



news

main news

Cod & Hake Recovery Plans

At the December 2000 Fisheries Council for the first time ever the Council of Ministers agreed that recovery plans for both cod and hake should be put in place. The KFO has been a big advocate of sensible recovery plans and fully supported the Minister in his efforts in getting the Council of Ministers to agree to the recovery plans. The Council agreement provided that the plans should include technical measures, effective and transparent control measures, provisions for further research and multi-annual procedures for setting TACs in future years. The agreement envisaged that appropriate emergency measures should be in place by March 2001, with specific control regulations before the end of March 2001, and proposals for multi-annual recovery plans by end of May 2001.

Since January, there have been a series of meetings with the Commission and the EU fishing industry on both the cod and hake recovery plans.

Cod Recovery Plan

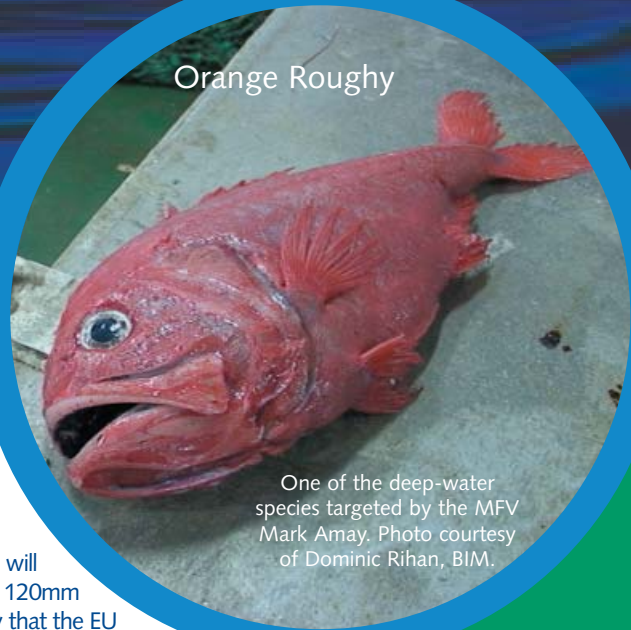
The emergency measures part of the cod recovery plan for both the North Sea and West of Scotland Area VIa have been agreed. The emergency measures cover closed areas for spawning cod and some additional control measures. Given that Ireland does not have a quota for cod in the North Sea, the West of Scotland closures are only of interest. A closure for the months of March and April 2001 of two areas West of Scotland is included in the Commission Regulation. One area is North of Scotland between the Western Isles and Orkney Islands, the second is the Clyde. No Irish demersal fishing vessels fish in these areas. The second phase of the recovery plan will involve technical conservation measures and a long-term five year plan. It is likely that a large

increase in mesh size will be proposed such as 120mm or 130mm. It is likely that the EU Commission will meet the fishing industry prior to making a proposal for Area VI. (A copy of Commission Regulation 456/2001 has already been circulated to members.)

Hake Recovery Plan

The EU Commission has not yet published its set of emergency measures for the hake recovery plan. A second draft proposal by the Commission was discussed at the meeting with EU fishing representatives on Wednesday 4th April. Some modifications to the proposal are envisaged, however it is likely that the bulk of it will remain as proposed. In summary, what is proposed is an increase in mesh size to 100mm for vessels targeting hake; the establishment of two boxes, one in the West and South of Ireland and one in the Bay of Biscay, where all towed demersal gear used will have to be 100mm. Within these two boxes, prawn areas have been identified where 80mm mesh can be used. Additional control measures are proposed such as four hours advance notification of landings when quantities on board are greater than 250kg of hake, and when landings are in excess of 500kgs of hake they will have to land into designated ports. Entry and exit notification into the boxes is also proposed. The Commission intends to put the regulation in place at the start of May 2001. Obviously, the fishermen will have to be given some time to change over gear if required. It should be noted that that mesh size increase to 100mm for hake and the advance notification applies to Area VI as well as Area VII, except Area VIIa and the English channel.

Orange Roughy



One of the deep-water species targeted by the MFV Mark Amay. Photo courtesy of Dominic Rihan, BIM.

