



EU Parliament Fisheries Committee Delegation Visit Killybegs

Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation (KFO) was pleased to facilitate the visit on February 13 last of a delegation from the European Parliament Fisheries Committee led by Pat 'the Cope' Gallagher, MEP. Sean O'Donoghue set the scene by providing an overview of the strategic geographical location of Killybegs, and the role of KFO which has been in existence since 1979, and functions both as a representative body and a Producers Organisation catering for a comprehensive range of vessels, accounting for more than 60 per cent of Irish landings.



The delegation from the European Parliament's Committee on Fisheries is pictured at the KFO Office Killybegs. From left to right: Ted Breslin, KFO; Cathal Boyle, Vice Chairman, KFO; Martin Howley, Chairman, KFO; Ulrike Rodust, MEP, Germany; Pat 'the Cope' Gallagher, MEP; Struan Stevenson, MEP, Scotland and Sean O'Donoghue CEO, KFO.

Killybegs is Ireland's largest fishing port and was one of 24 case studies undertaken by DG MARE in recent years to assess the social and economic impact of changes in such fisheries-dependent communities. This study revealed the true extent of Killybegs' reliance on fishing and its spin-off industries, and estimated that 68 per cent of employment in the area was fishery related. In light of this analysis, KFO and other sectors in the area came together to launch the Killybegs Jobs Initiative, which aims to widen the range of maritime-related employment and create an additional 250 jobs locally.

Sean O'Donoghue went on to speak of the more specific fishery-related issues that are a concern to the industry. The situation created by the reprehensible behaviour of Iceland and the Faroes regarding mackerel continues to be a major worry as this species is the lifeblood of the Killybegs industry, and he called on the EU Commission to implement the sanctions approved in 2012. He voiced concerns over the current reform of the CFP in areas such as discards, the definition of overcapacity, regionalisation, management plans, MSY, ITQs and the necessity to maintain the Hague Preferences, but welcomed the prospect of Producer Organisations playing a more important

role. The importance of adequately funding many of the reformed CFP proposals is crucial to their success.

KFO welcomes the role played by the European Parliament in the recent rationalisation of technical conservation measures in Area VI, which are of importance to all Irish fishermen but particularly relevant to those fishing off the North-West coast. This highlights the necessity to deal with such issues on a truly regional basis. Likewise, the development of the new boarfish fishery is an example of the positive outcomes to be had from stakeholder involvement in fisheries development and management; this has been achieved with a huge commitment from industry in the science and surveys, and the prospects for further development on the processing front are excellent.

Other groups such as Donegal Fish Merchants Association, representatives of Donegal Islanders and Inshore Fishermen and the aquaculture industry led by Ritchie Flynn, IFA, made representations to the Fisheries Committee over the course of the day. Visits to Killybegs Seafoods Ltd., and the MFV *Atlantic Challenge* rounded off a very comprehensive and timely encounter with the Irish fishing industry and the challenges it faces at this crucial point in time.

New Technical Conservation Measures Enter Into Force

Regulation (EU) No 227/2013 "amending Council Regulation (EC) No 850/98 for the conservation of fishery resources through technical measures for the protection of juveniles of marine organisms" has finally entered into force. Its progress was delayed when it became the focus of a stand-off between the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers over procedural issues but the content of the regulation itself was never an issue.

Pat 'the Cope' Gallagher, MEP, has played an extremely important role in this process; as Rapporteur to the Fisheries Committee of the European Parliament, he was responsible for the effective approach to amending the unworkable, unnecessary and unwarranted technical measures which fishermen in the North-West of Ireland have had to endure in recent years.

This regulation covers many aspects already in place in the transitional measures but those amendments which are of particular interest to Irish fishermen, including offshore and inshore operators, are:

- It is permitted to use gill-nets of mesh size greater than 120mm south of 59°North and within the Cod Recovery Area under certain conditions;
- It is permitted to use gill-nets of mesh size greater than 90mm to target lesser spotted dogfish within three miles of the coast. There will be a monthly ten days-at-sea restriction and maximum length of gill-nets of a 1000m;
- The by-catch provision of 30 per cent for whiting, haddock and cod has been removed;
- Non-Irish vessels will be prohibited from fishing in the "Greencastle Box" – closed from January-March and October-December each year to protect juvenile cod;
- The use of sorting grids in the restricted areas in the Irish Sea is allowed;
- There will be a review of the defined area for Cod Recovery by January 1, 2015, which may lead to complete removal of the line; and
- There will be a review of the defined mesh sizes within the defined area.

