



## Major Boost for Mackerel Fishery With First Irish Fishery Awarded MSC Certification

The Irish Pelagic Sustainability Group (IPSG) was recently awarded the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) standard for well managed and sustainable fisheries for the North Eastern mackerel fishery. This certification means that 87 per cent of the 66,070t of Irish mackerel quota can carry the MSC eco-label. IPSG, which formed 14 months ago, represented all Irish RSW fishermen who were keen to show that they could meet the demanding requirements set down by MSC. A smaller sub-group, which was set up to drive the process forward, met regularly to ensure the necessary information was collated and sent to Food Certification International (FCI) Ltd., which is the UK based Consultancy Company recruited to benchmark IPSG against the MSC standard.

The success of the outcome was largely down to the ability of the RSW fishermen to demonstrate that they fish responsibly and that they have proactively progressed initiatives to maximise sustainability and ensure future viability of the stock. These include:

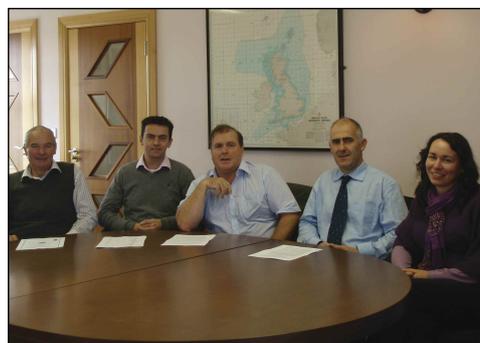
- demonstration of compliance to annual TACs;
- jigging to sample a mark of fish prior to shooting the net, allowing fishermen to

decide whether the shoal is of a suitable size. This information is then communicated to other vessels fishing in the vicinity;

- the use of environmentally friendly nets incorporating large hexagonal meshes and low diameter/high tenacity materials for construction to improve fuel efficiency, as well as the use of flexible sorting grids and square mesh cod-ends for release of juvenile mackerel and horse mackerel.



Pictured at the presentation of the Marine Stewardship Council Certificate were (from left) Anita Doherty, Sea Fisheries Protection Authority; Jarlith Morris, BIM; Tony Killeen, Minister of State, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; Sean O'Donoghue, KFO; Ted Breslin, KFO and Charlie McAleavy, Donegal Fish Merchants Association.



Pictured at the sub-group meeting of the Irish Pelagic Sustainability Group are (from left) Charlie McAleavy, Donegal Fish Merchants Association; Michael Gallagher, BIM; John Ward, Irish Fish Producers Organisation; Ted Breslin, KFO and Marianne Greene, KFO.

During the assessment process, FCI also met with a variety of stakeholders, including the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Sea Fisheries Protection Authority, Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, and the Marine Institute to collect further information on current fishing practices.

Although successful certification lasts five years, it is important to point out that this can be withdrawn at any time if certain conditions have not been addressed. The main conditions set out by FCI, outlined below, therefore must be fulfilled during this mackerel season, prior to the first audit, which will take place during the summer of 2010:

- recording all incidences of slippage;
- formalising a strategy to reduce slippage which is auditable;
- recording all interactions with endangered, threatened or protected species; and
- allowing observers onboard.

In order to meet these conditions, a number of the record sheets within the Seafood Environmental Management System (SEMS) onboard each vessel will have to be adapted, which then must be completed by crew during the mackerel fishing season. It is advisable that one person is responsible for ensuring all relevant records are completed within their SEMS and can act as a contact point. A meeting will be arranged with IPSG fishermen at the KFO, prior to the start of the mackerel season to provide further information.

The KFO would like to acknowledge the work carried out by the sub-group (see picture alongside) and in particular for Marianne Green who collated the relevant information collected and communicated it to FCI. In addition gratitude is expressed to BIM for providing funding support and for advice provided by Michael Gallagher, BIM Killybegs.

Ireland's main fishing and aquaculture representative organisations are collectively voicing their objection to the recommendation in the recently published An Bord Snip Nua report that proposes Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), the Irish Sea Fisheries Board be formally abolished.

The organisations including the Federation of Irish Fishermen, Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation, Irish Fish Producers and Exporters Association and IFA Aquaculture represent members from the catching, processing and aquaculture industries in Ireland. The seafood sector employs 11,000 people and total seafood sales on both domestic and export markets, excluding direct landings for Irish vessels into foreign ports, amounted to €715 million in 2008.

This demonstrates how important this indigenous industry is to our island nation and how it must be supported to allow further growth and jobs in coastal communities where there are few employment opportunities. The Irish Government has never given enough support to the seafood sector and if this recommendation is adopted it will be another blow to the industry.

