



news



Significant increase of 30% in whitefish quotas for North West fisheries Chaos avoided with workable solution found for 'Landing Obligation'

The Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation has acknowledged the outcome of the Council of Fisheries Ministers, which finished early on Wednesday, December 19, as generally positive in the circumstances with a workable solution adopted to the landing obligation thus avoiding the potential for early closures of a large number of fisheries. Despite the concerns surrounding the Brexit threat there is certainty and confidence to be had in the negotiated TACs and Quotas being maintained for the full calendar year in 2019.

The EU Commission issued a proposal for a Council Regulation on the 7th of November last detailing fishing opportunities for 2019 (COM(2018) 732). This document forms the basis of how the fishing industry will access fish stocks for the year 2019 and so, give or take those amendments which were issued in the following weeks, by the time the Fisheries Council takes place in December Ireland usually has a fairly accurate picture of expectations for the coming year. This year was not so clear cut with a combination of circumstances

PELAGIC QUOTAS 2019

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2018 (t)	Quota 2019 (t)	Diff. %
Mackerel ¹	6, 7	69,141	55,313	-20%
H. Mackerel ²	2a, 4a, 6, 7a-c, 7e-k, 8a,b,e	25,625	30,306	18%
H. Mackerel ³	4b, 4c & 7d	376	376	0%
Blue Whiting ⁴	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8a,b,d,e, 12,14	47,451	37,800	-20%
Herring ⁵	1, 2	2,512	3,399	35%
Herring ⁶	6aN	630	630	0%
Herring ⁷	6aS, 7bc	1,482	1,482	0%
Herring	7a	1,826	1,795	-2%
Herring	7 ghjk	8,748	4,097	-53%
Tuna ⁸	north.atl	2,845	2,869	1%
Argentines	3, 4	8	8	0%
Argentines	5, 6, 7	329	329	0%
Boar Fish	6, 7, 8	14,084	15,086	7%
Total		175,060	153,490	-12%

Footnotes for 2019 pelagic quotas

- 33,383 tonnes of the mackerel quota may be fished EU waters 2a; EU & Norwegian waters of 4a during the periods from January 1 to February 15, 2019 and from September 1 to December 31, 2019. 4,507 tonnes of the quota may be fished in Norwegian waters of 2a & 4,585 tonnes in Faroese waters.
- 5 per cent of this horse mackerel quota fished in division 2a or 4a before June 30, 2019 may be accounted for as fished under the quota. concerning the zone of Union waters of 4b, 4c and 7d. Catches of boarfish, haddock, whiting and mackerel may be counted against up to 5 per cent of this horse mackerel quota, provided that not more than 9 per cent in total of this quota for horse mackerel is accounted for by these catches and by-catches of those species.
- Catches of boarfish, whiting, haddock and mackerel may be counted against up to 5 per cent of this horse mackerel quota, provided that not more than 9 per cent in total of this quota for

horse mackerel is accounted for by these catches and by-catches of those species.

- Within a total access quantity of 21,500 tonnes for the EU, Ireland may fish up to 9.2 per cent of their quota in Faroese waters.
- EU vessels have access to 25,487 herring tonnes in Norwegian waters north of 62° and the fishery zone around Jan Mayen. Ireland has access to 399 tonnes herring 2, 5b north of 62° N (Faroese waters).
- It shall be prohibited to target any herring in the part of the ICES zones subject to this TAC that lies between 56° N and 57° 30' N with the exception of a six nautical miles measured from the baseline of the United Kingdom's territorial sea.
- Reference is to the herring stock in 6a south of 56° 00' N and west of 07° 00' W.
- Ireland has a maximum of 50 licences.

DEMERSAL IRISH QUOTAS 2019

AREA 6 WHITEFISH STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2018 (t)	Quota 2019 (t)	Diff.%
Cod ¹	6a	0	385	%
Cod	6b	16	16	0%
Megrim	6	704	749	6%
Monkfish ²	6	918	1145	25%
Haddock ³	5b, 6a	762	528	-31%
Haddock	6b, 12, 14	429	824	92%
Whiting ¹	6	64	324	406%
Plaice	6	261	261	0%
Pollock	6	56	56	0%
Saithe	6	428	455	6%
Sole	6	46	46	0%
Nephrops	6	164	204	24%
Total		3,848	4,993	30%

Footnotes for 2019 Area 6 whitefish quotas

- Exclusively for by-catches. No directed fisheries are permitted under this quota.

2. 5 per cent of this quota may be used in 2a, 4.