These amendments will make a huge difference to fishermen operating in conditions where weather, location and size of vessel impose effort restrictions far in excess of any regulation. Now a fishing trip will have some prospect of a reasonable return and restores some measure of flexibility to fishermen whose options are limited at best.

BIM Carry Out Hake Gill Net Selectivity Trials

The spawning stock biomass of the northern hake stock reached a low level in the 1990s and emergency measures were introduced in 2001 and 2002 (Regulation EC No 1162/2001, 2602/2001 and 494/2002). However in 2009, following the submission of a request together with supporting evidence by France and Spain, the minimum mesh size permitted in the hake fishery North of 48°N was reduced from 120mm to 100mm (Annex III of Regulation (EC) No. 43/2009) in depths greater than 200m. This enables fishermen to deploy mesh sizes of less than 100mm mesh in the part of the Hake Recovery Box that lies in depths of >200m. This reduction in mesh size was somewhat contradictory to the emergency measures that were introduced in 2001 and 2002.

During 2011, a number of trials were carried out onboard the Dingle, Co. Kerry based gill netter MFV *Atlantic Fisher* (See right.) The objective of the trials was to gather selectivity data for gillnets of a range of mesh sizes on the traditional hake grounds to the west and southwest of Ireland.

The core mesh size selectivity experiment involved the deployment of four identically rigged gillnets with mesh sizes of 80mm, 100mm, 120mm and 140mm. The trials were carried out on the hake grounds in ICES area VIIb, g and j to the west and southwest of Ireland. Fishing depths ranged from 102 metres to 212 metres with an average of 135 metres. Each trip was seven days long and four trips were carried out between April 20 and July 25,

2011. In total, 24 deployments were carried out over the trials. Weather conditions during the trials were favorable.



During the trials a substantially higher proportion of smaller hake were retained in 100mm mesh compared to 120mm mesh gear. Furthermore the gradually increasing mean hake selection sizes in relation to gradually increasing mesh sizes observed in this study clearly demonstrates that, as one might expect, the length of hake caught in gillnets generally increases as mesh size increases.

The catch composition of hake as a percentage of total catch from the 80mm, 100mm, 120mm and 140mm mesh sizes is 53 per cent, 67 per cent, 73 per cent and 53 per cent respectively. In this regard it is notable that the minimum catch composition of hake required by Council

Regulation 43/2009 for 100mm mesh size is 85 per cent as opposed to the 67 per cent which was observed during these trials. This is substantially below the required catch composition for this mesh size. The 120mm mesh size gillnets caught very few hake less than 60cm and the experimental design used clearly demonstrates that this is due to the selectivity of the net mesh size rather than an absence of small hake on the fishing grounds, as the use of 100mm mesh size resulted in catching much larger quantities of small fish under 60cm.

The commercial viability of landing fish under 60cm is questionable given the market demands and transport costs. Throughout the study period it was evident that the market for small hake was depressed and the high cost of transport to the Continental market made the delivery of small hake of under 60cm uneconomical. These issues are also likely to encourage discarding.

The trials clearly showed that by reducing the mesh size from 120mm to 100mm, depending on the market requirement, could potentially result in large catches of fish <60cm with little market value. The results of the trials indicate that the 120mm mesh size is economically viable, and should have the most beneficial results in terms of protecting future recruitments of the stocks.

The final report on the hake gillnet selectivity trials is available from BIM.

