

Editorial

by Sean O'Donoghue

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, KFO



The Commission finally published its reform proposals for the Common Fisheries Policy (see page 2) at the end of May. A number of key proposals on fleet policy, access arrangements including the Irish Box and social and economic aspects, are totally unacceptable, and will if agreed ultimately lead to the demise of the Irish fishing industry. The jury is still out on relative stability (the share of the resource cake Ireland is allowed) until the precise details are published. Some elements of the proposals are welcome, such as technical conservation measures, the Regional Advisory Councils and control and enforcement elements. As mentioned in previous newsletters, the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy is of vital importance to the sustainable development of the Irish fishing industry and members can be assured that the KFO will leave no stone unturned in trying to get a better deal for Ireland. This is our number one priority over the remainder of this year and probably next year, should the proposal not be agreed.

The Fisheries Council in Luxembourg agreed to set TAC and Quotas for eight deepwater species (see story page 1). Ireland obtained a reasonable percentage share for three out of the four species of importance to Ireland. The KFO is satisfied that the deepwater vessels have a future given the outcome, and that a significant number of species remain unallocated. It is likely that the effort regulation which was running in parallel with the TACs and Quotas proposal will be agreed in its present form and be published probably in conjunction with TACs and Quotas.

After a long wait, the second phase of the Whitefish Fleet Renewal Programme was launched in Galway on the 28th May. The Programme is a carefully crafted scheme by BIM ensuring there is no increase in fishing effort. Hopefully all the successful applicants

can now move ahead quickly and that BIM will pursue the implementation with the same vigour as the first scheme. The only disappointing aspect of the Programme was the non-adherence to the customer service guarantee as regards the announcement of successful applicants, which should have happened in early January 2002.

The marine industry was extremely annoyed and upset at the perceived downgrading by the Taoiseach of the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources by its omission from the title of the new Department of Communications and Natural Resources. It is fair to say that the KFO was at the forefront in lobbying for its inclusion in the title and in seeking a Cabinet Minister to deal directly with marine matters. Given the crucial CFP negotiations that lie ahead and that the agreed Programme for Government between Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats had identified the key priorities for Marine and Natural Resources, it was incredible that Marine should be downgraded. Happily, the situation was reversed and time will tell whether or not Minister Dermot Ahern can devote the necessary time to marine issues given his enormous portfolio. Based on his performance in Luxembourg on deepwater species, I am satisfied that he can deliver on the CFP reforms provided he has the time to do so.

Finally, I hope the members find this issue of the KFO news interesting and of benefit. Any suggestions for improvements, subjects or articles are more than welcome.

Harbour Development

This development has finally got underway and the contract commencement date was the 15th April 2002. The main contractor is "John Mowlem Construction Ltd" and the dredging contractor is "Irish Dredging Company Ltd". The forecast completion date is 8th February 2004, a contract duration of 95 weeks. The new quay will be 450m long. 150m of berth will be dredged to 9.0m chart datum and the remaining 300m will be dredged to 12.0m chart datum. Construction of the Harbour Administration Building is due to commence before the end of 2002. The current roadworks on the Shore Road and Shore Road/Main Street junction are due to be completed by the first 9 weeks of the contract.

KFO

Members news

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The KFO held its AGM on the 31st May 2002. The meeting was well attended and the members were happy with the operation of the KFO and considered they were well represented on issues of importance to them during 2001. Immediately after the AGM, a Special General Meeting was held to consider changes to the rules of the organisation. These rules were drawn up with a view to being more applicable to a modern producer organisation, and the members unanimously approved them.

NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS AT KFO

Following the KFO's Annual General Meeting on the 31st May 2002, a Board meeting was held on the 7th June to elect a Chairman and Vice Chairman and to co-opt Directors to the Board. The Board of Directors for this year is as follows:

- Kevin Mc Closkey, Chairman
- Teddy O'Shea, Vice Chairman
- Cathal Boyle
- Michael Callaghan
- Declan Doogan
- Martin Howley
- Hugh Mc Bride
- Eamonn Mc Hugh
- Paddy O'Malley

SECTORAL COMMITTEES PROVIDE VALUABLE OPPORTUNITY FOR DISCUSSION

Since the three Sectoral Committees were established within the organisation, each has had at least one meeting. These have proven very successful, giving fishermen time to discuss in detail issues relevant to their respective sector. Given that the Committees discuss the specific issues pertaining to each sector, this negates the need for long agendas at Board Meetings and at the Annual General Meeting. Members who wish to have matters discussed at Committee level, should contact the Chairman or a member of the relevant Sectoral Committee, or the KFO Executive.

