



# news



### AREA VI WHITEFISH STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2009	Quota 2010	Diff %
Cod <sup>1</sup>	Vla	na	53	New
Cod	Vlb	na	18	New
Megrim	VI	363	399	10%
Monkfish	VI	557	557	0%
Haddock <sup>2</sup>	Vb Vla	576	438	-24%
Haddock	Vlb XII XIV	463	393	-15%
Whiting <sup>3</sup>	VI	171	129	-25%
Plaice	VI	287	280	-2%
Pollock	VI	63	57	-10%
Saithe	VI	470	206	provisional <sup>4</sup>
Sole	VI	54	49	-9%
Nephrops	VI	255	217	-15%
<b>Total</b>		<b>3259</b>	<b>2796</b>	

### AREA VII WHITEFISH STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2009	Quota 2010	Diff %
Cod	VIIa	592	444	-25%
Cod	VII b-k	825	825	0%
Megrim	VII	3029	3029	0%
Monkfish	VII	2128	2447	15%
Haddock	VII	2573	2573	0%
Haddock <sup>5</sup>	VIIa	617	617	0%
Whiting	VIIa	120	91	-24%
Whiting	VIIb-k	4918	4565	-7%
Plaice	VIIa	934	1063	14%
Plaice	VII bc	75	64	-15%
Plaice	VII fg	200	201	1%
Plaice	VII hjk	184	156	-15%
Pollock	VII	1168	1051	-10%
Saithe	VII	1578	1525	-3%
Sole	VIIa	80	73	-9%
Sole	VII bc	40	35	-13%
Sole	VII fg	31	31	0%
Sole	VII hjk	249	225	-10%
Nephrops	VII	9091	8273	-9%
<b>Total</b>		<b>28432</b>	<b>27288</b>	<b>-4%</b>

### AREA VI, VII AND OTHER WHITEFISH STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2009	Quota 2010	Diff %
Cod	I,II	289	0	provisional <sup>4</sup>
Hake <sup>6</sup>	VI, VII	1593	1704	7%
Redfish	V, International waters XII, XIV	1	1	0%
Ling	VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	793	516	provisional <sup>4</sup>
Blue Ling	VI, VII	6	6	provisional <sup>4</sup>
Tusk	V, VI, VII	25	16	provisional <sup>4</sup>
Greenland Halibut	IIa, IV, VI	4	3	provisional <sup>4</sup>
Snow Crab	Greenland Waters	62	62	0%
Porbeagle	I, II, III, IV, V, IV, IVV, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	6	0	-100%
Skate & Rays <sup>7</sup>	VI, VIIa-c & e-k	2055	1747	-15%
Spur Dogs <sup>8</sup>	I, II, III, IV, V, IV, IVV, VIII, XII, XIV	195	0	-100%
Basking Shark	EU Waters	0	0	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>5029</b>	<b>4055</b>	

#### Footnotes for 2010 whitefish quotas

1. By-catch in defined area 30 per cent cod, haddock, whiting and 120mm mesh with square mesh panel vessels > 15metres, 110mm <15m vessels.
2. By-catch in defined area 30 per cent cod, haddock, whiting and 120mm mesh with square mesh panel vessels >15 metres, 110mm <15m vessels.
3. By-catch in defined area 30 per cent cod, haddock, whiting and 120mm mesh with square mesh panel vessels >15metres, 110mm<15m vessels.
4. Provisional quotas based on 65 per cent 2009 quota (except blue ling) until EU/Norway arrangements agreed probably in January 2010.
5. Five per cent may be fished in area VIII a,b,d,e.
6. Of which no more than 184 tonnes may be fished in ICES area VIII a,b,d,e.
7. Separate reporting of seven species of ray and prohibits catches of three species of skate and one species ray.
8. By-catches less than 10 per cent 2009 quota based on total weight marine organisms on board and maximum landing size 100cm.



