



news



AREA VI WHITEFISH STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2011 (t)	Quota 2012 (t)	Diff %
Cod ¹	Vla	40	0	-100%
Cod	Vlb	17	17	0%
Megrim	VI	439	439	0%
Monkfish	VI	546	518	-5%
Haddock ²	Vb Vla	328	984	200%
Haddock	Vlb XII XIV	295	260	-12%
Whiting ³	VI	97	92	-5%
Plaice	VI	275	275	0%
Pollock	VI	56	56	0%
Saithe	VI	429	407	-5%
Sole	VI	48	48	0%
Nephrops	VI	185	190	3%
Total		2,755	3,286	19%

AREA VII WHITEFISH STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2011 (t)	Quota 2012 (t)	Diff %
Cod	VIIa	333	251	-25%
Cod	VII b-k	825	1459	77%
Megrim	VII	3029	2272	-25%
Monkfish ⁴	VII	2447	2325	-5%
Haddock	VII	2959	3699	25%
Haddock	VIIa	570	542	-5%
Whiting	VIIa	68	52	-24%
Whiting	VIIb-k	4865	5298	9%
Plaice	VIIa	1063	1063	0%
Plaice	VII bc	62	62	0%
Plaice	VII fg	200	197	-2%
Plaice	VII hjk	81	77	-5%
Pollock	VII	1030	1030	0%
Saithe	VII	1516	1516	0%
Sole	VIIa	73	68	-7%
Sole	VII bc	37	37	0%
Sole	VII fg	39	33	-15%
Sole	VII hjk	190	190	0%
Nephrops ⁵	VII	8025	8025	0%
Total		27,412	28,196	3%

AREA VI, VII AND OTHER WHITEFISH STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2011 (t)	Quota 2012 (t)	Diff %
Cod ⁶	I,II	211	244	16%
Hake ⁷	VI, VII	1704	1704	0%
Redfish	International waters V, XII, XIV	1	1	0%
Ling	VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	575	576	0%
Blue Ling	Vb,VI, VII	5	5	0%
Tusk	V, VI, VII	17	17	0%
Greenland Halibut	IIa, IV, VI	2	2	0%
Snow Crab	Greenland Waters	62	62	0%
Porbeagle	I, II, III, IV, V, IV, IVV, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	0	0	0%
Skate & Rays ⁸	VI, VIIa-c, & e-k	1485	1294	-13%
Spur Dogs	I, II, III, IV, V, IV, IVV, VIII, XII, XIV	0	0	0%
Basking Shark	EU Waters	0	0	0%
Total		4,062	3,905	-4%

Footnotes for 2012 whitefish quotas

1. A zero TAC with maximum 1.5 per cent cod retained on board.
2. Commission to adopt catch composition requirements by mid-February 2012. Haddock will be taken out of the by-catch provision.
3. Commission to adopt catch composition requirements by mid-February 2012.
4. 5% monkfish in VII may be fished in area VIIa,b,d,e.
5. Only 456 (figure to be confirmed) tonnes of nephrops quota may be fished in porcupine functional unit 16
6. 250 tonnes unallocated in I, IIb to Member States except Germany, Spain, France, Poland, Portugal and the UK.
7. No more than 184 tonnes hake VI & VII may be fished in ICES area VIII a,b,d,e.
8. Separate reporting of seven species of ray and prohibits catches of three species of skate and one species of ray.



Satisfactory Outcome to a Very Difficult Fisheries Council

A satisfactory outcome was achieved at the Fisheries Council which finished in the early hours of Saturday morning December 17, after three days of protracted and very difficult discussions. The vast majority of the unjustified and arbitrary cuts proposed by the Commissioner were overturned using scientific analysis and sound argument, and significant increases secured in key stocks. There were major increases in the boarfish quota (155 per cent) and Ireland's share of the boarfish TAC, which is now 69 per cent; Celtic Sea cod (77 per cent); Celtic Sea herring (60 per cent); Northwest haddock (200 per cent); Celtic Sea haddock (25 per cent) and whiting (15 per cent). There was an incredible outcome to the protracted and contentious effort and discussions which held up the finalisation of the agreement for hours. The Council effectively endorsed retrospectively the controversial methodology for calculating fishing effort used by the UK in the Irish Sea and other areas (see Editorial page four.)