BRUACH NA MARA TO UNDERGO MAJOR RENOVATIONS

The KFO has lodged a planning application with Donegal County Council to carry out major renovations at its Head Office in Bruach na Mara. The proposals involve extending parts of the building, significantly upgrading the three floors in the existing building, and providing a state-of-the-art meeting room. Given the extensive nature of the renovations it is hoped to complete all works for the AGM in 2003.



Pictured at the Whitefish Fleet Renewal Grant Aid announcement were, from left Michael Keating, Fisheries Development Manager BIM, Sean O'Donoghue Chief Executive KFO and Kevin McCloskey, Chairman KFO.

TACs and Quotas Agreed for Eight Deepwater Species

At the Fisheries Council in Luxembourg on the 11th June, TACs (Total Allowable Catches) and Quotas were agreed for eight deepwater species, including: Orange Roughy, Roundnose Grenadier, Ling, Blue Ling, Tusk, Black Scabbard Fish, Argentines and Red Seabream. Prior to the Fisheries Council the KFO was very active in discussions with newly appointed Minister Dermot Ahern and Department of Marine officials. Even though the KFO is still against TACs and Quotas as the appropriate management regime for the sustainability of these stocks, it was determined that Ireland should get a fair and equitable share should the Council proceed with the adoption of TACs and Quotas.

In the end, the Council did agree on TACs and Quotas for eight species and Ireland has obtained a reasonable share for three of the four species which were of importance. The table below shows that Ireland obtained 22 per cent of the Orange Roughy; 7 per cent Argentines; 7.4 per cent

Ling and 3 per cent Black Scabbard Fish. Of these four species, the allocation for Black Scabbard is the most disappointing. A number of species were deleted from the list such as Sharks, Alfonsina and Forkbeards.

The effort proposal published in March 2002 is likely to be agreed as published with some minor modifications. The KFO can support the effort proposal.

It should be noted that a large number of commercial deepwater species still remain unallocated. Combining this with the outcome at the Council (including declaration on allocations in the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission area), Ireland can remain as a significant player in the deepwater fishery.

Species	ICES Area	TAC Tonnes	Ireland Quota	% Share Ireland
Black Scabbard	V, VI, VII, XII	3110	93	2.99
Argentines	V, VI, VII	6247	441	7
Tusk	V, VI, VII	710	40	5.60
Roundnose Grenadier	Vb, VI, VII	5160	346	6.80
Orange Roughy	VI	88	10	11.40
Orange Roughy	VII	1349	300	22
Blue Ling	II, IV, V	138	10	7.20
Blue Ling	VI, VII	3678	10	0.30
Ling	VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	14966	1102	7.40
Red Seabream	VI, VII, VIII	525	10	1.90
Totals		35,971	2,362	6.6

TEN KFO SKIPPERS APPROVED FOR NEW, MODERNISED VESSELS

In one of the final announcements by outgoing Minister for the Marine and Natural Resources, Frank Fahey, TD, five KFO skippers received approval for funding of up to 40 per cent, for new vessels under the Government's Fleet Development Measure. In an earlier announcement, one modern second-hand vessel was approved under the Young Skippers Scheme, as well as an additional four vessel modernisations for KFO members. The total investment by KFO skippers in the new, second-hand and modernised vessels is estimated at €18.5 million.

"These vessels will enable our members to meet the challenge of fleet renewal head on, and to secure safety, sustainability and competitiveness, into the future," said Sean O'Donoghue, Chief Executive, KFO. He added "The scheme is a carefully crafted plan by BIM that will not increase fishing effort as the new vessels entering the fleet will be balanced by an equal withdrawal of older, uneconomic and less safe vessels on a ton-for-ton basis."