### OUTCOME OF FISHERIES COUNCIL BEST THAT COULD BE ACHIEVED

The outcome of the Fisheries Council, which finished late Tuesday night December 15, was the best that could be achieved in the context of the negative scientific advice as well as the difficulties caused by the failure to date to secure an agreement between the EU and Norway on management of, and access to, shared stocks.

#### Whitefish Quotas 2010

The table opposite shows the whitefish quotas for 2010 for areas VI, VII and for combined areas. Due to the breakdown of the EU/Norway negotiations some of these stocks are shown as provisional. These stocks are set at 65 per cent of the quotas allocated for 2009 as an interim measure for the start of the year to facilitate the commencement of fishing. The increases in megrim, monkfish, hake and plaice are welcome as is the roll-over of the Celtic Sea cod and haddock in area VII. The reduction of only nine per cent in nephrops in area VII is a considerable achievement, given that the scientific advice had recommended a 50 per cent reduction. It is also welcome that the conservation proposal, that originated from Irish fishermen, for a seasonal closure for the months of May, June and July for the nephrops fishery on the Porcupine Bank (see article page three) has been adopted by the Council. All of the "Hague Preferences" which give Ireland an additional quota share in many key stocks were achieved. As agreed last year the spur dog quota has been set at zero with provision for a 10 per cent by-catch in 2010 based on the 2009 quota. A maximum landing length of 100cm also applies.

The effects of a further 25 per cent cut for 2010 in the demersal fishing effort in both area VIa and VIIa agreed at the Council is a major cause for concern which will eventually lead to no fishing in these areas, unless an alternative way forward is found. As a fall out from the November Fisheries Council and the failure to reach agreement on a new set of technical measures, the increased mesh sizes and catch composition rules (see footnotes 1, 2, and 3) east of the "French Line" agreed at December '08 Council were extended for a further 18 months. However, the Commission agreed at the Council to consider requests for modifying these measures in the first half of 2010.

#### Pelagic

The failure to reach an annual agreement between the EU and Norway, which is normally completed in advance of the December Council, has meant that EU quotas for mackerel, horse mackerel, blue whiting and herring in VIa North were only provisionally decided at the Council (see table page two). Of particular concern was the provisional quantity of mackerel to be set for the start of the year. The Commission proposed a 50 per cent rate, however after considerable effort by a number of countries led by Ireland, a 65 per cent rate was agreed. This should not pose a huge problem as it is based on 2009 quota that will be at least 5.5 per cent higher than the final agreed TAC for 2010. Furthermore the provisional figure becomes redundant should EU/Norway reach agreement, which is likely by the end January. Another key issue at the Council was the southern mackerel component. Minister Killeen argued our case very strongly that any new agreement with Norway must recognise that Ireland is continually giving rather than receiving in the quota transfer arrangements. Two important declarations in this regard are included in the agreement. In particular the Commission has agreed in the annual negotiations with Norway that it will endeavour to ensure that costs and benefits for individual Member States should be as balanced as possible.

In light of the difficulty with mackerel, the agreement of the new management areas for horse mackerel (see table page two) was not highlighted. This is a significant achievement by all involved, particularly by Ciaran Kelly, MI, and a very good outcome for Ireland. Nearly all our quotas in the two management areas are now in the new western area where we have real fishing opportunities. (Continued page two)

(Continued from page one) It was very disappointing that an industry management plan supported by the Pelagic Regional Advisory Council for herring in VIa South VIIbc was not accepted; instead a 20 per cent cut was agreed. Access to fish our quota of Atlanto Scandia herring in Norwegian waters is dependant on an EU/Norway agreement.

### Deepwater

The deepwater Irish quotas shown (see table right) were agreed at the Fisheries Council last year for a two-year period. Ireland no longer has deepwater vessels and given the quotas that are available in 2010 it is just as well. Some of these quotas will be a valuable source of currency for swapping during the year.