Major International Crab Project Up And Running

The Atlantic Crab Resource Users Network (ACRUNET), funded by INTERREG IVB Atlantic Area Transnational Programme to the tune of €2.2 million has made considerable progress since its launch by Kieran Calnan, Chairman, BIM, in October 2012. On that occasion, the 15 partners representing Ireland, the United Kingdom, France, Spain and Portugal held a two-day "kick-off" meeting in Clontarf Castle to map out the work needed to ensure a viable, sustainable and profitable future for the brown crab industry Europe-wide. This was followed in February with the Shellfish Association of Great Britain (SAGB), led by Director David Jarrad, hosting a hard-working and productive meeting of the ACRUNET partners at its London headquarters in Fishmonger's Hall. The historic setting was an inspiring backdrop to this first real working meeting of ACRUNET where the partners outlined their progress and future plans.

Objectives of the programme include: the stabilisation in market price through the management of the shared resource to meet market demand. A crucial step in achieving this objective is a complete economic analysis of the business from vessel to consumer, coupled with an accurate forecast of how the business will evolve in the near to medium future. This work is being undertaken by Seafish, which has a specialist unit in this area, aided by BIM.

Another key deliverable is the establishment of a European brown crab quality standard

backed by scientific evaluations, accredited to ISO 9000 and ISO 65. BIM is leading this activity and has already established common ground with the standards in place in the UK and France. It is planned to develop a transnational version to be piloted on approximately 20 vessels from the participating countries in the coming year. A focused promotional drive, aimed primarily at the French consumer with new innovative product formats plus cheaper transport options based on technical, market and consumer research will ultimately increase economic viability.



Of course, all these plans rely on a well-managed and sustainable fishery both in Ireland and our partner countries; Oliver Tully and his counterparts from Cefas, IFREMER and Marine Scotland brought the science to the table and proposed some very interesting options which were positive and innovative and will be explored further.

KFO is lead partner for two of the project activities – Network Development and Communications - and has established a Working Group within its Crustacean Sectoral

Committee to facilitate this role. However, KFO is aware that ACRUNET is primarily an industry-based network which seeks to improve opportunities and financial viability for all sectors – fishermen, merchants, processors – and does not see its function confined to its own Crustacean Sectoral members. KFO has been working jointly with BIM to ensure all Irish stakeholders have access to ACRUNET, so a seminar to inform and engage with the brown crab industry in Ireland was held in Dublin in January and was followed up with a further meeting at the Fish EXPO in Galway in March. At both meetings there was considerable debate; a consultative group was formed which will interact on behalf of all industry sectors to ensure ACRUNET remains aware of the problems and concerns of the brown crab industry country-wide.

To date, KFO has developed the ACRUNET logo (see left), a project banner and template materials for presentations and, more importantly, a project Factsheet and the first project Newsletter. These materials will shortly be available (April 2013) on the ACRUNET web-site (www.acrunet.eu) which, together with the ACRUNET Facebook and Twitter sites will promote dialogue throughout the industry. Please join the debate!

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The sudden announcement in December 2012 by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan, of the designation of an additional six offshore SACs has been greeted with dismay by many operators in the marine sector, particularly as there was no consultation whatsoever and the announcement seems to be driven by the looming Commission deadline.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (Dept of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht) met with representatives of the fishing industry, aquaculture and marine renewable energy in February where many individuals and companies expressed their fears and annoyance at the lack of transparency, consultation and assessment guidelines when designating and developing SACs.

The dismal history of fish farm licences caught in the bureaucratic tangle of red tape for more than ten years was held up as an example of what stakeholders can expect yet again. Those present expressed their fears that these new SACs will prevent any activities such as fishing, fish farming or marine energy developments being carried out in the apparent absence of plans or guidelines and referred to previous negative experiences in similar situations.

Stakeholders acknowledge the need to protect vulnerable habitats and species but there are also socio-economic aspects, which are essential elements of any designation of SACs. In many such areas there are traditional fishing activities which have been carried out for generations and which, in themselves, form a part of the SAC and must be included in future management of the area. It is important to note the European Commission Guidance on Managing Natura 2000 Sites, states that management measures should take account of economic, social and cultural requirements or regional and local characteristics subject to ensuring that deterioration of the location is avoided.