3. Not more than 10 per cent of this haddock quota may be fished in 4; Union waters of 2a.

never experienced previously creating a huge level of uncertainty, mostly due to the continued but unresolved negotiations between the UK and EU the regarding Brexit and the full implementation of the Landings Obligation.

The reductions in the pelagic quotas are disappointing but were flagged up from earlier in the year when ICES issued its advice for 2019. The reduction in blue whiting is based on the long-term management strategy for this stock and though the stock is in a healthy state, catches have exceeded advice in recent years which may lead to a decline in future years. The 20 per cent reduction in mackerel is as a result of an ICES miscalculation when issuing advice; there will be a review of this advice early in 2019 and a reversal of this drastic cut should be made.

Pelagic Quotas 2019

As already referred to previously, there has been a 20 per cent drop in mackerel quota which, following a similar reduction last year, is a further substantial loss to the pelagic fleet. Once again this has been as a result of inappropriate advice from ICES and hopefully will be addressed in 2019 and adjusted upwards. There has also been a 20 per cent drop in blue whiting quota; this was expected as part of the management plan though the stock is in a healthy state. On a positive note, there has been an increase of 18 per cent for horse mackerel and a very substantial increase of 35 per cent for Atlanto-Scandian herring. Boarfish is increased by 7 per cent and, with the exception of a very large decrease for Celtic Sea herring, all other pelagic fisheries are holding steady.

Whitefish Quotas 2019

There was a high level of apprehension on the run-in to the Fisheries Council this year as it was very difficult to predict what effect the Landing Obligation would have on the setting of quotas. There was a fear that the "choke species" effect could make any quota irrelevant as fishing would be dependant on the lowest common denominator or once the lowest quota was caught all other fishing could be suspended. The Council has adopted a sensible approach to prevent this happening by establishing by-catch pools of quota for the most affected species which can be accessed by swap, by the countries concerned as needed. Assuming this strategy works effectively, Area 6 will see 25 per cent monkfish increase, megrim and saithe up 6 per cent, Nephrops up 24 per cent and a huge 92 per cent increase for haddock. This is balanced by a haddock decrease of 31 percent in 5b,6a.

In Area 7, cod (16 per cent), megrim (47 per cent), plaice (19 per cent) and haddock (20 per cent) are all increased as is hake (28 per cent). The proposed 32 per cent reduction in Nephrops has been confirmed despite hopes of a less severe reduction.

Deepwater Quotas 2019

Deepwater quotas are set biennially; 2019 is year one of this setting of quota. There is a steady decline in available quota for these stocks, but Ireland does not have a direct interest in them and their value remains their availability for "swapping" regarding other species.

Finally, a word of thanks to Minister Creed and his team, BIM, the Marine Institute and to all the officials for their efforts before and during Council and for fully engaging with the industry in addressing our concerns.

AREA 7 WHITEFISH STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2018 (t)	Quota 2019 (t)	Diff. %
Cod ¹	7a	458	532	16%
Cod ¹	7 b-k	757	650	-14%
Megrim ²	7	2,038	3001	47%
Monkfish ³	7	2,540	2501	-2%
Haddock	7 b-k	1,536	1847	20%
Haddock	7a	1,388	1619	17%
Whiting ¹	7a	46	419	811%
Whiting	7b-k	6,176	5334	-14%
Plaice	7a	1,255	1499	19%
Plaice	7 bc	63	63	0%
Plaice	7 fg	204	240	18%
Plaice ¹	7 hjk	56	47	-16%
Pollock ⁴	7	929	929	0%
Saithe	7	1,492	1492	0%
Sole ⁶	7a	17	84	394%
Sole	7 bc	36	36	0%
Sole	7 fg	29	26	-10%
Sole	7 hjk	171	171	0%
Nephrops	7	10,729	7296	-32%
Nephrops ⁵	7 Functional Unit 16	992	959	-3%
Total		29,920	27,786	-7%

AREA 6, 7 AND OTHER WHITEFISH STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2018 (t)	Quota 2019 (t)	Diff. %
Cod	1,2	345	322	-7%
Hake	6,7	3,449	4,400	28%
Redfish	Int waters 5, 12, 14 (Shallow)	0	0	0%
Redfish	International waters 5, 12, 14	0	0	0%
Ling	6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14	935	898	-4%
Blue Ling	2, 4 international waters	4	4	0%
Blue Ling	5b, 6, 7	30	33	10%
Tusk	5, 6, 7	68	68	0%
Greenland Halibut	2a, 4, 6	16	14	-13%
Snow Crab	Greenland Waters	0	0	0%
Skate & Rays ⁶	6a, 6b, 7a-c & 7e-k	1,266	1,329	5%
Small-eyed Ray ⁷	7f, g	20	25	25%
Undulate Ray ⁸	7d	21	13	-38%
Spur Dogs ⁹	1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14	53	53	0%
Total		6,207	7,159	15%