### PLANS TO RE-BUILD NORTH WEST HERRING ASSESSED BY SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

In the summer of 2009, under the Federation of Irish Fishermen (FIF), fishermen and scientists debated the state of the NW herring stock. The ICES advice is that the stock is at a low level and that the TAC should be set at zero tonnes unless a rebuilding plan was put in place. Fishermen do not agree with the advice from ICES. At a series of workshops in Killybegs, a rebuilding plan was developed. This was presented to the pelagic RAC in September, and with some amendments, was endorsed. The plan was then forwarded to the European Commission.

The Commission passed on some elements of the plan to its Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF). Notably, the proposal for status quo catch in 2010 was not sent to the committee. Instead, the Commission published its intention to implement a 25 per cent cut for 2010 which ended up at 20 per cent (see table right). This intention was in line with Commission policy statement on stocks for which 0-catch advice is given.

The Commission did not consider it possible to implement the proposed target fishing mortality (F0.1). This is because of the lack of an accepted assessment.

STECF was asked for advice on three areas, and responded as follows:

**1. The sentinel fishery:** STECF stated that such a fishery was unnecessary, on the basis that the ICES advice was for 0-catch, and because it felt that the fishery would not provide information that could not be collected by the acoustic survey.

Even though STECF did not endorse the sentinel fishery, it gave advice on how to structure such a fishery. Sentinel fishing should focus on known spawning grounds, mostly within the territorial limits, from October to February.

**2. What steps are required before an assessment could be conducted?** STECF noted that a good assessment needs a time series of several surveys. At present only two comparable surveys are available (2008 and 2009). When data from several surveys is available, then assessment may be possible.

**3. Could advice be based on surveys, as an alternative?** STECF noted that survey-based advice would have to wait until several surveys are available, and that the time frame for this is the same as point two above. So the two processes would take place concurrently.

STECF made general comments on the difficulty in surveying this stock. The survey should include any proportion occurring in VIaN at the time of the survey. The co-operative work with Scotland and Northern Ireland was acknowledged.

### Comments on STECF advice

The advice on the sentinel fishery may seem quite negative. However the decision to have such a fishery is a matter for Ireland, as the member state, and does not need any endorsement by the Commission.

The STECF comments on the surveys, and assessments confirm that it will be several years before more definitive advice would be available for this stock. The STECF's comments on the need to include fish that may be present in VIaN illustrates the difficulties in surveying this stock.

The large reduction of 20 per cent in the TAC for 2010 will make the design of the sentinel fishery very difficult. It will be important to work out how to determine if older herring are present in some of the other spawning grounds, which have not been fished as much in recent years. The small TAC and quota available will make it difficult to achieve this objective.

PELAGIC STOCKS					
SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2009	Quota 2010	Diff %	
Mackerel <sup>1</sup>	VI, VII	66070	42947	provisional <sup>2</sup>	
H. Mackerel <sup>3</sup>	IIa, IVa, VI, VIIa-c, VIIe-k, VIIla,b,e	New	25560	provisional <sup>2</sup>	
H. Mackerel <sup>4</sup>	IVb, IVc & VIId	New	903	provisional <sup>2</sup>	
Blue Whiting <sup>5</sup>	I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII a,b,d,e XII, XIV	8756	5691	provisional <sup>2</sup>	
Herring <sup>6</sup>	I, II	9487	8563	-10%	
Herring	VIaN	3187	2072	provisional <sup>2</sup>	
Herring	VIaS, VIIbc	8467	6774	-20%	
Herring	VIIa	1250	1250	0%	
Herring	VII ghjk	5115	8770	71%	
Tuna	north.atl	6696	4354	-35%	
Argentines	III, IV	8	8	0%	
Argentines	V, VI, VII	375	360	-4%	
<b>Total</b>		<b>109411</b>	<b>107252</b>		