The sites recently designated are the following: Blackwater Bank (Sandbank); West Connacht Coast (Bottlenose Dolphin); Hempton's Turbot Bank (Sandbank); Rockabill to Dalkey Island (Reefs and Harbour Porpoise); Porcupine Bank (Canyon Reefs); and South-East Rockall Bank (Reefs). The KFO in conjunction with the FIF are actively pursuing these designations with the National Parks and Wildlife Service to ensure that inappropriate and unnecessary management measures are not adopted to the detriment of the long standing fishing activities in these areas.

The Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) concept was proposed as the basis for managing fish stocks by the 2009 Green Paper on Reform of the CFP with a target of having this mechanism in place by 2015. In the context of fisheries, MSY can be defined as the maximum amount of fish that can be removed from a stock over an indefinite period under constant environmental conditions.

MSY seems relatively straightforward at first glance but in fact raises many questions:

- What is the impact that maximising the yield of one stock will have on other stocks i.e. how does MSY work for mixed fisheries?
- How can we balance conflicting goals in terms of ecosystem, economic and social objectives to ensure fisheries are sustainable?
- How do we allow for variability and trends in economic, environmental and social conditions?
- How can MSY-management be implemented as acceptable, operational and efficient?

In an effort to answer these questions the EU-funded (€5 million) project "Myfish" was authorised under the FP7 Programme "Cooperation, Food, Agriculture and Fisheries and Biotechnology." Myfish will run over 48 months until February 2016 and includes 31 partners from 12 countries. KFO, along with the Marine Institute and AquaTT Ltd, is one of three Irish partners.

There is one overall objective for Myfish – provide an operational framework for the implementation of the MSY concept in European waters. To achieve this, Myfish will:

1. Create a framework of collaboration between fisheries scientists, economists, social scientists and stakeholders;
2. Establish the conditions necessary to ensure sustainability and achieve a balance between Good Environmental Status (GES) while avoiding economically and socially unacceptable situations;
3. Devise tools and measures to enable steps one and two; and
4. Having completed steps one-three, develop an operational framework for the implementation of MSY, which can accommodate the variables that will be encountered throughout the range of European fisheries.

Myfish will achieve its objective through addressing fisheries in all Regional Advisory Council (RAC) areas and integrating stakeholders - the fishing industry, NGOs and managers - throughout the project. Existing ecosystem and fisheries models will be modified to perform

maximisation of stakeholder-approved yield measures while ensuring acceptable impact levels on ecosystems, economic and social aspects. Implementation plans are proposed and social aspects addressed through active involvement of stakeholders.

The project will follow a regional approach with case studies in the Baltic Sea, North Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Western Waters and Wide Ranging stocks. KFO is participating in the Western Waters and Wide Ranging Stock case studies.

The Western Waters region covers diverse areas from the exposed Iberian Seas in the south to the semi-enclosed Irish Sea in the north, and Myfish will consider several different scenarios. KFO is involved with the Celtic Sea study where an 'ecosystem operating modelling approach' will be adopted. In co-operation with local stakeholders, MSY will be estimated for slow-growing elasmobranch species caught both as target and by-catch species. Different models will assess the MSY for the interactions among the multiple demersal elasmobranchs.

Widely ranging fish, in which KFO also plays a part, differs from other regions in its spatial extent, encompassing the pan-regional RACs, Pelagic RAC and long distance RAC, and regional fisheries management organisations (RFMO).

Existing models do not reflect the complexity of this system and the indicators of GES that have been developed (using techniques applicable to demersal fisheries and fish stocks) are not representative of the widely ranging system. Myfish will provide guidance on descriptors of GES, specifically targeting the ecology of pelagic habitats, and the particularities of European pelagic fisheries. The indicators will also be discussed with NGOs, fishers and fish processors. The aim is to provide tools to understand the ecological implications of specific management plans.

Myfish has now been operating for approximately one year and has held two major partner meetings – a kick-off meeting in Vigo in April 2012 where the project partners and stakeholders defined the variants of MSY, the constraints and the preferred management measures followed by the second project meeting in Copenhagen this March. The aim of the Copenhagen meeting was to present the first year project results and to focus on the challenges to be addressed in the next three years of the project. This meeting also highlighted the crucial role of stakeholders in the process of defining the objectives for fisheries management strategies. It was the first step toward the outline of an effective stakeholder engagement strategy.