Whitefish Quotas 2012

The table opposite shows the whitefish quotas for 2012 for areas VI, VII and for combined areas.

The status quo in nephrops quota was a significant achievement, however it was very regrettable that the Council ignored a proposal brought forward by the FIF and supported by French, UK and Spanish industries, for the relaxation of counter productive management measures for the Porcupine Bank nephrops in response to very positive indications of stock improvement in the area. The seasonal nephrops closure in the Porcupine Bank for the months of May, June and July has been maintained.

This year, the Commissioner took, as mentioned above, an unjustified and arbitrary approach to propose large reductions on almost all whitefish species in areas VI and VII. These were rejected by the Council with large increases agreed in haddock area VIa (200 per cent) and Celtic Sea cod (77 per cent,) with lesser but still important increases in Celtic Sea haddock and whiting. The commitment by the Commission to adopt emergency measures for haddock in VIa by mid-February, to remove it from the by-catch provisions, is very good news. A roll-over was achieved in 21 stocks as shown in the table. The zero TAC proposed for the Irish Sea was not adopted, with a 25 per cent reduction agreed instead. It is regrettable that a zero TAC was agreed for area VIa with a provision to retain on board 1.5 per cent of cod during the fishing trip.

(Continued on page two.)

The Commission had a change of mind on the cod management plan and has now accepted that the effort methodology applied by the UK under the regulation was correct. This means that our Irish Sea fishery, closed since mid-October, should not have been closed. Furthermore, the reductions applied in the last two years in the Irish Sea and in area VIa should also not have been applied. Council did agree to the automatic 25 per cent reduction applied to effort in accordance with the cod management plan regulation and that it should be applied for 2012.

Pelagic Quotas 2012

The mackerel situation was known in advance of the Council with the ad hoc management arrangements agreed between EU/Norway in Clonakilty in early December. This arrangement gives us 80 per cent of our 2011 mackerel quota (see table right) to fish in the first three months of the year. This is not a cause for concern as our uptake at the start of the year is approximately 70 per cent. The date for setting the final mackerel TAC is January 31, 2012, as agreed in Clonakilty. Another important document presented by the Commissioner was her proposal for sanction measures against third countries that permit non-sustainable fishing in their waters. This proposal has been developed by the European Commission at the request of the EU fishing industry, in light of the mackerel dispute between the EU/Norway on the one hand, and Iceland and Faroe Islands on the other. It is now incumbent on the European Parliament and Council to strengthen and quickly adopt these measures.

The percentage share and TAC for boarfish was set last year. Ireland obtained a 67 per cent share. The debate centred this year on the level of the TAC and the share out of the 5 per cent that remained unallocated from last year. The Commission's proposal was for a 15 per cent reduction in TAC, whereas the scientific advice was for 150 per cent increase. I am pleased to say a 150 per cent increase to 82,000 tonnes was achieved, as was a further additional share of 1.5 per cent, giving Ireland a 69 per cent share.

The status quo applies to the important western horse mackerel quota. The management plan developed and proposed by the PRAC is providing the desired quota stability. The 25 per cent reduction proposed for the herring quota in VIa South VIIbc was significantly reduced to 5 per cent, which is still disappointing, particularly as a rebuilding plan had been proposed by the Irish industry and adopted by the PRAC. The very large increase in blue whiting quota of 532 per cent highlights the fact again that the TAC set for this year was wrong, as it was based on a flawed survey that has now been rejected by the scientists. The Atlanto Scandia herring agreed at the Coastal States meeting in October is showing, as expected, a 16 per cent reduction. A very significant increase of 60 per cent was agreed for Celtic Sea herring.

Deepwater Quotas 2012

The deepwater Irish quotas shown above right were agreed last year for a two-year period, this being the second year. Ireland no longer has deepwater vessels and given the quotas that are available in 2012, it is just as well. Some of these quotas will be a valuable source of currency for swapping during the year.