### Footnotes for 2010 pelagic quotas

1. Of which 12960 tonnes (provisional) may be fished from January 1 to February 15 and October 1 to December 31, 2010 in EU waters of ICES division IVa.
2. Provisional quotas based on 65 per cent 2009 quota until EU/Norway arrangements agreed probably in January 2010.
3. New management area including IVa and excluding VIId. 5 per cent of this quota may be fished in areas II & IVa before 30 June.
4. New management area including VIId and excluding VIa.
5. Of which 68 per cent can be fished in Norwegian waters and 27 per cent in Faroese waters subject to agreements.
6. Can only be fished in Norwegian waters subject to EU/Norway agreement. Subject to this condition no more than 7707 may be taken in Norwegian waters north 62° N and around Jan Mayen.

### DEEPWATER SPECIES

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2009	Quota 2010	% Diff
Black Scabbard	V, VI, VII, XII	78	73	-6
Roundnose Grenadier <sup>1</sup>	Vb, VI, VII	254	216	-15
Roundnose Grenadier <sup>2</sup>	VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	7	7	0
Orange Roughy	VI	2	0	-100
Orange Roughy	VII	15	0	-100
Orange Roughy	I, II, III, IV, V, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIV	2	0	-100
Blue Ling	II, IV, V	5	4	-20
Red Seabream <sup>3</sup>	VI, VII, VIII	7	6	-14
Alfonsinos	I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	10	10	0
Forkbeards	V, VI, VII	260	260	0
Deep Sea Sharks <sup>4</sup>	V, VI, VII, IX	55	0	-100
Deep Sea Sharks <sup>5</sup>	XII	1	0	-100
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>696</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>-17</b>

### Footnotes for 2010 deepwater quotas

1. A maximum of eight per cent of each quota may be fished in Community waters and waters not under the sovereignty or jurisdiction of third Countries of VIII, IX, X, XII and XIV.
2. A maximum of eight per cent may be fished in Community waters and waters not under the sovereignty or jurisdiction of third Countries of Vb, VI, VII.
3. Up to 10 per cent of the 2010 quotas may be taken in December 2009.
4. By-catches only and by-catch of 10 per cent of 2009 quotas to be taken in 2010.
5. By-catches only and by-catch of 10 per cent of 2009 quota to be taken in 2010.

## NEW OMEGA MESH GAUGE TESTED AGAINST WEDGE GAUGE

It is hard to believe that measuring "a hole between four pieces of string" could be so problematic, but the use of the new OMEGA mesh gauge, which replaced the wedge gauge for measuring mesh size from September 1, 2009, has become a hot topic within the fishing industry in Europe. The issue revolves around the OMEGA gauge giving lower readings than the wedge gauge. During development of the new gauge, extensive testing was carried out by the designers, fisheries inspection services, fisheries research institutes and netting manufacturers in EU countries, including Ireland. It emerged that using the original force recommended in the OMEGA gauge, would result in many codends being measured as undersized and needing replacement. Therefore, the OMEGA developers subsequently recommended a larger measuring force, corresponding to the estimated average stretching force when using the wedge gauge. This force of 125N has been adopted into legislation, but it seems even with this larger force, frequent incidents of codends previously classified legal with the wedge gauge are now deemed illegal with the OMEGA gauge, sometimes by up to 8-10mm.

Many have seen this as an increase in mesh size by default.

At the request of FIF, BIM is carrying out independent testing on a variety of netting of different mesh size, twine thickness and materials using the OMEGA and the wedge gauges. The preliminary results of these tests do show that the new gauge measures mesh size consistently lower than the wedge gauge, but the differences found have only been in a range of 0.5 – four per cent (0.6mm-3.3mm). Depending on material and condition, some variations were found, while it was also noted that the knot orientation relative to the jaws of the gauge had a bearing on individual measurements. Table One below shows a sample of the results obtained to date.

These findings are in line with previous tests carried out in other countries, but it should be stressed that this does not mean that either gauge is wrong, it just shows the two gauges give different measurements. In summary, we can conclude that "while measurement is knowledge, do we know what we are measuring?"

