



news



Reasonable Outcome to Fisheries Council Dark cloud of Brexit still looms large

The Killybogs Fishermen's Organisation considers that a reasonable outcome was achieved at the Council of Fisheries Ministers, but the threat posed by BREXIT still looms over the future of the Irish fishing industry following the recent UK elections and the renewed threat of "No Deal." The continued uncertainty, coupled with many other negative factors the industry now faces, such as the effects of the on-going Landing Obligation, a range of environmental issues and very difficult regulatory constraints, makes this an increasingly challenging business.

The EU Commission issued a proposal for a Council Regulation on November 24 last detailing fishing opportunities for 2020 (COM(2019) 483). This document forms the basis of how the fishing industry will access fish stocks for the year 2020 and is supplemented by further information and amendments from the Commission issued in the weeks in the run-up to the Fisheries Council in December. This year much of the information on stocks was only made available at the Fisheries Council meeting. (continued page two)

PELAGIC QUOTAS 2020

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2019 (t)	Quota 2020 (t)	Diff. %
Mackerel ¹	6, 7	55,313	78,052	41%
H. Mackerel ²	2a, 4a, 6, 7a-c, 7e-k, 8a,b,e	30,306	17,726	-42%
H. Mackerel ³	4b, 4c, and 7d	376	334	-11%
Blue Whiting ⁴	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8a,b,d,e, 12, 14	37,800	38,599	2%
Herring ⁵	1, 2	3,399	3,035	-11%
Herring ⁶	6aN	630	526	-17%
Herring	6aS, 7bc	1,482	1,236	-17%
Herring	7a	1,795	2,099	17%
Herring ⁷	7 ghjk	4,097	750	-82%
Tuna ⁸	north.atl	2,854	2,891	1%
Argentines	3, 4	8	8	0%
Argentines	5, 6, 7	329	263	-20%
Boar Fish	6, 7, 8	15,086	13,235	-12%
Totals		153,475	158,754	3%

Footnotes for 2020 Pelagic Quotas

- Up to 25 per cent can be used for exchanges to be fished by Spain, France and Portugal in 8c, 9 and 10 and Union waters of CECAF 34.1.1
- Up to five per cent of the quota may consist of by-catches of boarfish, haddock, whiting and mackerel; combined by-catches cannot exceed nine per cent of the quota.
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- Within a total access quantity of 37,500 tonnes for the EU, Ireland may fish up to seven per cent of their quota in Faroese waters.

- EU vessels have access to 34,484 tonnes herring in Norewgian waters north of 62°N & the fishery zone around Jan Mayen. - Ireland has acces to 621 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.
- This quota only for vessels participating in the sentinel fishery to allow fisheries-based data collection for this stock as assessed by ICES.
- Ireland has a maximum of 50 licences.

DEMERSAL IRISH QUOTAS 2020

AREA VI WHITEFISH STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2019 (t)	Quota 2020 (t)	Diff. %
Cod ¹	6a	385	284	-26%
Cod	6b	16	16	0%
Megrim	6	749	764	2%
Monkfish	6	1,145	797	-30%
Haddock ²	5b, 6a	528	650	23%
Haddock	6b, 12, 14	842	842	0%
Whiting ³	6	324	273	-16%
Plaice	6	261	261	0%
Pollock	6	56	34	-39%
Saithe	6	455	402	-12%
Sole	6	46	46	0%
Nephrops	6	204	215	5%
Totals		5,011	4,584	-9%

Footnotes for 2020 Area 6 Whitefish Quotas

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

- Not more than 10 per cent of this haddock quota may be fished in 4; Union waters of 2a.
- Exclusively for by-catches. No directed fisheries are permitted under this quota.



Pelagic Quotas 2020

There was very good news regarding mackerel with an increase of 41 per cent. This increase is really only adjusting what was a completely unjustified and inappropriate decrease last year due entirely to flawed initial advice on the stock by ICES. There is also a modest increase of two per cent for blue whiting which is welcome after last year's 20 per cent decrease. This year there are a number of substantial cuts in pelagic stocks. The Western Horse mackerel has been cut by 42 per cent and by 11 per cent in the North Sea. Herring has had a 17 per cent increase in Area 7a but most other herring fisheries, including the scientific data-collection fishery in the northwest (Areas 6aS,7bc), were cut by 17 per cent and a drastic cut for the Celtic Sea fishery of 82 per cent which is now a monitoring TAC. Overall pelagic fisheries showed a modest increase of three per cent.