Footnotes for Areas 6 and 7 2019 whitefish quotas

1. Exclusively for by-catches. No directed fisheries are permitted under this quota.
2. 5 per cent megrim quota may be used in area 8abde for by-catches in directed fisheries for sole.
3. 10 per cent monkfish in 7 may be fished in area 8a,b,d,e.
4. Up to 2 per cent pollack may be fished in 8 a,b,d,e.
5. Nephrops quota in the Porcupine Bank functional unit 16 is part of the 7 nephrops quota. It is not additional. Closure period one month May 1-31, 2019. It is prohibited to have on board cod, megrims, anglerfish, haddock, whiting, hake,

Norway lobster, plaice, pollack, saithe, skates and rays, common sole, tusk, blue ling, ling and spurdog.

6. Separate reporting of seven species of ray.
7. Small-eyed ray (*Raja microocellata*) catches prohibited except in 7f,g. When caught accidentally shall be released unharmed.
8. Undulate ray (*Raja undulata*) catches prohibited except 5 per cent may be fished waters 7d.
9. Spurdog shall not be targeted but there is an amount of 53 tonnes for a scientific fishery. When caught accidentally they must be released unharmed.

DEEPWATER STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2018 (t)	Quota 2018 (t)	% Diff	Quota 2020 (t)	% Diff
Black Scabbard ⁴	5, 6, 7, 8	74	71	-4%	71	-4%
Roundnose Grenadier ^{2,3}	5b, 6, 7	203	166	-18%	166	-18%
Roundnose Grenadier ^{2,3}	8, 9, 10, 12, 14	3	3	0%	3	0%
Orange Roughy	6	0	0	0%	0	0%
Orange Roughy	7	0	0	0%	0	0%
Orange Roughy	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14	0	0	0%	0	0%
Red Seabream ⁴	6, 7, 8	4	3	-25%	3	-25%
Alfonsinos ⁴	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14	9	8	-11%	8	-11%
Forkbeards	5, 6, 7	247	0	-100%	0	-100%
Deep Sea Sharks	5, 6, 7, 8, 9	0	0	0%	0	0%
Deep Sea Sharks	10	0	0	0%	0	0%
TOTALS		540	251	-53.5%	251	-54%

Footnotes

1. Difference compared with 2018.
2. A maximum of 10 per cent of each quota may be fished in Union and international waters of 8, 9, 10, 12 and 14 (RNG/*8X14- for roundnose grenadier; RHG/*8X14- for roughhead grenadier by-catches).

3. No directed fisheries of roughhead grenadier are permitted. By-catches of roughhead grenadier (RHG/5B67-) shall be counted against this quota. They may not exceed 1 per cent of the quota.
4. Exclusively for by-catches. No directed fisheries are permitted under this quota.

Brexit: Uncertainty Persists for Fishing Industry Despite Months of Negotiations between UK and EU

Landing Obligation Implementation Poses Ground-breaking Challenges for 2019

What started as a seemingly innocuous campaign by yet another publicity-seeking celebrity chef less than a decade ago, has developed into one of the most serious challenges facing the European fishing industry. Hugh Fearnley-Whittinstall's catchphrase "No Discards" has become a serious piece of legislation now with a more ominous title "Landing Obligation" and is the biggest step in the dark the Irish fishing industry has ever faced.

The Landing Obligation was first introduced in January 2015 on a phasing-in basis; it applied only to pelagic species where the model was relatively simple. Pelagic fishing is very focused, the species, by and large, are found in distinct shoals and fishermen already avoid undersize fish so the Landing Obligation issues for that sector were minimal. Over 2016-2017 the legislation was extended to selected demersal species and on January 1, 2019 will apply to all TACs and quotas species.

While the over-arching Landing Obligation is relatively simple i.e. land everything caught, its implementation is very complex and outcome potentially disastrous for all sectors of the Irish industry. The single greatest threat is the issue of "choke species." In mixed fisheries, which demersal fisheries invariably are, the species with the lowest quota will potentially bring the entire fishery to a halt, including pelagic fisheries which cannot operate if there is any risk of accidentally catching fish which have reached their quota. The knock-on effect could be incalculable – the supply of fish to processors, retail, and exports could cease early in 2019 and the financial consequences could well mean those businesses might never recover.