Table 1 Sample results from measurements carried out by BIM

Material	Nominal Mesh Size	Average Measurement OMEGA Gauge	Average Measurement Wedge Gauge	Difference Between Gauges	% Difference
Single 5mm PE old discarded codend	80mm	75.1mm	78mm	-2.9mm	4%
Single 6mm PE new sheet netting	100mm	103.8mm	106.7mm	-2.9mm	3%
Single 6mm PE new sheet netting	90mm	87.1mm	88.6mm	-1.5mm	2%
Single 6mm PE existing codend	80mm	85.5mm	88.8mm	-3.3mm	4%
Single 3.5mm PE Compact sheet netting	80mm	84.8mm	85.4mm	-0.6mm	0.7%
Double 4mm PE Compact existing codend	120mm	124.4mm	125mm	-0.6mm	0.5%

In its current Green Paper the EU Commission identifies structural failings, management of fisheries, the market, the role of scientific advice and how the CFP is funded, as the key areas where it intends to initiate "whole-scale and fundamental reform."

In Ireland, the Minister for Fisheries, Tony Killeen TD, has appointed Dr Noel Cawley, Seafood Strategy Implementation Group, to oversee and co-ordinate the response and input from the Irish stakeholders. The FIF has conducted a series of internal and national meetings, including hosting a major Seminar open to all stakeholders, believes it is in a position to respond in a rational, critical manner and represent the reactions and aspirations of the Irish fishing industry, to this very important Green Paper.

It is vital that Ireland uses its experience gained during the previous two CFP reviews, and effectively mobilises all stakeholders, government and support agencies, in a united effort. We must look beyond narrow national interests and form alliances with strong, like-minded, fishing-nation neighbours and keep focused on clear and simple objectives.

**Imprecise Policy Objectives:** The FIF would point out that the EU needs to return to the basic policies of even-handed regional development as enshrined in the Treaty of Rome and subsequent Treaties to resolve its dilemma regarding implementation of all elements of the CFP – the biological needs of fisheries must not be attained at the expense of the socio-economic needs of people in coastal areas. Similarly, the FIF calls for The Hague Agreement to be re-visited and its Resolution to be enshrined and enhanced in future CFPs. The FIF is completely opposed to **Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)** being included as an over-arching policy objective but considers it should be dealt with as a fishery management issue on a case by case basis.

**Fleet Over-Capacity:** Over-capacity varies from fishery to fishery and cannot be dealt with as an over-all policy issue. It is imperative to set out a clear definition in relation to over-capacity from the outset.

**The Market – from catch to consumer:** The Common Organisation of the Market (COM) has failed to achieve its objectives. We are currently experiencing the lowest prices in decades and the market is swamped with cheap imports. A radical overhaul of Regulation 104/2000 is a basic requirement but short-term remedial actions are also needed. Producer Organisations are ideally placed to push forward on labelling, traceability and consumer dialogue and an improved price support mechanism.

**Decision-making:** Regionalisation has been identified by the Commission as a possible means of improving the decision-making process going forward. The FIF does not envisage ramped-up Regional Advisory Councils as being suitable for this task but would favour enhancing their advisory role. Management of pelagic fisheries is a particular challenge in this context due to their widely distributed nature and joint stock management with third countries. There is a strong case to be made for greater involvement of industry in the various layers of management already in existence.

**Industry Responsibility:** The EU Commission admits that a greater role for the industry would have many positive results and would envisage a combination of responsibilities and rights to bring this about. The FIF sees this as an excellent opportunity to further the concept of self-management by the fishing industry and point to areas where Producer Organisations are already very successfully managing quota, data collection, etc.

**Culture of Compliance:** The top-down approach to enforcement of regulations has proved to be, for the most part, inadequate. The Irish fishing industry sees this review as an opportunity to standardise Member States compliance and enforcement regimes, introducing a system of administrative sanctions rather than the criminal sanction system currently used in Ireland with uniform and transparent application of rules across the EU.