In conclusion, a very satisfactory deal was achieved that will sustain not only the Irish fleet but also the stocks. The very hard work and efforts of Minister Coveney and his officials in this regard have to be acknowledged.

PELAGIC STOCKS					
SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2011 (t)	Quota 2012 (t)	Diff %	
Mackerel ¹	VI, VII	68700	54956	prov	
H. Mackerel ²	Ila, IVa, VI, VIIa-c, VIIe-k, VIIla,b,e	40439	40284	prov	
H. Mackerel ³	IVb, IVc, and VIId	1243	937	-25%	
Blue Whiting ⁴	I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII a,b,d,e, XII, XIV	1187	7498	532%	
Herring ⁵	I, II	5705	4810	-16%	
Herring	VIaN	3286	3360	2%	
Herring	VIaS, VIIbc	4065	3861	-5%	
Herring	VIIa	1375	1237	-10%	
Herring	VII ghjk	11407	18236	60%	
Tuna ⁶	north.atl	3554	3896	10%	
Argentines	III, IV	8	7	-13%	
Argentines	V, VI, VII	331	305	-8%	
Boarfish	VI, VII, VIII	22227	56666	155%	
Total		16,3527	19,6053	na	

Footnotes for 2012 pelagic quotas

- Provisional quota (54,956t) to be decided by January 31, 2012. Of which 22112 tonnes (provisional) may be fished from January 1 to February 15, and September 1 to December 31, 2012 in EU and Norwegian waters of ICES division IVa.
- Provisional quota with 2,000t unallocated subject to conclusion of Third Countries negotiations. 5 per cent of this quota fished in areas II & IVa before June 30 may be attributed to IVb, IVc & VIId. Advance notification necessary.
- New management area including VIId and excluding IVa.
- Provisional quota with 4,500 tonnes unallocated subject to conclusion of Third Countries negotiations. Of which 68 per cent can be fished in Norwegian waters.
- 90 per cent of EU TAC of 48,805t may be taken in Norwegian waters north 62° N and around Jan Mayen.
- Maximum 50 licences Ireland.

DEEPWATER STOCKS					
SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2011 (t)	Quota 2012 (t)	Diff %	
Black Scabbard	V, VI, VII, XII	67	62	-7%	
Roundnose Grenadier	Vb, VI, VII	190	165	-13%	
Roundnose Grenadier	VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	6	6	0%	
Orange Roughy	VI	0	0	0%	
Orange Roughy	VII	0	0	0%	
Orange Roughy	I, II, III, IV, V, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIV	0	0	0%	
Blue Ling	II, IV, V	4	4	0%	
Red Seabream	VI, VII, VIII	6	6	0%	
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	V, VI, VII, IX	0	0	0%	
Deep Sea Sharks	XII	0	0	0%	
TOTALS		543	513	-6%	

KFO ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THREE EU RESEARCH PROJECTS

The KFO has been involved in the application process for three major EU research projects this year – **ACRUNET** (Atlantic Crab Resource Users Network), **MYFISH** (Maximising Yield of Fisheries while Balancing Ecosystem, Economic and Social Concerns) and **FISHSAVE** (Training of Fisheries Professionals on Energy Efficiency).

ACRUNET, an Atlantic Area Interreg IVB project, designed to further the initial transnational co-operation between KFO and fellow Producer Organisations in the UK and France, has scored very highly in the current assessment process. ACRUNET was submitted by BIM, the lead partner, under Priority One which was over-subscribed and is currently awaiting permission from the EU Commission to transfer unused funding from the other Atlantic Area Priorities. This process should be completed by early- to mid-February 2012 and the project is well placed to be funded.

CRUSTACEAN SECTOR: UPDATE

There has been a welcome increase in demand and prices for all crustacean products for the Christmas market, but many fishermen on the northwest coast are confined to port with a lengthy period of very bad weather. Bord Bia has been running in-store promotions in France in the major outlets such as Carrefour and Casino, where demand has been on a par with last year, but warn there will not be a public holiday or long festive period in France due to Christmas Day falling on a Sunday.

