. You will see more detail in our article opposite.

Once again we are indebted to the BIM Technology Division which has been developing and trialling innovative gear (page three). I have long been advocating an approach of avoidance and minimisation to the "no discards" issue and the recent gear trials have vindicated this stance. The clear-cut results from these trials are a clear signpost to the way forward, not alone in the reduction of unwanted fish but also improving the condition and quality of landed fish which in turn increases its value.

A highlight of 2016 was the inaugural BIM National Seafood Awards where our own members and local processors were well represented (page two). We were proud and saddened with the awarding of the Lifetime Achievement Award to our late Chairman, Martin Howley; it was a night he would have enjoyed immensely.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Minister Michael Creed and all his team for the support and hard work undertaken on behalf of the fishing industry. Similarly, we are indebted to the staff at the Marine Institute and BIM for their continued input. Finally, on behalf of all the KFO staff I would like to wish all our members a very happy Christmas and prosperous fishing 2016. I look forward to continue to work with you to address both the challenges particularly Brexit and the opportunities to achieve a sustainable and profitable Irish fishing industry.



The Irish Fishing Industry Welcomes Introduction of the Seafarers' Tax Allowance

The Seafarer's Allowance has finally been extended to fishermen; the announcement was made by Minister for Finance, Michael Noonan TD, when he delivered the 2017 Budget on October 11 last. The Seafarer's Allowance of €6,350 amounts to a tax credit of €1,270, and can be claimed by all fishermen who spend a minimum of 80 days fishing at sea in any one tax year. In this instance a 'day at sea' is defined as a cumulative period of eight hours within any 24 hour period during which the fisher undertakes fishing voyages. The fishing vessel to which this applies must be on the European Community Fishing Fleet Register and used solely for fishing and does not include fishing or dredging solely for scientific, research or training purposes.

Fishing industry representatives have welcomed this announcement but point out it is long overdue. The Department of Finance itself commissioned a review of marine taxation in 2015. That review was carried out by Indecon International Economic Consultants which began its work in May 2015 and issued a report in October 2015. The Indecon report examined all aspects of marine taxation including ports and shipping, marine energy, tourism and leisure, but, most importantly, the fishing industry and its ancillary seafood industries.

KFO, in cooperation with its fellow producer organisations IFPO and IS&WFPO, made a detailed submission regarding fishing industry issues to Indecon at the outset. The joint industry submission pointed out that, in the overall context, there are particular circumstances around fishing regarding location, socio-economic factors and demographics which contribute to the vulnerability of the industry and without appropriate incentives the fishing industry will continue to decline.

In the course of its review, Indecon assessed the existing tax supports available to the Irish marine sector and evaluated similar systems in a range of other countries worldwide, including cost-benefit analyses on the Irish systems to establish where the real advantage, if any, to the state, the sector or the wider economy could be identified. When issuing its report Indecon made a number of key recommendations one of which was: Introduction of seafarers' tax allowances to sea fisheries.

Indecon pointed out in its report that its review of the taxation system was part of a wider suite of initiatives and research aimed at developing the sector.



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