SFPA Clarifies The Rules Regarding Weighing Fish

According to Regulation EC No 1224 of 2009, all fish products must be weighed on landing; however, all rules must be interpreted in a manner which enables the rule to be applied in a manageable and rational way.

In this case, the pragmatic approach has been achieved by way of a series of derogations which allow for:

1. Sample weighing at landing;
2. Weighing all fishery products on board followed by sample weighing on landing;
3. Weighing all fishery products after transport to a destination within the same Member State (MS) as landing; and
4. Weighing all fishery products after transport to a destination in a MS outside of the MS of landing.

These derogations can only be invoked when the EU Commission has approved the control procedures which are to be used; in Ireland, the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) is the

responsible agency and has received approval for all derogations listed but points out that in the case of weighing in a destination MS other than the MS where landed (point four left), has, so far, only received approval for this procedure in France.

The SFPA points out that it expects all operators to be compliant with these procedures by March 15, 2013 but they are aware that updating of facilities is ongoing. SFPA staff are available to advise individual operators of their obligations and will publish any updates on the SFPA website www.sfpa.ie as they become available.

The Regulation and its derogations vary slightly in their application depending on the fishery sector. There is no facility for sample weighing for bulk pelagic landings which only have the options of full weighing on landing or at destination (processing plant). Demersal landings have the options of full or sample weighing on landing or

after transport to a permitted Irish establishment except consignments for France, which can be weighed at their destination. SFPA hopes to extend the number of agreed MS under the scope of the Common Control Programme in the future. At the moment, SFPA are not aware of any demand for on-board weighing but will revise if necessary.

SFPA points out that there is a Europe-wide requirement for compliance with the requirement to weigh all landings of fishery products which extends to the responsibility to complete all documentation correctly; this is particularly important for registered buyers, auctions or those recording first point of sale details that will complete landing declarations and sales notes. SFPA also points out it is aware of the challenges posed by the implementation of this Regulation but a professional approach from all parties will improve the outcomes.

Editorial

by Sean O'Donoghue

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, KFO



The Commission has to date failed to act on the very strong political mandate that the European Parliament and the Council gave it in October 2012 (regulation 1026/2012) to enact trade sanction measures in case of unsustainable fishing by third countries. This year again, Iceland has set a unilateral mackerel quota of 123,000 tonnes and Faros has set a quota of over 159,000t for 2013 including a carryover of 33,000t from 2012. Combining the unilateral quotas that both countries have declared for 2013 (282,000t) represents more than 52 per cent of the scientific advice by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) of which both countries are members. In addition to these huge unilateral and irresponsible mackerel quotas that both parties have set for 2013, the Faroe Islands have this year withdrawn from the five-parties Coastal States agreement on Atlanto Scandia herring and have increased their share of this stock from five per cent to circa 17 per cent of the TAC. This behaviour is totally unacceptable and will continue unabated unless the Commission implements appropriate and effective trade sanctions immediately and in advance of the fishing season starting in May. Surely both the EP and Council cannot allow their strong mandate to be ignored by the Commission? This is our number one economic fishery and we are determined to continue to use every available means at our disposal at national, international, EU (EP and Council) and Commission level to stop this reckless and irresponsible behaviour in collaboration with EU and Norwegian industry colleagues.

The end game on the reform of the CFP is fast approaching with the Irish Presidency determined to have it completed during its Presidency, which finishes on June 30. It has been a long and torturous process starting

in April 2009 with the Commission's Green Paper which in turn lead to a consultation process and many submissions, then the Commission's proposal, numerous discussions, meetings and amendments at the European Parliament and Council of Fisheries Ministers and finally to a likely agreed new policy at the end of June 2013 with an implementation date of January 1, 2014. It is safe bet that if a new policy is agreed (which looks likely) it will not be subject to a major review again for the next ten years which would be 2024. In the likelihood that this policy will set the scene for at least the next ten years, the final outcome is of paramount importance to the Irish fishing industry in order to ensure sustainable stocks with enhanced fishing opportunities thus leading to a more viable and sustainable Irish fishing industry.