BIM hosted a Crab Innovation Workshop in the School of Tourism (LYIT), Killybegs on November 30. The objective of the Workshop was to inform and inspire the processing sector to explore the development of new and attractive crab products for the retail and food service sectors. Considering that 85 per cent of Irish seafood is still sold in commodity form, all efforts to value-add here at home are to be applauded.

KFO crab vessels which had applied for accreditation under the BIM Seafood Stewardship Programme successfully completed the audit procedure during November. This should prove rewarding for the vessels, as not only will it achieve an internationally recognised standard, vital for breakthrough to new markets, but it has also been a process of re-assessment for many on how they manage their vessels and catch. The catching sector would like to see the accreditation process rolled out to the on-shore sector as soon as possible to fully exploit the potential

of well caught, well handled Irish brown crab. Dr Emma Wootton, Swansea University, is carrying out a survey on the extent of Black Spot disease in crab. She has developed a short questionnaire and is appealing for the input of fishermen to build up a picture of this condition which can have economic consequences for the entire industry. The questionnaire is available at <http://bit.ly/CrabQuestionnaire> or contact Norah Parke norakfo@eircom.net

MYFISH is particularly relevant given that Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) is a stated objective of the revised CFP. This project has completed all stages of assessment and the draft grant agreement is currently being completed. Its work should commence in early 2012 and will be of particular interest to KFO which will represent a significant number of stakeholders with an interest in the theme.

FISHSAVE is very topical considering the ever-rising cost of fuel and related products. It too has scored very well in the scrutiny process, but has also been a victim of over-subscription and placed on a reserve list. The partners will either "wait and see" if some of the other projects do not take up the funding, allowing FISHSAVE to move up the list, or re-submit the project, addressing some of the issues identified by the assessors. Either way, this project should be up and running during 2012.

SEAL WORKSHOP

A Seal Workshop organised by the Irish Fisheries Science Research Partnership at the Marine Institute, Oranmore, Co Galway on September 2 last provided a forum where over 50 stakeholders from the fishing industry, the Marine Institute, BIM, environmental NGOs, the Irish Seal Sanctuary, the National Parks and Wildlife Services, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Swedish Board of Fisheries and University College Cork could finally put "all the cards on the table." There was a positive and realistic input from all stakeholders, which culminated in agreement that a Seal Group, drawn from the Workshop participants, will be set up to develop a "roadmap" for future collaboration and co-ordination before the end of 2011. KFO member John O'Brien, Magharoarty, has been nominated to represent fishermen at the Seal Group.

INDUSTRY/SCIENCE NEPHROPS TRAWL SURVEYS ON THE PORCUPINE BANK YIELDS POSITIVE RESULTS

The nephrops fishery on the Porcupine Bank takes place in a large area (7,000km² approx.) of complex muddy habitat between depths of 300-470m. The large size and high quality of the catch means the 2011 quota is likely to be worth in the region of €15m, of which approximately 50 per cent will be caught by Irish fishermen (604t with swaps). A spatio-temporal closure of the fishery was put in place in 2010 and 2011, in response to pessimistic scientific advice and worrying stock indicators. In 2011, an additional 'of which' clause was introduced to the area VII TAC specifically for the Porcupine Bank. This limited landings to less than 1,260t for Functional Unit 16. The need for further scientific investigation on the stock and monitoring of the performance of the closure was identified by the Irish Fisheries Science Research Partnership (IFSRP) as an important issue. In July 2010 and 2011, IFSRP nephrops trawl surveys were carried out on the Porcupine Bank within and outside the closed area. The 2010 survey was carried out on *MFV Ocean Pioneer* and the 2011 survey was carried out on *MFV Seán Óisín*. The 2011 survey was a development on what was done in 2010, and involved using commercial gear and a scientific trawl historically used in the same area. The 2011 survey was also funded using so-called "scientific quota," whereby an additional monthly quota allocation is made to the vessel in compensation for carrying out the scientific programme.

A total of 46 hauls of approx. five-hour duration were carried out during the 2010

survey (Table 1). In 2011, 37 hauls were carried out using a commercial net, and 25 using the scientific "Baka" trawl. Catch rates for the commercial trawl net were significantly higher in 2011, with Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) averaging 86Kg/Hr in 2011 compared to 58Kg/Hr in 2010. The catch rates in 2010 were already significantly higher than for the commercial fleet in years prior to the closure.