BIM is the only dedicated agency for the Irish seafood sector and it has played a vital role in developing the Irish industry. BIM has worked closely with the industry since 1952 to develop new gear technologies, supported new seafood businesses, advised on route to market, promotion of Irish seafood at home and abroad and provided training for fishermen around the coast.

The Bord Snip Nua report recommends that the export and enterprise support functions of BIM be merged with Enterprise Ireland and all remaining functions should be carried out in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The report states that this move will result in €7.3million in cost savings.

The recommendation to abolish BIM and move functions to Enterprise Ireland and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is preposterous. It is impossible to run a development function for our industry from a Government Department. The reason BIM has worked so well with industry over the years and delivered not only financial support but advisory support is down to the hands-on role BIM's experienced staff have provided around the coast. If this recommendation is implemented, the damage that it will cause will far outweigh the €7.3 million cost savings.

In recessionary times, it is important, now more than ever, that indigenous industry is protected, and the abolition of a well established and respected agency like BIM is not the solution the industry needs. BIM has shown and continues to show that it is more than capable of adapting to changing needs of the industry.

We would appeal to Government and particularly to Minister of State with special responsibility for Fisheries, Mr. Tony Killeen, T.D that this recommendation is not implemented and that BIM remains to ensure the Irish fishing industry continues to receive the support it deserves.

**On April 22 2009, the European Commission adopted a Green Paper on reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) where it identifies areas and issues which need reviewing. The previous reform of the CFP, which became effective in 2003, aimed to incorporate environmental safeguards and encourage long-term rather than short-term planning, but fell far short of its objectives.**

The Commission identifies five structural deficiencies as the main causes of such failures:

- a deep-rooted problem of fleet overcapacity;
- imprecise policy objectives resulting in insufficient guidance for decisions and implementation;
- a decision-making system that encourages short-term focus;
- a framework that does not give sufficient responsibility to the industry; and
- lack of political will to ensure compliance and poor compliance, by the industry.

In addition to listing these five basic problems, the Green Paper itemises several other contentious areas, such as small-scale inshore fisheries; TAC and quota systems; discards; access arrangements and rights; integrated maritime policy; the role of scientific advice; funding; external fisheries, including their associated relationships and responsibilities, and aquaculture. All in all, the Commission's Green Paper identifies five major structural deficiencies, nine specific areas to be addressed and poses a total of 65 key questions.

Many of the short-comings of the current CFP have one common underlying weakness – lack of participation and input from the man on the deck. This is why the various agencies and representative bodies are making every effort to have a searching and productive consultation process this time round. Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation, in common with its fellow members in the Federation of Irish Fishermen, has held several internal working meetings to tease out both the issues and the solutions and was in a position to present a rational analysis of the situation at a recent meeting with Minister of State Tony Killeen TD and Dr Noel Cawley, who has been given the task of co-ordinating the response of the Irish government to the Green Paper.

Among the questions which need to be answered are why, after two major reforms and constant on-going updates to regulations, are there so many unworkable areas within the CFP? KFO feels this current review is an opportunity to step back and examine the case for:

- clear objectives which integrate ecological, economic and social principles;
- simple, clear and effective rules; and
- active involvement of the industry.

When the overall objectives are clear they can be enshrined in clear and unambiguous rules which will have universal acceptance. The five major short-comings of the current system would no longer be a millstone around the neck of the entire marine sector and would free up resources to tackle the more specific problems posed by the day-to-day operation of a global resource.

What is needed is a fresh look at not just the problems, but the approach to dealing with them; for instance, should the traditional notion of fleet over-capacity be simply a function of stock availability with a proportional decrease in the number of vessels by means of expensive de-commissioning or should economic sustainability be the criterion? This approach would, in turn, require a major overhaul of the marketing arrangements, which is urgently needed in any event.

TACs and quotas continue to be a thorny issue but again suffer from being administered through a rigid framework which creates unworkable anomalies and drives much of the non-compliance identified as needing to be addressed. More appropriate application of this management tool could produce far more positive effects but needs to be handled in a more imaginative way rather than the current "one size fits all" approach. Flexibility and local management are elements which could be considered which would encourage rational and economically sound use of available resources. The regionalisation of marine management has already begun but needs major further expansion with real authority to provide that sense of ownership which is essential to develop self-regulation and willing compliance in all sectors.

Scientific advice and technical support are key elements in all successful enterprises, but in the CFP arena the focus has been negative, to say the least. The confrontational nature of this area must be addressed and the positive contribution of all stakeholders, including both biologists and fishermen, must be structured to provide a long-term sustainable and economic industry. The potential contribution of fishermen to the body of scientific knowledge is immeasurable and has been ignored for too long; the opportunity now presented for incorporating both the expertise and good-will of this important sector must be grasped and utilised with the introduction of a framework which can collect and integrate data from this source with more traditional approaches.