Deepwater Species

As stocks and quotas of some traditional demersal fish continue to decline, deep-water species such as orange roughy, black scabbard, ling, tusk, grenadier, Greenland halibut, bluemouth and siki shark, are becoming increasingly important to the viability of certain polyvalent fishing vessels. Ireland has fished for these species over the years with limited success. At the Fisheries December 2000 Council meeting the Minister of the Marine Frank Fahey with the full backing of the Irish fishing industry was instrumental in scuttling proposals to put quotas on some deepwater species. Over the years a number of vessels, in conjunction with BIM and Marine Institute have taken part in exploratory trials for deep-water species. The MFV Mark Amay has been the most recent vessel to explore the deep-water species, and has had three successful trips to date. The KFO takes this opportunity to wish Sean and Pat Conneely, MFV Mark Amay, and others who explore the deep-water species continued success.



News in short



The MFV Heather Jane II and MFV Peadar Elaine II are the most recent vivier crab vessels to join the fleet.



Two New Vivier Crab Vessels

The MFV Heather Jane II and MFV Peadar Elaine II are the most recent vivier crab vessels to join the fleet and are owned by KFO members Hugh McBride and Peter McBride, respectively. These vessels are part of the Whitefish Renewal Scheme. They took delivery of the vessels in December and January, and to date they have performed very satisfactorily. The vessels have been fitted with a new automatic innovative pot hauling and handling/conveyor system designed by Peter and Hugh, based on their experience in the crab fishery. It is designed to reduce the intense labour involved in hauling, emptying, baiting and shooting the pots, and has proved to be very successful. The new system works as follows: the pots are automatically hauled through a hatch on the starboard side; they are then taken off the main leader and passed along a conveyor belt where the crab are removed and then the pots are freshly baited. The pots and the main leader are stored in bunkers ready for shooting.



Tenders sought for new Killybegs Quay

The KFO and local fish processors are working closely with the DOM&NR to get work on the new quay at Killybegs underway. Applications for planning permission and to the EPA licence were submitted on the 2nd February 2001. KFO understands that DOM&NR have sought tenders for the construction of the new quay and that it has been published in the EU Journal.

Seafarers Allowance

Despite the efforts of the four fishermen's representative Organisations, the Minister for the Marine and the Independent TDs, the Minister for Finance Charlie McCreevy has not included this allowance for fishermen in the Finance Bill. Given its importance to the fishing industry the KFO intends to continue its campaign for such an allowance.

New KFO Catch Plans

Under the new Common Organisation of the Markets Regulation, the KFO is obliged to submit an Operational Programme/Catch Plan for species that represent a significant share of total production. The KFO has four species in this category: herring, mackerel, horse mackerel and blue whiting. In accordance with this regulation, catch plans have been drawn up for these species, to match supply with demand. The operational programme and catch plans have been submitted to the DOM&NR for approval.

In devising the plans the KFO have paid particular attention to market fluctuations and intend to use the carry-over scheme instead of the withdrawal scheme when fish does not attain the minimum price. Members are familiar with the withdrawal scheme. For the benefit of members it is worth outlining a brief description of the carry-over

scheme: Should a KFO members fish not attain the minimum price, as set by the EU, it is taken off the market. Under the carry-over scheme fish is then sent for processing, rather than fishmeal which happens with withdrawals. It must be stored for a minimum of five days, after processing. Once it had been decided that the fish should be carried over, the fish becomes the property of the KFO, who in turn have to pay the vessel that landed the fish and the processor who has processed it. When an opening occurs in the market, the fish is sold, and this is called a carry-over. Under the new Common Organisation of the Markets Regulation, the amount eligible for withdrawals has been reduced, but the amount eligible for carry-over has increased significantly and members are encouraged to use the carry-over scheme rather than withdrawals when there is a difficulty in the market.

Report on Training & Employment in the Seafood Industry launched

The Task Force on Training and Employment in the Irish Seafood Industry was set up in October 1999 to recommend initiatives to improve training and assist retention of workers in all sectors of the seafood industry. Research commissioned by the Task Force indicates that the catching, aquaculture and processing sectors have a combined labour shortfall of 2,200 workers.

The report contains a large number of recommendations (63) in total 40 of which relate directly to the catching sector. Some of the relevant catching sector recommendations are summarised below:

- * that the Government should simplify Work Permit procedures to facilitate a structured intake of non-national workers and provide induction training where necessary;
- * radical changes to the tax and social welfare status of fishermen;
- * the introduction of a series of measures to assist young skippers acquire their first vessel;
- * continuing renewal and modernisation of the fleet to improve safety standards as well as strengthening of the occupational health and safety legislation;
- * a series of enhanced training initiatives and fast-tracking of a number of qualifications.

The report highlights the need for the establishment of an Implementation Committee to review progress in delivering the Task Force recommendations. This is an issue the KFO will pursue with the Minister for the Marine & Natural Resources.