**Improved Management of EU Fisheries:** Inshore fisheries form an important part of the Irish fishing industry but, due to their artisanal nature, are environmentally low-impact and should continue to be managed on a national basis. Inshore fisheries have a

high socio-economic profile in remote coastal areas and as such, require support by developmental EU frameworks.

**Effort –** The FIF is vehemently opposed to Effort as the only management system. Ireland has many examples of the incongruity and hardship caused by inappropriate effort controls already in place.

**TAC & Quotas and Relative Stability –** The FIF admits that Relative Stability is not a perfect system but has potential for adjustment which would better reflect the needs and usages of Member States. Ireland's percentage of annual TAC does not reflect its geographical share of Community waters but there are more imaginative ways available to utilise TACs and Quotas.

**Discards –** Making it obligatory to land everything that is caught is not the answer to the problem of discards. The FIF supports reducing landings of unwanted fish to lowest possible levels but calls for rational debate to identify the various components of discards and a concerted effort from the industry, fishery managers, NGOs and the Commission to find appropriate solutions.

**Access –** The Irish industry wants retention of the current access arrangements regarding the six- and 12-mile limits and calls for safeguarding the existing Irish Conservation Box.

**Third Country Agreements –** The FIF calls for the Northern Agreements to be revisited and the method for devising the swaps restructured to reflect the contribution of quota from those countries benefitting from such Agreements.

**Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) -** The FIF is very happy to be fully committed to an Integrated Maritime Policy provided it is a two-way process particularly when sites are being considered for conservation purposes.

**Scientific Research and Advice –** Scientific research and advice has long been a source of friction and distrust within the fishing industry – improve this situation by:

- utilising fishermen and their vessels for data collection
- more relevant and timely data
- restructure STECF

**Funding –** The reformed CFP must provide (including Articles dealing with this aspect) specific provisions relating to funding all aspects of the CFP including the relevant EFF provisions, and include specific Articles dealing with all funding aspects.

## ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF THE STOCKS OF NORWAY LOBSTER (NEPHROPS) IN VII

ICES has fundamentally changed its advice on fishing *Nephrops* in Area VII. As representatives of the Irish fishing industry, FIF does not accept that this scientific advice is correct. The 50 per cent reductions proposed by ICES were not justified and were not supported by FIF.

Historically, ICES advice is based on precautionary considerations or PA reference points. For example, the stock should be above a certain threshold below which future recruitment might be weak, and the proportion of individuals removed by fishing should not be so high as to jeopardise future stock size. But in March 2009 an ICES Benchmark Assessment Working Group (WKNEPH) developed a new method to forecast catches using Underwater Television Surveys. This method was used to give various catch options for *Nephrops* stocks in the Irish Sea and Aran Grounds in 2010.

*Nephrops* PA reference points have not yet been developed. This is mainly due to limited historical knowledge on stock development, and the unknown relationship between stock size and recruitment. In the absence of PA reference points, ACOM (the advisory committee of ICES) framed the 2010 advice on a long term yield reference point called  $F^{0.1}$ . The European Commission has been promoting the use of  $F^{0.1}$  as a proxy for  $F^{msy}$  (the fishing mortality associated with maximum sustainable yield). This is a very conservative target to achieve in one year and meant around 50

per cent reductions in the landings advice for *Nephrops* in 2010.

It is important to emphasise that with the exception of the Porcupine Bank the other stocks in VII appear to be in relatively good condition at current levels of fishing and no dramatic changes in stock status have been observed in the 2009 assessments. Having said that the stocks on the Aran Ground and Irish Sea appear to be over-fished relative to maximum sustainable yield and could benefit from some fishing mortality reductions.