It is important for the Irish fishing industry to remember that it is not a requirement to adhere to the format presented by the Green Paper when it comes to reforming the CFP – all aspects of the CFP can be debated and where a coherent and constructive case can be made for change such proposals can be submitted. Previous experience of CFP reviews indicates that preparation and planning are vital; all sectors need to be fully aware of what is at stake and what our priorities should be. Strategies which reflect regional, multi-national co-operation are more likely to be successful long-term and part of the research and formulation of a response should take this into account.

All these issues, and more, will be discussed at the day-long CFP Seminar which is being hosted by the Federation of Irish Fishermen on October 9 2009 at the Radisson Hotel, Dublin Airport. The FIF is taking the view that a more viable CFP needs to look beyond national interests and have lined up several industry leaders from fellow fishing nations to give their own perspective on the CFP reform while the Commission's view will be given by Reinhard Priebe. This event will provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to take a deep and considered view of the current CFP and by a combination of analysis, debate and common sense come up with solutions to the problems identified – many of which are long standing and many which have been addressed previously without success.

Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation played a pro-active role in the brown crab sector by initiating a meeting of vivier crabber owners from all regions of the United Kingdom and Ireland in Edinburgh on July 1 last. The KFO crustacean members have long felt that real progress on the management of the fishery would only be achieved at grassroots level and, spurred on by the disastrous market conditions which have existed since the early part of the year, invited their fellow "viviers" from Scotland, Wales, the North Sea coast and the Channel to join them to explore some options which might improve future prospects.

The meeting was very successful and well attended. The topic at the top of everyone's agenda was the price and the manner in which the annual pattern of rise and fall in demand had broken down. The consensus of those present was that this was due largely to over-production, while other factors such as the global recession were having an additional effect. While those present could control quite a significant proportion of landings, there is now a very large non-vivier fleet which is not constrained by weather conditions during the summer months and it was feared that this sector would soon make up any shortfall if the viviers restricted their landings. It was felt that as a short-term solution, reducing landings could possibly be a useful strategy. However, in the long-term, the group proposed a management plan with emphasis on the following key elements:

- cap the fishery;
- control the effort; and
- decommissioning.

This plan was taken forward to the scheduled meeting of the UK and ROI Brown Crab Group the following day, also in Edinburgh.

The UK and ROI Group meeting was given an overview of the planned Seafish project which is also exploring brown crab management options. As part of this process, the consultant company, Nautilus, which has been commissioned by Seafish to carry out this work, has been engaged in consultation with the stakeholders in all the regions. Nautilus will report back in late October.

KFO continues its efforts in conjunction with BIM to improve the route-to-market with a series of meetings with several local operators in this field. The very poor market situation is having a serious effect at this level also. KFO sees a need for as much co-operation as possible to avoid unnecessary internal competition and duplication of effort. BIM is currently developing a Seafood Standard which could have positive implications for the brown crab industry and it is hoped there will be rapid progress in this area.

Scientific advice on the status of fish stocks is produced annually by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES). Scientists from the Marine Institute spend a considerable amount of time working with scientists from other countries at ICES, in order to formulate this scientific advice. The advice is used by the EU Commission as a basis for setting the fishing opportunities for the following year, namely the Total Allowable Catches (TACs). The Commission uses the scientific advice to determine what action (increases/decreases or status quo) they will take in relation to setting the TAC's in accordance with their own policy statement. Therefore, ICES scientific advice is very important in determining fishing opportunities for all the fleets that operate in EU waters.

The ICES scientific advice is generally developed and released in July and October of each year. In relation to the stocks of interest to Ireland, the July advice focuses on whitefish (cod, whiting, haddock, hake, megrim, anglerfish), flatfish (plaice, sole), herring and nephrops in Areas VI and VII. The October advice focuses on mackerel, horse mackerel, blue whiting and Atlanto Scandia Herring.

This year, the July advice from ICES painted a gloomy picture on the state of many fish stocks. The advice for cod is critical, as it drives many of the management measures put in place in the waters around Ireland. There are serious scientific concerns about the state of these stocks and this was reflected in the advice for cod in VI, and VIIa - zero catch in 2010. No analytical advice was provided for Celtic Sea cod for next year other than to reduce effort and catches. There was some good news in that the scientific advice for northern hake was to increase the TAC from 51,500 tonnes in 2009, to 55,200 tonnes in 2010. ICES advised that Celtic Sea herring should be increased from 5,918t in 2009 to 10,150t in 2010. The scientific advice for the megrim and anglerfish stocks around Ireland was that there should be no increase in effort which should relate to an increase in monkfish in VII.