● Fahey to take action on Trawler Safety

Frank Fahey, Minister for the Marine and Natural Resources, has announced that new legislation will be introduced to enforce mandatory safety training for fishermen in Ireland. This initiative will also include new statutory measures requiring fishermen to wear suitable personal flotation devices. The KFO in welcoming the Ministers initiative said "that it was imperative that the fishing industry were fully consulted, particularly as regards the type of personal flotation devices which must be capable of being easily worn by the crew on board and still be effective as a flotation device."

Minister Fahey said, "I believe that the time has now come and that the capacity is in place to introduce mandatory safety training for the fishing industry. Such training would be designed to ensure that the maximum number of fishermen have access to, and avail of, basic safety training; it is particularly important that training is provided for man overboard situations." At present, it is a statutory requirement to carry sufficient numbers of lifejackets, but wearing them is not a requirement.

● Productive Sector OP

The KFO is anxiously waiting for the Minister for the Marine to announce schemes for grant aid for Fisheries Development in the National Plan 2000-2006. £45m in National and EU support is earmarked for fleet development, supporting measures (e.g. quality initiatives and e-commerce) and decommissioning.

North West Pelagic Management Advisory Committee

The North West Pelagic Management Advisory Committee has been convened by the Minister for Marine and Natural Resources, following a recommendation by Padraic White, Chairman of the North West Pelagic Group. The Committee's remit is to manage and develop the pelagic fisheries in a sustainable way that will utilise the national quota to the optimal for both fishermen and processors. The Committee consists of six persons three from the catching side and three for the processing side. At its inaugural meeting on 19th January 2001, Sean O'Donoghue CEO of the KFO was elected Chairman. The Committee has met five times since that date, and has made a number of recommendations to the Department of Marine and Natural Resources covering both catching and processing issues.

Blue Whiting

International Scene

The recent negotiations of NEAFC (North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission) working group broke down without agreement on the share out of a TAC between the relevant contracting parties: EU, Norway, Iceland, Faeroes and others. As a result, the EU is the only relevant party which has set a TAC in its waters which also covers the international waters. Norway has indicated that it has set itself an international zone TAC of 225,000 tonnes. This situation is totally unacceptable and given that the scientific advice is recommending a 50% cut in the overall TAC there is an urgent need for action. The KFO is liaising very closely with the DOM&NR on this issue.

Domestic Scene

At national level, the KFO through the North West Pelagic Management Advisory Committee, is determined to develop blue whiting for the consumer market. A start on this has recently commenced with approximately 200 tonnes processed for the consumer market. The KFO is working closely with BIM and the processors on continuing this development of the consumer market for blue whiting and is confident that it can be achieved.



Kevin McCloskey

KFO Member Kevin McCloskey, MFV Pilgrim Light, writes . . .

I have been fishing since my early teens and have fished on different vessels, big and small, for various species. Fishing by its very nature involves trying out new grounds from time to time, and to a certain extent its a leap into the unknown. When asked to attend a meeting on the cod recovery plans for Area VI in Brussels on the 12th November 2000, I thought, another leap into the unknown and another new fishing ground ... there's a lot of fish to be "caught" in Brussels if you play your cards right. As a fisherman, like the rest of you, I was never too bothered about how quotas were split or how decisions were made, as long as I had fish to catch. This is changing however, and fishermen need to be more involved in the decision making. With this in mind, I decided to take the opportunity to attend this meeting in Brussels.

While I, and probably most of you, often felt that our representatives in Brussels were there to have a good time, thinking little about the fishermen they represent, I can assure you this is far from reality. I quickly forgot any thoughts of sight-seeing in Brussels! After landing, I got the bus directly to the Commission building, where the meeting was being held. Security was tight. It was quite daunting entering the meeting room to see the number of people attending and speaking different languages. It was interesting to say the least, to hear the views of the representatives and how each view expressed would affect the other countries. This was certainly new ground for me — quotas, fishing rights, entitlements, conservation, etc — with each country looking after the interests of their fishermen. Some Member States were quite difficult on particular issues, which we refer to as "fasts." While we can avoid "fasts" on the fishing grounds, these difficulties have to be sorted out to everyone's satisfaction, which is not an easy task. It was here that I realised and appreciated some of the difficulties that our representatives experience on an ongoing basis while looking after our interests.