A huge amount of information on stock size and sex structure was gathered during the surveys, with more than 14,000 and 29,000 prawns measured during the surveys in 2010 and 2011, respectively. Large differences in the size distributions of the catches, and catch rates from different parts of the ground, were observed in both years. In 2010, larger males predominate in the south-western part of the ground, whereas females dominate catches in the north-eastern part of the ground. In 2011, the same pattern in sex ratio was observed, but there was no particular correlation between average size and area.

This survey is very much a collaborative effort between FIF, the Marine Institute and the individual skippers involved in the fishery. Over time, it is hoped that these surveys will be continued and should provide a robust relative index of stock abundance. The results of these surveys have already been used by FIF as part of an NWWRAC industry case to the European Commission for the removal of the FU16 "of which clause" (see Outcome of Council page one.)

Table 1 Summary of the Results of the IFSRP Surveys in July 2010 and 2011

Vessel	Gear	Year	Mean CPUE (kg/hr)	+95% CI	Count
<i>MFV Ocean Pioneer</i>	Commercial Trawl	2010	58.1	9.0	46
<i>MFV Seán Óisín</i>	Commercial Trawl	2011	86.2	24.9	37
<i>MFV Seán Óisín</i>	Baka Trawl	2011	34.9	10.5	25

Report of the High Level Jobs Initiative Group Launched

On November 23, Minister Simon Coveney launched the report produced by the High Level Group on Job Creation in the Killybegs Region. On June 3, the Minister had asked this Group to produce a report within three months, to identify without any increase in public expenditure, the actions required to deliver a job creation initiative across five key areas namely: seafood, ancillary services, offshore supports, tourism and marine leisure and green/economy-renewable energy. The Minister set a target of 250 jobs to be created over the next three years in the Killybegs region.

The concise report produced identifies the actions required to deliver 250 jobs in the Killybegs region over the next three years in the above five key areas, as requested by Minister Coveney. The Group systematically dealt with a diversity of issues during the three Group and seven Sub-Group meetings that took place over the three-month time period. Although the issues that are impacting on job creation potential are not detailed in the text of the report, these issues and associated solutions, are implicit in the action items and recommendations set out in the report. Delivery on these recommendations is a necessary prerequisite to job creation. Of particular importance, which was conveyed strongly to Minister Coveney, is that a Killybegs Harbour Management Committee be established without delay to progress the actions set out in the report that will build on the collaborative framework that was fostered by the Group over the three months.

The Group is of the firm view that the integrated approach developed across the five key sectors -- with a private and public sector mix -- was vital to delivering on its mandate of job creation initiatives in the Killybegs region. It is important that the integrated approach developed remains in place over the next three years to assist in the delivery of the implementation of this worthwhile initiative.



Members of the High Level Group are pictured from left (front row) with Minister Simon Coveney; Sean O'Donogue, Group Chairman and Chief Executive, KFO; Jason Whooley, Chief Executive, BIM; Back row (from left) John Doran, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, representing Paul Hannigan, President, LYIT; Jim Parkinson, representing Offshore and Ancillary Services; Conor Fahy, Regional Director, Enterprise Ireland; Seamus Neely, County Manager, Donegal County Council; Cecil Beamish, Assistant Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine; Michael Gallagher, BIM and Group Secretary. Group member Niall O'Gorman, representing Donegal Fish Merchants Association, is absent from the photo.

BOARFISH PROJECT UPDATE AND TARGET STRENGTH MODELLING

As the 2011 season draws to a close it's time to take stock of the progress of the boarfish project and also the prospects for 2012. In the September issue of KFO News we reported the primary findings of the project and their contribution to the development of the positive ICES advice. Since then, the Commission has published its TAC proposals for 2012, which were totally at odds with the ICES advice.

To recap, ICES advised that catches should not increase, however in the management considerations this was stipulated to mean no increase above the average catch from 2008-2010 i.e. 82,000 tonnes. The Commission has proposed a 15 per cent reduction of the 2011 TAC to 28,050 tonnes, which is considered totally unnecessary by both ICES and STECF. The final agreed TAC was 82,000 tonnes (see table page two.)