There are three documents under discussion, namely the basic regulation on the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the Common Organisation of the Market (COM) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). It is likely that CFP and COM will be agreed by the end of June, but the EMFF is now unlikely to be fully agreed as the EP is not as advanced in its deliberations as expected with a vote in Plenary unlikely to happen in time for Trialogue discussions to take place before the end of the Irish Presidency on June 30. However, both the EP and Council should have agreed positions on the EMFF by that date.

The key CFP Irish industry areas of concern that are still not agreed between the EP and Council and are under active discussion by the Trialogue are: discards, MSY and management plans,

regionalisation, Hague Preference, Irish Box, overcapacity definition and implementation procedures.

The discards debate has been the area that is getting the most publicity with both the EP and Council agreeing their respective positions in February. At this stage the debate has moved on from the simplistic view of ban all discards and the problem is solved. The Council agreement in February was a step in the right direction in trying to address the implementation of the highly complex and multi faceted issue of banning discards which are often driven by regulations and restricted quotas but is still not the finished article. The starting date for the phasing in of a discards ban for pelagic species on January 1, 2014 is unrealistic, particularly as the timeframe will be less than five months from the time the legislation is published to allow meaningful discussions on the modalities of implementing such a ban with the pelagic industry.

The Irish industry has long advocated for increasing our percentage share of the TAC (relative stability) particularly during the previous two reviews of the CFP going back to 1992. On both occasions we failed to achieve this even though we had very good arguments and reports. This time around we (FIF) have learned from this failure and adopted a different strategy rather than just demanding an additional share. We have proven to be correct in adopting such a strategy as both the EP and Council have already agreed to maintain relative stability unchanged. One element of our strategy is the enshrining of the Hague Preference into the reformed CFP. "Hague Preferences," which have been in place since 1976, give Ireland an additional quota share in many key stocks. However, this arrangement has to be approved annually at the Council of Fisheries Ministers so enshrining it in the CFP would avoid the annual threat of losing part or all of it. It was heartening to see that the EP voted in favour of a Hague Preference amendment proposed by Pat 'the Cope' Gallagher, MEP. It is now incumbent on the Irish Presidency to ensure that this vital amendment remains as part of the final agreed text during the forthcoming Trialogue negotiations.

The COM is less contentious than the CFP and the Trialogue discussions are at an advanced stage, and I expect that agreement will be reached by the end of April. The COM deals with the market organisation across the EU and identifies the key role that Producer Organisations (POs) play not only in the market but also the essential role they will play in ensuring that the objectives of the reformed CFP, including those in relation to conservation, are delivered. Under the COM it is envisaged that each PO will produce, on an annual or multi-annual basis, a production and marketing plan which sets out how they will achieve the objectives laid down in the revised COM that are in conformity with the revised CFP. The COM identifies that financial support may be available to POs to enable them to meet the new requirements but the detail and conditions of such support are not yet decided and will be covered under the EMFF. In order for the POs to play the key role envisaged in the COM and CFP, it is essential that the necessary financial support is provided otherwise one of the cornerstones in implementing the objectives of reformed CFP is doomed to failure even before it starts.

Important Dates April - June 2013

April 15	Extended Bureau EAPO	Webex
April 17-18	NWWRAC	Bilbao
April 19	Plenary ACFA	Brussels
April 19	Whitefish Quota Management	Dublin
April 22-23	AG and Fish Council	Luxembourg
April 24	Northern Pelagic Working Group	Amsterdam
April 25	PRAC WG1 & WG2	Amsterdam
April 26	Industry/Science Partnership	Dublin
May 8	EU/Norway WG Technical measures	Bergen
May 13-14	AG & Fish Council	Brussels
May 16	SFPA Consultative Committee	Galway
May 24	KFO AGM	Killybegs
May 31	IMSARC	Achill Island
June 10-14	Celtic Sea Advice Drafting Group (ICES)	Copenhagen
June 17	EP Fisheries Committee Deep-water Hearing	Brussels
June 24-25	AG & Fish Council	Luxembourg
June 28	Release ICES advice 2014 demersal and herring stocks	Copenhagen

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