The scientific advice for certain components of Area VII nephrops implied a large reduction of about 50 per cent in the TAC for 2010. There is currently great debate on this advice as the Nephrops stocks in Area VII are considered to be in a good state. However, there is concern over the Porcupine grounds; scientists from the Marine Institute are working closely with FIF and the North Western Waters RAC to develop an agreed Porcupine closure for three months in 2010. There will be much debate between scientists, industry and managers before the final 2010 nephrops TAC is decided.

Currently, ICES is finalising the scientific advice for mackerel, horse mackerel blue whiting and Atlanto Scandia herring. This advice will be released in mid-October. It will form the basis of important discussions between the EU and other coastal states (e.g. Norway) before the final TAC is decided.

The period from October through to Christmas will be very busy with many meetings and decisions on TACs, technical conservation measures and various control measures. While the scientific advice will form the starting point for many of these discussions, ultimately it is a mix of scientific, socio-economic and political considerations that determine the final outcomes.

### New Set of Technical Conservation Measures to Be Agreed

The Commission is determined to get a new set of technical conservation measures agreed before the end of the year. The Commission's proposals envisage a framework Council Regulation with general principles and provisions, and the complementary Commission Regulations with specific technical rules for each RAC area. The Commission believes that this approach is a far more efficient way of sorting out the detailed measures, however some Member States are opposed to the regional approach being placed under the control/ambit of the Commission. In the absence of a compromise on this issue before the end of the year it seems that the technical annexes not related to TACs and quotas which have formed part and parcel of the December Fisheries Councils over the years will not, in a post Lisbon scenario, have a legal basis come January 1, as co-decision will be required with European Parliament.

The Commission's proposed new legislative package, envisages simplifying the current complex rules and also introducing specific provisions for each 'RAC area', reflecting regional differences. The proposal tries to set a comprehensive and coherent package with the right balance between measures generally applicable in all areas and those specific to the localised RAC areas. FIF is in favour of the regional approach as it should simplify the regulations and avoid introducing measures that are inappropriate such as happened with technical measures introduced east of the "French line" at the December Fisheries Council last year.

### Low Uptake of Effort (Days at Sea)

The Cod Effort Management Steering Group has met on a number of occasions since the beginning of the second pilot period in May to continue to monitor the uptake of the effort. It now looks more than likely that the uptake will be low in most gear categories when the second pilot period expires at the end of October. In this regard FIF has recommended that an additional 20 days be allocated to most of the gear categories immediately. The group is also trying to cater for new entrants and vessels which may not have a track record in a given area. The imposition of additional inappropriate technical conservation measures and catch composition rules at the 2008 December Fisheries Council east of the "French line" in area VIa continues to cause major problems. The KFO in conjunction with FIF colleagues has continued to highlight these difficulties both at national and EU level and is hopeful that changes can be affected for next year.

# Editorial

by Sean O'Donoghue

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, KFO



The Commission and the Swedish Presidency are determined to have a new control regulation agreed at the October Fisheries Council. The Commission's proposal originates from the damming Court of Auditors report at the end of 2007 which found a very poor level of compliance with the existing fisheries rules and a lack of control by the Member States. The basic idea behind the Commission's proposal is to put in place an efficient and effective control system that is applied uniformly across all Member States and covers all facets of fisheries from net to plate. While the idea may be very laudable, some of the detailed text is far from satisfactory, and if agreed in its present format will have serious negative implications for the Irish fishing industry.

This large document containing almost 120 articles is under active discussion at official level and it is hoped that significant changes will be made before final adoption at the Fisheries Council. To mention a few of these: problems exist with reducing the size limit for vessels from 15 metres to 12 metres for the application of the vessel monitoring system and electronic logbook; a major issue with engine power which does not allow the use of certified de-rated engines both for exiting and future engines; ambiguity on the controls on imports; the double penalty factor to be applied for reduction in quota, and the application of the penalty points system; the eight per cent margin of tolerance used in the logbook, and the unrealistic date of January 1 2010 as the date of application of the regulation. It is amazing the effort the Commission is putting into getting this regulation agreed which is in total contrast to its lack of urgency in trying to address

a key industry priority of the collapse in whitefish and shellfish prices. It announced in July that the revision of Common Market Organisation regulation will not happen until 2013.