All sectors have been preparing as best as possible but right up until the Council (see outcome page one) there was no workable solution on the table for the choke situation created by zero TACs. While the objective of the Landing Obligation is to ensure all fish are landed and accounted for, regulators are aware that there must be some flexibility and have considered the options but the zero TACs were only solved at the Council. A few species are exempt due to their high survivability rating including nephrops; this would include fish caught accidentally in pots and creels, prawns using specific gear, prohibited species, such as certain sharks which must be released immediately and a number of flat fish species which, again, are caught using specific gears and in specific areas. While these species can be returned to sea they must be recorded, as must those which come under the *de minimis* exemptions.

On a more positive note, the Landing Obligation requirements have promoted increased effort in developing gear modifications which reduce the amount of unwanted and undersized fish. BIM has been to the forefront in developing and trialling adaptations to trawling gear and has had some very encouraging results; for instance, catches of undersized whiting, a key "choke species" for Irish demersal fisheries, were reduced by 60 per cent while market sized whiting increased by 16 per cent using T90 square mesh panels. This work is ongoing and will continue to improve the quality of fish landed while reducing unwanted fish.

Landing all fish creates its own problems. A proportion of such fish is likely to be undersized and what happens to them will be strictly regulated. When caught, undersized fish must be recorded and stored separately and weighed on landing; they will count against the national quota. Undersized fish may not be sold for direct human consumption, but they may enter the food-chain as additives or ingredient-type products; they will be subject to all the usual food hygiene and quality regulations. Alternatively, such fish may go for fish meal or animal feed; here, also, there are strict standards which must be observed, and the fish remains the responsibility of the vessel operator until it is sold.

2019 will test the implementation of the Landings Obligation to its limits and the limits of those affected but the outcome of the Council (see page one) particularly with the allocation of by-catch quotas to the Member States for the five zero TACs in Western Waters offers a workable solution for the choke species situation.

Ireland, in company with its fellow member states, fully expected that by now an agreement would have been reached with the United Kingdom regarding its withdrawal from the European Union. Unfortunately, this is not the case and the member states, including the UK, embarked on the annual Fisheries Council negotiations to determine fishing arrangements for 2019 in an unprecedented fog of uncertainty.

In recent weeks there appeared to be progress on reaching a workable deal which would have, at the least, enabled all parties to move on to the implementation phase but all headway stalled when it became evident that a divided government and parliament in the UK would not ratify the arranged withdrawal agreement. It now appears there will be no further headway in the UK until well into January 2019; this creates enormous uncertainty for the Irish fishing industry battling with the challenges posed by the Landings Obligation and now possible lack of access to traditional fishing grounds should the UK leave the EU on March 29 with no deal in place. The Council did set the TACs and quotas for the entire year at the Council (see page one) but there remains uncertainly as to what will happen in terms of access to fishing grounds on March 30, 2019 in the event of a hard Brexit.

It remains a crucial requirement for the future of Irish fisheries that the linkage between access to resources and the wider trade issue remains at the heart of any post Brexit negotiations. Ireland's two biggest fisheries, mackerel (60 per cent) and Nephrops/prawns (40 per cent) are hugely dependent on access to UK waters with the overall dependency for all stocks of over 30 per cent. The loss of those species would cripple the Irish fishing industry. However, the UK fishing industry is similarly dependant on the wider European market, particularly for its valuable shellfish landings, and this common interest can be exploited as part of a sensible overall wider trade deal.

In spite of the current stalemate in the UK parliament and the threat of a hard Brexit on March 30, there were substantial and positive positions on future fisheries arrangements reached between the UK and EU negotiators by the end of November. The draft text

of the declaration on future arrangements, which is part of a package alongside the legal treaty on Britain's withdrawal from the EU, stated: "Within the context of the overall economic partnership the Parties should establish a new fisheries agreement on, inter alia, access to waters and quota shares." A new EU-UK agreement on fisheries would form part of the overall new relationship between the two. The sides aim to "conclude and ratify their new fisheries agreement by July 1, 2020."

Early in the negotiations a transition period from March 30 to December 31 was agreed to enable a smooth changeover in the many areas which will need to make adjustments on both sides. Specific arrangements were agreed in relation to fishing opportunities; during the implementation period the UK's fisheries rules would be aligned with those of the EU and the UK's share of catch maintained. During the last year of the implementation period, the UK would be able to negotiate its own fishing opportunities for the following year but the objective would be to conclude a UK-EU fisheries agreement which would be in place as soon as the transition phase finished.