Considerable advances have been made in the KFO, IFPO and Danish Pelagic PO-funded boarfish project, specifically in the determination of a boarfish target strength, which is critical for future acoustic surveys. So what exactly does this mean for acoustic surveys and why is it so important?

During an acoustic survey, an echo sounder is used to estimate biomass (weight) and abundance (number) of target species. The echo sounder works by sending a pulse of sound down into the water and measures the intensity of the echo as it bounces back off shoals of fish below. If the target strength of the species is known and a sample of fish is taken for measurement, then the biomass and abundance of fish in the shoal can be estimated. It all sounds quite simple but determining accurate target strength for individual species is extremely difficult and has long been one of the biggest issues in fisheries acoustics.

The target strength of a given species is the product of a number of factors, the most important of which are the size, shape, volume and type of swim bladder. As no specific target strength currently exists for boarfish, the aim of this ground-breaking study is to model one theoretically based on the dimensions of the swim bladder. This work is being carried out by scientists from the Marine Institute, IMARES in the Netherlands and NOAA in the USA and is at the forefront of fisheries acoustics. This study will also be a benchmark for the species and the results will be presented at the annual ICES fisheries acoustics science and technology working group (WGFAST) in 2012.

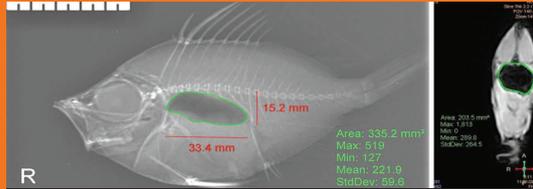


Figure 1. An x-ray (left) and MRI (right) image of a boarfish. The swim bladder is highlighted in green.

During the acoustic survey onboard the *FV Felucca* in July this year, boarfish samples were collected from across the length range and frozen onboard. After the survey, a random sample of these fish was x-rayed to ensure that their swim bladders were not damaged during their time in the net. The x-rays clearly showed that the swim bladders were intact and also that boarfish have a distinct and easily recognisable swim bladder (see figure above). The stout and laterally compressed shape of their swim bladder is markedly different from any species currently being quantified acoustically in the northeast Atlantic, which further highlights the need for a specific target strength. The next phase of the study was to model the 3-D structure of the swim bladder. MRI scans were used to analyse 32 boarfish. Analyses of these data are ongoing and when completed will yield a theoretical target strength for boarfish, which will be used to convert existing and future survey data into biomass and abundance estimates.

As the number of boarfish surveys builds up, it will allow for the detection of increases or decreases in stock size which is crucial for the development of the advice. Coupled with the advances in ageing and the understanding of the reproductive biology, considerable progress has been made, in large part due to the continued support of the KFO. It is a positive endorsement of the strong industry-science partnership which is central to the success of this project.

Editorial

by Sean O'Donoghue

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, KFO



The Commission's TACs and quotas proposals for 2012, that were issued at the end of September, were both unjustified and arbitrary with 10, 15, 25 and even 100 per cent cuts, in key quota species. For example, it is incredible that the Commission proposed a 15 per cent cut in the boarfish TAC, whereas the scientific advice (ICES and STECF) recommended more than a 150 per cent increase. This is only one example of several other arbitrary cuts such as haddock in North West and Celtic Sea, whiting Celtic Sea, megrim, hake, monkfish and pollock. Furthermore, the zero cod TACs proposal for the Irish Sea and North West was counter productive and only a recipe for discarding. The lack of active engagement with the Member States and stakeholders by Commissioner Damanaki in the lead up to this year's December Fisheries Council was without doubt a major contributor to a protracted and very difficult Council. A continuation of this attitude by the Commissioner does not bode well for future discussions on her key proposals issued in July of this year on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy and Common Organisation of the Markets.