The recommendation to abolish BIM in the McCarthy Report (see article page two) and move functions to Enterprise Ireland and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is certainly not based on any objective analysis on the role BIM plays in the development of the industry. It is purely an easy target in a financial cutting exercise. This lack of objective analysis in this case calls into question the other recommendations in the report. It is impossible to run a development function for our industry from a Government Department. The reason BIM has worked so well with industry over the years and delivered not only financial support but advisory support is down to the hands-on role BIM's experienced staff have provided around the coast. If this recommendation is implemented, the damage that it will cause will far outweigh the €7.3 million cost savings. Looking closely at the cost savings it transpires that €6.8 million of this figure relates directly to financial support for the industry, not to savings by scrapping BIM. This is totally unacceptable and highly detrimental to the industry. I call on Minister Killeen to stop this madness and in conjunction with BIM to find the necessary cost savings. More than ever, the industry requires a dynamic and relevant development agency.

## Editorial Continued.

The scientific advice for mackerel, Atlanto Scandia herring, horse mackerel and blue whiting should be available in mid-October. Initial indications are that the mackerel TAC for 2010 will be down. The TAC for 2009 was set at 605,000 tonnes in accordance with the agreed Coastal States management plan however it is likely that catches for 2009 will be in the region of 830,000 tonnes. The main reason for this massive overshoot of the TAC is that Iceland, Norway and Faroe Islands have fished additional amounts over and above the agreed TAC. This is not acceptable or responsible behaviour by these parties and must be stopped. This year the mackerel Coastal States meeting will be hosted by Ireland on behalf of the EU and it will be incumbent on the EU to use every means at its disposal to put an end to these additional catches. This stock is in a very healthy state and we must not let the irresponsible behaviour of others jeopardise the sustainability of stock with obvious disastrous consequences for the Irish pelagic industry.

The CFP review (see article page two) is well under way with several national and EU meetings taking place. An important Irish fishing industry seminar will be hosted by the Federation of Irish Fishermen (FIF) on October 9 2009 at the Radisson Hotel, Dublin Airport. This day-long CFP Seminar is taking the view that a more viable CFP needs to look beyond national interests and have lined up several industry leaders from fellow fishing nations to give their own perspective on the CFP reform while the Commission's view will be given by Reinhard Priebe. This event will provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to take a deep and considered view of the current CFP. I encourage as many members as possible to attend and have your say as the final outcome of this review process scheduled for completion in 2012 will have a significant effect on your future. Let's collectively work together to achieve a positive outcome this time round.

## NEWS

### Regional Advisory Councils Update

Both the North West Waters RAC and the Pelagic RAC are continuing their work in the interest of the fishing industry. The review of the CFP is common to both RACs and is currently being discussed to see if a joint position can be found in certain areas. The preparation in advance of the Commission's proposals for the TAC and quotas for 2010 such as the scientific advice is high on the agenda for both RACs at this time of year. The NWWRAC has written to both the Scottish and Irish authorities asking them to ensure that the Autumn monkfish survey be re-instated and the long term management plan for west of Scotland haddock has been sent into the Commission. The pelagic RAC has recently agreed a rebuilding plan for herring in VIa (South) VIIbc which the KFO with the support of FIF colleagues has been instrumental in drafting. The Pelagic RAC will be submitting its recommendations on mackerel, horse mackerel and Atlanto Scandia herring once the scientific advice is available in mid-October.

## IMPORTANT DATES OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2009

DATE	MEETING/EVENT	VENUE
October 7	EAPO General Assembly	Aalborg, Denmark
October 9	CFP Seminar	Radisson Hotel, Dublin Airport
October 14	PRAC Workings Groups 1&2	Leiden, Netherlands
October 15	ACFA Working Group 3 Markets	Brussels
October 19 & 20	Fisheries Council	Luxembourg
October 21	Whitefish Quota Management	Dublin
October 22 & 23	Atlanto Scandia Herring Coastal States	London
October 26-30	Mackerel Coastal States	Clonakilty
October 28	NWWRAC General Assembly	Dublin
November 2	Sea Food Strategy Implementation Group	Dublin
November 3 & 4	CFP Workshop (RACs organised)	Edinburgh
November 9-13	NEAFC AGM	London
November 10	ACFA Ad-hoc Group CFP	Brussels
November 16-20	Norwegian Negotiations 1st Round	Bergen
November 17	ACFA Bureau	Brussels
November 19-20	Fisheries Council	Brussels
November 23	Pelagic RAC Executive Committee	Leiden, Netherlands
Nov 30-Dec 4	Norwegian Negotiations 2nd Round	Brussels
December 8	ACFA Bureau	Brussels
December 9	ACFA Plenary	Brussels
December 11	EC Workshop Markets	Brussels
December 13 & 14	Fisheries Council	Brussels