KFO Vessels	
New Vessels	Length (OA) (m)
Patrick O'Malley	45.7
Cathal Boyle	38.0
Cyril Harkin	33.0
Kevin McCloskey	11.9
Eddie Doherty	11.7
Modernisations	Length (OA) (m)
Barry Faulkner	19.4
Michael Faherty	22.2
Michael Faherty	16.5
Cathal Gillen	18.6
Young Skipper	Length (OA) (m)
Patrick Cavanagh	18.3



News in short

Quality System under development for RSW Pelagic Vessels

The pelagic fishery is undoubtedly one of the most important industries in the Northwest, accounting for the majority of Irish pelagic exports, worth €170 million in 2001. Despite its huge importance and the fact that the latest technology is used in catching, handling and storing fish, there is no system in place whereby quality standards can be objectively assessed and there is no transparent system to critically assess the quality of fish landed.



In recognition of this the KFO, North West Pelagic Management Advisory Committee and BIM are currently putting together a two-year project to develop and implement a quality system for the Northwest RSW pelagic vessels, initially focussing on mackerel, herring, and scad.

Year One of the project (September 2002 – April 2003) will focus on developing quality and size grading, assessing factors effecting quality, landing and transport, and deciding on the required standards for markets. It is envisaged that a small number of RSW vessels will participate in this phase.

Year Two (September 2003 - April 2004) will involve the implementation of a defined quality system based on the experience gained in year one for all RSW vessels and processors that have agreed to participate in the project.

The success of the project will depend on industry co-operation. In order to try and achieve optimum co-operation BIM will discuss, explain and seek advice from the industry over the coming months in finalising the proposed project.

Competitive Vessel Insurance and Oil Storage Facilities investigated by KFO

The KFO is exploring the possibility of getting competitive quotations from insurance companies for vessel insurance, and is approaching a number of insurance companies on this issue. The KFO is confident it can progress the matter in the interest of its members.

On the issue of oil storage, the KFO is continuing to assess the possibility of providing oil storage facilities in Killybegs. It is hoped that the Organisation will be in a position to decide whether such a project is viable before the end of 2002.

Directors of KFO to brief new Minister

The KFO will host a lunch for the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources before the opening ceremony of Fish Ireland 2002. This will represent an important opportunity for the Directors of the KFO to meet with the newly appointed Minister, Dermot Ahern, and brief him on the main issues affecting the fishing industry.

Results of new mackerel egg survey may boost annual biomass estimates

The Marine Institute in conjunction with the KFO and the North West Pelagic Management Advisory Committee have just completed a pilot egg and larval survey off the west coasts of Ireland and Scotland. The MFV Atlantean, which was chartered for the survey, has covered extensive grounds including the Porcupine, Rockall and Hatton Banks, the Rockall Trough and north to Faroese waters, to sample the eggs and larvae of mackerel and horse mackerel. The aim of this survey was to evaluate the distribution of mackerel and horse mackerel eggs and larvae which may exist outside recognised spawning areas. In order to make data comparable to last year's ICES survey results, plankton samples were collected at over 170 stations which run along East/West transects in accordance with the ICES international mackerel egg survey protocols. In addition to plankton samples, hydrographical

data was collected. Preliminary sample analysis on board the vessel indicated that concentrations of mackerel eggs were elevated on the shelf, but rapidly decreased to zero values off the shelf edge. Eggs found at stations close to the Anton Dohrn sea mount indicated some mackerel spawning activity outside the recognised spawning grounds, while on the Rockall Bank and Hatton Bank only single mackerel eggs and larvae were found at a few stations. Some mackerel eggs and larvae were also found south of the Faroese Isles close to the Faroese bank and west of the Shetland Islands, but numbers were low in comparison to the high concentrations usually encountered on the shelf edge in the ICES standard area. Full analysis of samples in the laboratory will reveal whether the numbers of eggs found on this survey contribute significantly to the annual egg production and thus affect the estimate of the mackerel and horse mackerel biomass.