The Marine Institute and FIF had a very constructive meeting in July 2009 to discuss the assessment and management of *Nephrops* stocks in VII. At that meeting the main participants in the Porcupine *Nephrops* fishery proposed a seasonal closure to conserve the stock. A detailed scientific document was drafted by the Marine Institute and sent to the NWWAC and the European Commission's scientific and technical committee (STECF). The Marine Institute also worked successfully with FIF and DAFF to clarify aspects of a non-paper circulated by the Commission which proposed a 30 per cent reduction in the VII TAC. In response to an Irish request STECF advised the Commission that the maximum reduction in the 2010 TAC could be 15 per cent according to the Commission's own policy statement.

Ultimately December fisheries council agreed a nine per cent reduction in the 2010 *Nephrops* TAC for VII. In addition, a seasonal closure as proposed initially by the Irish industry, will be implemented for the Porcupine Bank (Figure 1). Given the initial TAC proposals proposed by the Commission, this can be considered a very successful outcome for Ireland. It will help to ensure the future sustainability of this vitally important fishery.

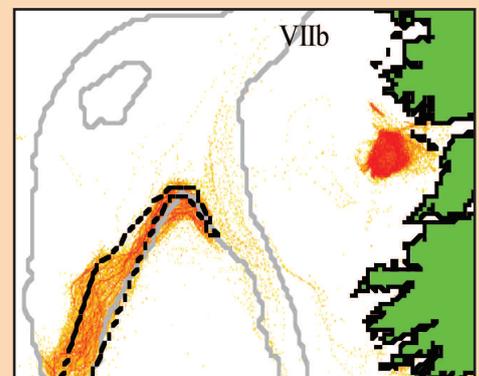


Figure 1. The area on the Porcupine Bank to be closed seasonally to *Nephrops* fishing in 2010 is shown as a dotted black line overlaid on the distribution of recent Irish fishing effort directed towards *Nephrops*.

by Sean O'Donoghue

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, KFO



### Crustacean Update

Brown crab and lobster continued to experience very difficult market conditions throughout 2009 with a relatively slight improvement in response to what is the normal Christmas peak demand. As has been discussed by all sectors in this industry throughout the year, several factors are at play here: a world-wide recession; high running costs; oversupply at certain times of the year; and very significantly, a European market which is biased in favour of cheap imports from third countries which displace the local product.

The United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland Crab Group which was initiated in 2008 continued to meet during 2009, and at the suggestion of our own members, KFO invited the UK and Irish *vivier* owners to a meeting in Edinburgh in early July. This proved very successful and there was a frank and open discussion on the problems facing the crab industry. There was agreement that crab was being sold below production costs which is not sustainable economically, and those present felt the lack of government policy in both jurisdictions and the EU had contributed substantially to the current situation.

The *vivier* owners group discussed the various factors which need to be addressed to bring about an improvement; these could be divided broadly into short-term issues, some of which could be solved by the industry itself, and long-term management issues such as limiting access, controlling effort and possible de-commissioning, which would require substantial national and trans-national legislative input. Hopefully, 2010 will see some progress being made on realistic management of brown crab fishing in the region.

Closer to home the brown crab fishery in the Biologically Sensitive Area (BSA) has yet again been subject to closure as a result of Kilowatt Days being used up by the end of October. This was all the more frustrating for both fishermen and processors since there appeared to be sufficient KWDays remaining to carry through until the end of the year and the closure came as a bolt out of the blue. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food did, in fairness, act quickly to arrange a swap and re-opened the fishery, but there must be a better way than this to run a business. The industry is more than willing to play its part in managing this fishery in an equitable way if given the opportunity.

### New Date for Electronic Logbook

The implementation of electronic logsheets for the larger fishing vessels in the fleet has been rescheduled from January 1, 2010 to March 31, 2010. The SFPA anticipates that the revised implementation date will not cause difficulties for Irish vessels fishing in the waters of other Member States or of Third Countries.