The withdrawal deal has not found favour in the UK parliament as it is viewed as constitutionally flawed due to the arrangements included to prevent a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; the terms of the separate declaration on the future relationship between the EU and UK have not been criticised so it could be assumed that, by and large, there are no great objections to the proposed future fisheries arrangements. If the withdrawal agreement can be progressed through the UK parliamentary system in early 2019, it may still be possible to regain the position which appeared to be within reach last November.

McBride Fishing Company is worthy winner of the BIM Fishing Enterprise of the Year Award



Hugh McBride, McBride Fishing Co, Donegal, (centre) receives award for Fishing Enterprise of the Year from Jim O'Toole, CEO (left) and Kieran Calnan, Chairman, of BIM at the November awards ceremony.

developed their own marketing division, originally focusing on France, then the wider European market and more recently the rapidly expanding Asian market. Ireland's brown crab fishery has been a major success story on several fronts; it was worth €43m, and is the third most valuable Irish seafood exported in 2017. The catching sector ranges from off-shore large vivier crabbers, such as the three McBride vessels *Heather Jane II*, *Peadar Elaine II* and *Amy Jane II*, to the smallest inshore vessels and supports many peripheral coastal communities where fishing opportunities are scarce. Once landed, brown crab enters complex routes to market; there are several levels of processing ranging from state-of-the-art cooking, vacuum packing, and pasteurising, to basic white crab meat extraction while the live market for brown crab grows globally with readily available and reliable vivier truck and air transport.

The Fishing Enterprise of the Year Award was richly deserved on this occasion. The McBride Fishing Company support the industry by raising the profile of brown crab whenever possible. The company is Origin Green accredited, and their vessels are BIM RSS (Responsibly Sourced Standard) certified. They are members of the internationally accredited Irish Brown Crab FIP (Fisheries Improvement Project) and long-time members of the KFO where they support all projects designed to raise standards for their own and the wider fishing industry.

This year the BIM Fishing Enterprise of the Year Award went to the McBride Fishing Company based in Downings, Co Donegal. McBride's business is an example of how successful a completely integrated supply chain can be as the company, which specialises in brown crab, controls every step in their route to market. The company was set up in 1990 by brothers Hugh and Pete McBride who commissioned the first vivier crabbers registered in Ireland. Initially, they supplied live crab through Burtonport Co-Op to local processors and live exporters but subsequently

Editorial



by Sean O'Donoghue

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, KFO



Fishing Industry Needs to Keep Focus on Marine Spatial Planning

The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) has been developing a Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) strategy for Ireland for a little over a year now. This is largely in response to the EU Directive 2014/89, but also as part of Ireland's Integrated Marine Plan policy objective "Harvesting Our Ocean Wealth (HOOW)" which has been pursued since 2012. The DHPLG describes MSP as "a new way of looking at how we use the marine area and planning how best to use it into the future. MSP will try to balance the different demands for using the sea including the need to protect the marine environment. It's about planning when and where human activities take place at sea. It's about ensuring these activities are as efficient and sustainable as possible. Marine spatial planning involves stakeholders in a transparent way in the planning of maritime activities."

So far, the DHPLG has set up a Stakeholder Advisory Group which has had several meetings and has conducted countrywide information events with good engagement with the general public and special interest groups. This feedback had been incorporated into the MSP Baseline Report which was issued last October and formed the basis of a consultation process which finished this month.

This approach of DHPLG is all-inclusive but the Baseline Report indicates a very large increase in potential operators in the marine environment; there will be more and more demand on the space, the waters, types of access and usage and differing expectations from leisure to mineral extraction and environmental demands to energy production. It is unlikely that all demands can be met in every area at the same time.

In Ireland the more traditional marine users, shipping and fishing, have not been exposed to these new pressures to any great extent. While fishing has had pressures from increased fishery management with reducing fishing opportunities, tougher regulations and environmental scrutiny, it has not had serious restrictions regarding exclusion zones due to other marine users. It is crucially important that the fishing industry maintains a united front in opposing any reduction in access to fishing grounds, usage of piers and port facilities or transport. That said, it is also important to maintain a positive approach and be ready to avail of new technologies and cooperative ventures with innovative partners which can enhance the fishing industry and make it more competitive in a well-managed marine space.