Pic: Plankton sampler on board the MFV Atlantean used during the recent mackerel egg survey

Commission Sets Out Common Fisheries Policy Reform Proposals

After a number of abortive attempts, the Commission finally published its proposals for the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy on the 28th May. The proposals involve six separate documents covering a road-map for the reform process, the main framework CFP regulation, community measures for scrapping fishing vessels, rules governing financial aid to the fisheries sector, an action plan to integrate environmental protection into the CFP and an action plan to eradicate illegal unreported and unregulated fishing. Further Commission documents are due to be published over the next six months dealing with structural economic and social measures, conservation, including improvement of scientific advice for fisheries management, international aspects, control and enforcement, aquaculture and governance.

Under the current Common Fisheries Policy established in 1983 a major review is foreseen by the end of 2002. The proposals now on the table by the Commission are intended to be the Commission's action programme for reform of the CFP and to meet its obligation under the CFP legislation.

It is worth highlighting a number of key issues in the Commissions proposals which are of vital concern to the future sustainability of Ireland's fishing industry:

1. Access

The Commission is proposing maintaining the current arrangements for the six- and twelve-mile limits. It does not specifically mention the Irish Box, however that will go, unless Ireland can show that it is a needed for conservation purposes and sustainable exploitation.

2. Relative Stability

The Commission is proposing maintaining the principle of relative stability and that the method of allocation, including the Hague Preferences, be decided by Council. Until the precise detail of this is known it is not possible to assess the affect, if any, on Ireland's share of the resource.

3. Fleet

The Commission is proposing fixing the reference capacity (GT & kW) for Member States based on MAGP IV objectives at the end of 2002 and having an entry/exit ratio for vessels of one to one. In addition, it is proposing large fishing effort (days at sea) limitations. Even though decommissioning is not compulsory in the proposal, the effect of such effort limitations on Ireland's fleet would ultimately lead to scrapping 411 vessels or over 15,300 GT, as shown in the Commission's document.

4. Financial Support

It is proposed to increase premiums for scrapping vessels and to stop public aid for new, second-hand vessels or modernisations.

5. Control and Enforcement

It is proposed to create a joint fisheries inspection structure involving the operation of multinational inspection teams in both Community and International waters. A range of other actions are envisaged, such as specific monitoring programmes for fisheries subject to recovery plans, a code of conduct for inspections, deployment of observers on board fishing vessels, electronic logbooks and uniform rules for enforcement including levels for sanctions.

It is likely given the enormity of the task and the major difficulties with some of the Commission's reform proposals that the debate at Council will continue into next year before final agreement can be reached.

EU Proposes Multi-Annual Recovery Plans for Cod and Hake

The EU Commission has tabled a proposal, that provides for a multi-annual recovery plan for the stocks of cod and hake which include the following:

(1) The setting of biological targets for the recovery of the stocks concerned.

The objective of the recovery plan is to rebuild the quantities in tonnes of mature fish in the sea, to values equal to or greater than 22,000 tonnes of cod in the west of Scotland and 165,000 tonnes of hake in the northern area.

(2) A procedure for setting annual total allowable catches (TACs) for these stocks.

It is proposed that each year the TAC be set at a level that will give a high probability that the overall stock size will increase by 30 per cent in the case of cod, and 15 per cent in the case of hake.

(3) A system for limiting fishing effort (or time spent by a vessel at sea) in respect of all fishing vessels likely to catch cod and/or hake.

It is proposed that vessels will be allocated effort based on their fishing activities in a reference period 1998-2000. If a vessel on average landed over 100 tonnes of cod and/or hake during this period, it will be subject to the full reduction of effort (i.e. a 50 per cent reduction in certain cases) vessels landing less are subject to effort reduction to a lesser extent. If a vessel did not land cod or hake during 1998-2000 it may be excluded from fishing these species in the future under this effort regime.

(4) Special conditions for the monitoring and control of vessels engaged in these fisheries.

Among the monitoring conditions proposed are obligations that: vessels over 15m in length carry satellite monitoring systems;

special reporting requirements apply for other vessels; catches over a certain quantity are landed in designated ports; and conditions for the weighing and transport of landed cod and/or hake are introduced.

(5) Amendment of the rules for Community financial aid to the fisheries sector.