Unlike previous years, I expected the December Fisheries Council to be less contentious and shorter this year, with the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty on December 1. This was not the case, as the breakdown in the EU/Norway negotiations meant that a large number of joint shared stocks were unable to be decided at the Council. Ireland had five pelagic stocks caught up in this, namely mackerel, horse mackerel, blue whiting, herring VIa north, and from an access respective, Atlanto Scandia herring.

On page one you will see the Irish quotas for 2010 compared with 2009 and page two shows the tables of pelagic and Irish deepwater quotas. The deepwater TACs and quotas are set every two years, this being the second year of the two-year cycle. This year the TACs and quotas proposals produced by the Commission contained a number of totally unacceptable measures from an Irish industry perspective such as a 30 per cent reduction in Nephrops area VII coupled with year round closure of the Porcupine, the 55 per cent reduction in haddock area VIa and 25 per cent reductions in Celtic Sea cod and herring in the north west.

The mackerel issue dominated the Council and it looked very bleak for Ireland when at one stage it seemed we were going to significantly lose large quantities of mackerel when the southern mackerel component was fully integrated into the Coastal States TAC. I have to say that Minister Killeen stood very firm on this vital issue for us and was not prepared to be rolled over by the larger Member States. He succeeded in obtaining two very important declarations that will stand us in good stead in the future. These declarations will be very useful in any new agreement with Norway, and in my view will stop this continual trend of Ireland having to give rather than receive in the quota transfer arrangements. I do not envisage that the provisional 65 per cent of our quota allocated for the start of the year will cause major problems as it is likely that an agreement will be signed before the end of January.

In addition to the mackerel declarations the outcome of the Council contained a number of other positive and import elements of benefit to the Irish industry such as the increases in monk, hake, megrim and maintaining the status quo on Celtic Sea cod. A very satisfactory outcome was agreed for nephrops for area VII with a nine per cent reduction, and inclusion of the conservation proposal which originated from Irish fishermen. This demonstrates that Irish fishermen, working in collaboration with UK, French and Spanish colleagues, are fully prepared to propose and support difficult but necessary conservation measures. It was very

disappointing that an industry management plan supported by the Pelagic Regional Advisory Council for herring in VIa South VIIbc was not accepted; instead a 20 per cent cut was agreed. This cut is unjustified, and is wrong.

I am very concerned at the deepening effects of a further 25 per cent cut for 2010 in demersal effort (kwdays at sea) and cod quotas in the Irish Sea and the North West, which if continued will lead to there being no fishing industry at all in these areas in the future. The only light at the end of tunnel is the fact that the Fisheries Council decision includes an explicit commitment to a complete review of the illogical and unjustified regulations in the North West which have nearly wiped out much of the whitefish fishing activity in that region.

FIF has submitted to Minister Killeen and Noel Cawley a detailed response to the Commission's Green paper on the review of the CFP (see article page three). The FIF document sets a solid platform for building Ireland's case for an improved future CFP, and one that is fully supported by the stakeholders. In my view the FIF document should form the basis of Ireland's response. This is only the start of a lengthy three-year process before the adoption of a new CFP.

On October 19 last, the Council adopted a new control regulation. While the industry was successful in getting a number of important amendments included, the KFO has concerns that the regulation may have serious implications, and we will be addressing these with members shortly.

The fall in fish prices throughout the year, particularly for whitefish and shellfish, is very worrying and has been highlighted in numerous fora both nationally and at EU level. The level of imports, such as pangasius, is having a huge downward effect on prices on the EU market, as is the major problem of labelling thawed fish. It does however raise the question: How can the Commission and Council act so quickly in introducing a new control regulation, but are prepared to wait for the CFP reform in 2013 to change the market regulations?

Finally on behalf of all the KFO staff I would like to wish all our members a very happy Christmas and prosperous fishing in 2010. I look forward to continue to work with you to address the many challenges that lie ahead, starting with the EU/Norway negotiations in early January, in order to achieve a sustainable and profitable Irish fishing industry.