The run in to this Fisheries Council was dominated by two issues; the Landing Obligation and Brexit. There is no doubt that Brexit in the immediate and long-term is the greatest threat to the stability of our industry which was reflected in the very challenging negotiations at this year's Fisheries Council.

KFO was extremely concerned regarding the implications of the landing obligation for the wider industry as it enters its final phase on January 1, 2019 when all species subject to TACs and quotas become subject to Article 15 of the Common Fisheries Policy. The implementation of the landing obligation, as laid out in the Commission's proposals, would have had large negative consequences for Ireland's whitefish and pelagic sectors as the "choke species" factor could have triggered the closure of most fisheries in the early months of 2019. The prospect of "choke species" paralysing the Irish fishing industry was a very credible threat with knock-on effects for a vast array of sustainable fisheries, hitherto able to function normally, being caught in the slip-stream. I am glad to say the Council has adopted a workable solution to the "choke" situation with the allocation of by catch quotas to the Member States for the five stocks where a zero TAC was set.

Our whitefish members will be pleased with the overall results of the quota negotiations as there were some very worthwhile increases which have been dealt with on pages one and two. The reduction of 32 per cent in Nephrops in Area 7 is large but is partly mitigated by the exemption from the landing obligation; taking this into account the reduction is in line with scientific advice of 17 per cent. This Nephrops reduction must also be looked at in the context of the substantial increase of 24 per cent in Area 6.

The 20 percent mackerel reduction should not have happened as it is due to erroneous advice from ICES. At the basis of this advice lies the method by which ICES arrives at its conclusions which in this instance is flawed and must be reviewed. ICES has indicated there will be an inter-benchmark for mackerel in early 2019 but, in the meantime, ICES must re-consider its mackerel advice, exclude the erroneous data and revise the advice for 2019. This is not the only instance of Inaccurate ICES advice indicating a review of the ICES system is overdue.

The threat posed by Brexit has, if anything, increased in recent weeks. When the withdrawal deal was concluded there appeared to be some possibility of a way forward but recent events in the UK would now indicate we may have moved closer to a hard Brexit which could have disastrous results for ourselves and fellow fishing communities in Europe. It is unlikely to bring the UK the benefits it expects either and could very well have a very negative outcome. This topic has been dealt with in greater detail - see page three. Even though there was not a clear declaration to that effect, the negotiated TACs and Quotas are in place for the entire calendar year of 2019.

The brown crab fishery in the Biologically Sensitive Area (BSA) has been closed since

the beginning of November due to lack of KWDays. This fishery has been supported by a regular swap of 40,000 KWDays to top up the official allowance of 63,198 KWDays for many years but this year's strong demand for brown crab and very good prices has attracted more vessels into the fishery. The existing operators are aware that dependence on swaps is not a sound footing for their fishery as closure can be unpredictable and likely to happen at the time of highest demand. The majority of those involved in the brown crab fishery met in Cork recently and agreed a closure in the early part of the year would make more sense and could possibly improve sustainability. They also agreed to use their existing KWDays more carefully and review previous log sheets to see how they could make better use of existing effort. In the course of its review of KWDays in the BSA, the Commission recommended stakeholder management of this resource. The current difficulties could be just such an opportunity to develop a management plan tailored to the needs of the operators in the area.

KFO, along with our fellow producer Organisations, IFPO and ISEFPO, made a joint submission to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) on the Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) consultation. (see article to right) MSP is definitely needed in Ireland, but the fishing industry must be vigilant and ensure it maintains its current profile as a user of the marine resource. There is a strong emphasis on public input, which is as it should be, but DHPLG must ensure a balance is kept between genuine public opinion and negative forces masquerading as the public.

On a lighter note, we are pleased to congratulate our colleagues and long-time members, McBride Fishing Company, Downings, on their recent success at the BIM Seafood Awards. McBride Fishing Company was awarded Seafood Enterprise of the Year (page three) and richly deserves the award.

I must take this opportunity to thank Minister Creed and his team for their tremendous support during all the fishery negotiations this year and, in particular, throughout the recent lengthy Fisheries Council. Their tenacity to gain the best possible sustainable deal for the Irish fishing industry was exemplary and we would have fared far worse without their efforts. Similarly, we are indebted to the staff at the Marine Institute and BIM for their continued input. Finally, on behalf of all the KFO staff I would like to wish all our members a very happy Christmas and prosperous fishing in 2019. I look forward to continuing to work with you to address the major challenges Brexit will pose in 2019 and opportunities to achieve a sustainable and profitable Irish fishing industry.