The Commission proposes that an additional incentive be provided to scrap vessels fishing these stocks, by increasing the maximum level for scrapping by 20 per cent. It is proposed to relax conditions for co-financing of national aid for temporary laying-up of vessels before decommissioning. The conditions for granting aid to vessels undergoing modernisations are made more restrictive. No additional EU funding is provided.

(6) Closure of fishing grounds temporarily.

This procedure allows for the rapid temporary closure of areas where there are unpredictable accumulations of juvenile cod or hake. The maximum duration of any closure envisaged is two months and the geographical area would be limited.

The long term cod and hake recovery plan has huge negative implications for the Irish polyvalent fleet particularly if the effort limitation as proposed is agreed. Even though no direct link exists between this proposal and the Commission's proposals on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (see article page 2), it is obvious that they are closely related and must be monitored very closely, as agreement on the longterm cod and hake recovery plan would set the scene for the reform proposals.

Ashore Vs At Sea: A Perspective by Martin Howley



Martin Howley

The question I am most often asked is, do you still miss the fishing? And after more than three years ashore, I am still not sure of the answer. I suppose you can miss different things for different reasons, like you miss a toothache for the pain it gives or something else more pleasant for the joy it brings. I think my answer lies somewhere in the middle of the two.

I decided about three years ago to hang up the boots, and join the land lovers on what seemed at the time, a much handier job than going to sea. After 25 years of good, bad and sometimes indifferent fishing that had taken me from the North of Iceland to the Bay of Biscay, I thought I would not miss the sea. That certainly was not the case. When you spend the best years of your life in any job it has to become part of you, and this is certainly the case with fishing. You become part of a small community, firstly with your own crewmates, and secondly with the other people involved in the industry.

When you think back you always remember the good times, the good bags, fine weather and big prices. The bad times are hazy memories. In reality there was more bad times than good. The terrible weather where you dodged for four or five days in the North Sea and when the weather settled the fish were back five miles inside the Norwegian sector or after punching into a storm for three days to arrive home with fish that were only fit for fishmeal. However in the spirit of fishing, as soon as the bad trip was over, everyone tackled the next trip with renewed vigour.

The most difficult times to pick yourself up and start again was after the many tragedies that happened while I was at sea. In most of the cases I knew the people involved and indeed some were personal friends, and I remember having second thoughts about the job on more than one occasion.

To come ashore and join the nine-to-five brigade looked very attractive and I thought it would be very nice to be able to plan ahead, do normal things, like attend funerals, weddings and other social events that always seemed to clash with the best fishing

times. My own family had grown up, and I had managed to attend only a hand-full of Christenings, Communions and Confirmations. This was pretty normal at that time.

I suppose I was lucky when I came ashore that I had a job that was closely linked to the industry. This meant I was still in contact with most of the people I knew, and worked with at sea. That certainly helped, however I would not be telling the truth if I said I did not feel at a bit of a loose end, particularly when you are left standing on the pier at midnight and the last boat is passing the Smooth Point. Similarly, when you hear the reports from the boats of good marks and big hauls, sitting behind a desk can feel a bit mundane or even boring.

After the first year or so it gets easier your routine changes and you almost become a land lover. You even start to think like one; things like going to bed and getting up at a reasonable times become a way of life and you stop listening and looking at every forecast and weather chart available. Still, when the alarm clocks rings in the morning, it sometimes takes a few seconds to realise to your disappointment that its not the bell for shooting or hauling. Just time to hit the road for another day of something similar to the one past. This was never the case at sea as each day brought something new, let it be bad or good, at least it was different.

As I said earlier, I am lucky with the job I do in Swan Net and since our merger with Gundry's earlier this year things have been pretty hectic for everyone involved. It has been a very exiting venture, and I believe it will help the company, employees and the customer. I am happy that we have managed to achieve this and bring things this far.

I still spend quite a lot of my time away from home and my wife says she saw more of me when I was fishing! I don't think this is the case, however as I have not done the comparison I am not in position to prove her wrong.

Getting back to the original question -- do I miss fishing? -- I think I have talked myself into admitting that I do. Would I go back again? Not unless the crew guarantees me at least six to seven hours sleep a night, the weather stays good and the "Cold Coast of Greenland stays far, far away".