On pages one and two you will see the Irish quotas for 2012 compared with 2011. The deepwater TACs and quotas are set every two years, this being the second of the two-year cycle. The TACs and quotas proposals produced by the Commission contained a number of totally unacceptable measures from an Irish industry perspective, such as the unjustified and arbitrary cuts in 44 out of 58 stocks of interest to Ireland; the zero TACs for cod in both the Irish Sea and North West; the 25 per cent reduction in the day-at-sea and the absence of Hague preferences which gives Ireland additional quotas in many key stocks.

The good news prior to the start of the Council was that the EU and Norway had agreed -- in the absence of a Coastal States agreement on mackerel -- at the meeting in Clonakilty, on ad hoc mackerel management arrangements for the first quarter of 2012. As a result of these ad hoc arrangements Ireland will be entitled to fish 80 per cent of its 2011 mackerel allocation at the start of the year.

Furthermore, they also agreed to set the final mackerel TAC by January 31. There was also further good news in advance of the Council arising directly from efforts spearheaded by the Irish industry, with a 60 per cent increase in Celtic Sea herring quota sought by industry, and a substantial rise of 70 per cent in Celtic Sea cod quota resulting from Irish industry-led seasonal closures supported by other countries and put in place by the EU.

The outcome of the Fisheries Council, which finished in the early hours of Saturday morning December 17, was very satisfactory, containing a number of expected outcomes such as the rejection of the Commission's unjustified and arbitrary cuts in a large number of stocks. Almost 75 per cent of the stocks of interest to Ireland were subject to cuts of varying degrees 10, 15, 25 and even 100 per cent in the Commission's proposals. The final outcome shows that only one stock out of the 44, megrim in area VII, remained with a 25 per cent cut. There was an incredible outcome to the protracted and contentious effort and discussions which held up the finalisation of the agreement for hours. The Council effectively endorsed retrospectively the controversial methodology for calculating fishing effort used by the UK in the Irish Sea and other areas. As a result, Irish vessels operating in the Irish Sea have been tied up since mid-October as Ireland has used the Commission-approved approach in implementing the Cod Recovery rules in place for the past three years. Minister Coveney announced after the Council that he was immediately re-opening the Irish Sea Fishery to allow the remaining 2011 quotas there to be fished even at this late stage.

No agreement was reached at the Coastal States mackerel meeting that met in Clonakilty in early December, however a further meeting is scheduled for January 25-27 in Iceland. The Commissioner presented, belatedly, her proposals for sanction measures against third countries that permit non-sustainable fishing in their waters. This proposal has been developed by the European Commission at the request of the EU fishing industry, and in light of the mackerel dispute between the

EU/Norway on the one hand, and Iceland and Faroe Islands on the other. Provided this document is strengthened and adopted quickly by EP and Council, I am convinced it will have the desired effect by getting Iceland and Faros to adopt a reasonable approach to the negotiations.

The High Level Group on Job Creation in the Killybegs Region (see article page three) has delivered its report to Minister Coveney. Contrary to the misguided and ill-informed comment in certain quarters, this concise report identifies the actions required to deliver 250 jobs in the Killybegs region over the next three years in five key areas namely: seafood, ancillary services, offshore supports, tourism and marine leisure and green/economy-renewable energy. I am convinced this innovative and integrated approach across the sectors will yield much-needed employment in the Killybegs region over the next three years.

The SFFA has submitted a Control and Sampling Plan for approval to the Commission as per the requirements of the implementing regulation. The Plan provides the framework where instead of weighing the entire catch on landing, a sample weighing can be made of a specified number of boxes of each species. The SFFA has indicated to the Commission that they are now in the process of defining specific aspects of Ireland's Control and Sampling Plan, with a view to immediate implementation. FIF has met and made a number of submissions to the SFFA over the last number of months on this control plan. There are still issues to be resolved, particularly the risk categorisation of the species, and the number of boxes that have to be sample weighed. The progress with implementation in other Member States is also a major concern and we have made it very clear to the SFFA that there has to be a level playing field in this regard.

Finally, on behalf of all the KFO staff I would like to wish all our members a very happy Christmas and prosperous fishing in 2012. I look forward to continue to work with you to address the many challenges that lie ahead, particularly the CPF reform and new funding proposal 2014-2020, in order to achieve a sustainable and profitable Irish fishing industry.