I will finish by saying that, while fishing, I have a plotter and radar to guide me to the grounds where I am likely to have good fishing. In this arena there are no such instruments and one has to rely on experience and knowledge of the bureaucracy of the EU. The next time I haul the net I will remember my experience and spare a thought for those negotiating on my behalf in Brussels.

Editorial



by Sean O'Donoghue

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, KFO

This KFO newsletter idea, which started at the end of last year, has been very well received by members. To be honest, I was surprised at the number of members who reacted so positively to it and praised its simple, informative and not too detailed format. This issue is set out in the same format as the previous one, and I hope it will be useful to our members.

It is normal in the fishing industry, at EU and National level, that the first couple of months of the year are not as busy as the October to December period. This however was not the case this year as a series of meetings at both EU and National levels were necessary to discuss the cod and hake recovery plans. In addition, on the pelagic side, the newly formed North West Pelagic Management Advisory Committee has been very active.

The cod and hake recovery plans are now underway. The KFO has more than once advocated for such plans instead of annual exercises every December of continuing to cut TACs. It is very important that these plans are sensible, have the backing of the industry and take into account social and economic effects of measures proposed. Certainly in the North West, every demersal fisherman you talk to is looking for some form of a recovery plan, as the stocks of the traditional whitefish species are seriously depleted.

The "Green Paper on the Future of the Common Fisheries Policy" has just been published by the EU Commission. The Paper is the fore-runner to the Commission's proposal on the Review of the Common Fisheries Policy due at the end of the year. The existing CFP expires at the end of 2002. The Green Paper covers a number of areas that the Irish Strategy Review Group had in its report. The Review of the CFP affords Ireland an opportunity to try and rectify some of the imbalances in the policy, and put us on a level playing field with a number of Member States, thus ensuring a viable and sustainable Irish fishing industry. The Green Paper

will stimulate a wide ranging debate and the work done by the Irish Strategy Review Group will stand in good stead.

Safety at sea is of paramount importance to the KFO and it fully endorses Minister Fahey's proposed legislative changes, and is ready to participate in any consultative process which he intends to put in place.

As Chairman of the North West Pelagic Management Advisory Committee, I am pleased that the Committee is working very well and is addressing some of the key issues, such as mackerel yearly allocations, herring stock decline in Areas VIa and VIIbc, processing requirements and administrative sanctions and penalties. To date, a number of recommendations have been made to DOM&NR and it is hoped that they will be acted upon quickly.

It is very disappointing that the Finance Bill did not include any of the industry proposals on taxation and social welfare issues. However, Rome was not built in a day, and the KFO will continue to pursue these issues.

The KFO has continued over the last number of months to bring forward new initiatives and ideas, such as articles by members, which will benefit the organisation. Some of these you will see in this newsletter, others which are in the pipeline, will be covered in future issues of the newsletter.



Members news

AGM

The KFO will hold its Annual General Meeting on Friday 25th May 2001 at 2.00pm in Bruach na Mara. Members are asked to arrive on time, as there are a number of important issues on the agenda. Members will be notified in writing shortly.

Insurance for Fishermen

The KFO believes all fishermen should provide for their future through personal insurance, which would provide an income in the event that they are unable to fish. To this end the KFO, in association with an insurance company, is endeavouring to put in place a range of products which fishermen can avail of to provide a secure future for themselves and their families. As details are available, members will be notified.

Development at KFO

The KFO is examining the possibility of developing the large attic space in 'Bruach na Mara,' into two or three offices, as well as a site owned by the KFO adjacent to the premises, into apartments. This is still at an early stage and members will be kept informed of progress.

Local Fuel Store Examined

The recent fuel crisis is fresh in the memories of all fishermen, due to its dramatic impact on earnings. During that time, the KFO investigated ways to get cheaper fuel for its members through bulk buying and installing short-term storage tanks on a nearby site. While the short-term storage tanks proved too costly, the KFO is pursuing the possibility of installing permanent storage tanks, with a long term view to provide cheaper fuel and to safe-guard, to a certain extent, KFO members against future fuel price fluctuations.

Admiralty Charts for Sale

The KFO stocks a full range of sailing and admiralty charts which have proved popular over the years. The KFO also stocks dividers, parallel rulers, tide-tables, and a range of nautical almanacs. If you need any of these items give us a call.

KFO Website

Work on the new KFO website is well underway, and it is expected to be 'live' shortly after Easter. It will feature lots of useful information, the latest news on KFO activities, as well as relevant issues arising at an EU and National level.
The address is www.kfo.ie

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