Whitefish Quotas 2020

The Commission's unworkable proposals for cod and whiting in the Celtic Sea were changed after protracted discussions to setting appropriate by-catch and catch levels for these species and a range of workable additional technical conservation measures. The important *Nephrops* fishery in Area 7 (Porcupine) was reduced by 15 per cent but the Functional Unit 16 quota within the overall *Nephrops* grounds remained the same as 2019 (957 tonnes). *Nephrops* in Area 6 showed a small increase of five per cent. Monkfish quota was well reduced in Area 6 (-30 per cent) but had a small increase in Area 7 (seven per cent). Haddock quotas fared well with increases of 23 per cent (Area 5b,6a), two per cent (Area 6b), 30 per cent in Area 7b-k but a reduction by 16 per cent for Area 7a. There was little change for megrim in both Area 6 and 7 with small increases of two per cent and three per cent respectively. Hake was reduced by 21 per cent covering both Areas 6 and 7. There was no change to the overall quota for skates and rays (1,329 tonnes) but as is the norm, there are detailed instructions on how individual species must be treated and returned to sea undamaged where possible.

Deepwater Quotas 2020

Deepwater quotas are set biennially; 2020 is year two 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.

DEMERSAL IRISH QUOTAS 2020

AREA VII WHITEFISH STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2019 (t)	Quota 2020 (t)	Diff. %
Cod ¹	7a	532	169	-68%
Cod ²	7 b-k	650	461	-29%
Megrim ³	7	3,001	3,101	3%
Monkfish ⁴	7	2,501	2,675	7%
Haddock	7 b-k	1,851	2,413	30%
Haddock	7a	1,619	1,366	-16%
Whiting ⁵	7a	419	415	-1%
Whiting	7b-k	5,334	4,073	-24%
Plaice	7a	1,499	1,442	-4%
Plaice	7 bc	63	67	6%
Plaice	7 fg	240	253	5%
Plaice ⁶	7 hjk	47	30	-36%
Pollock ⁷	7	929	929	0%
Saithe	7	1,492	1,492	0%
Sole	7a	74	77	4%
Sole	7 bc	36	36	0%
Sole	7 fg	26	52	100%
Sole	7 hjk	171	148	-13%
Nephrops ⁸	7	7,296	6,201	-15%
Nephrops	7 Functional Unit 16	959	957	0%
Totals		27,780	25,400	9%

AREA VI, VII AND OTHER WHITEFISH STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2019 (t)	Quota 2020 (t)	Diff. %
Cod	1,2	322	322	0%
Hake	6,7	4,400	3,493	-21%
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	898	898	0%
Blue Ling	International waters 2, 4	4	2	-50%
Blue Ling	5b, 6, 7	33	31	-6%
Tusk	5, 6, 7	68	68	0%
Greenland Halibut	2a, 4, 6	14	14	0%
Snow Crab	Greenland waters	0	0	0%
Skate & Rays ⁹	6a, 6b, 7a-c and 7e-k	1,329	1,329	0%
Small-eyed Ray ¹⁰	7f,g	25	25	0%
Undulate Ray ¹¹	7d,e	13	28	115%
Spur Dogs ¹²	1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14	53	53	0%
Totals		7,159	6,263	-13%

Footnotes for Areas 6 and 7 2020 Whitefish Quotas

- Exclusively for by-catches. No directed fisheries are permitted under this quota.
- Exclusively for by-catches of cod in fisheries for other species. No directed fishery for cod permitted under this quota.
- 10 per cent megrim quota may be used in area 8a,b,d,e for by-catches in directed fisheries for sole.
- Up to 10 per cent of this monkfish quota may be fished in 8a, b, d, e.
- Exclusively for by-catches of whiting in fisheries for other species. No directed fisheries for whiting are permitted under this quota.
- Exclusively for by-catches of plaice in fisheries for other species. No directed fisheries for plaice are permitted under this quota.

7. Up to two per cent pollock may be fished in 8a,b,d,e.

8. 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, 2020.
- 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.

9. Separate reporting of seven species of ray.
10. Small-eyed ray (*Raja microcellata*) catches prohibited except in 7f,g. When caught accidentally shall be released unharmed.
11. Undulate ray (*Raja undulata*) catches prohibited except five per cent may be fished waters 7d.

12. 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 2019 (t)	Quota 2020 (t)	Diff. % ¹
Black Scabbard ⁴	5,6,7,8	71	71	0%
Roundnose Grenadier ^{2,3}	5b,6,7	166	166	0%
Roundnose Grenadier ^{2,3}	8,9,10,12,14	3	3	0%
Orange Roughy	6	0	0	0%
Orange Roughy	7	0	0	0%
Orange Roughy	1,2,3,4,5,8,9,10,12,14	0	0	0%
Red Seabream ⁴	6,7,8	3	3	0%
Alfonsinos ⁴	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14	8	8	0%
Forkbeards	5,6,7	0	0	0%
Deep Sea Sharks	5, 6, 7, 8, 9	0	0	0%
Deep Sea Sharks	10	0	0	0%
Totals		251	251	0%

Footnotes

- Difference compared with 2019.
- 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).
- 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 one per cent of the quota.
- Exclusively for by-catches. No directed fisheries are permitted under this quota.

Environmental Challenges and Opportunities for the Fishing Sector

Environmental issues now have as much an impact on fisheries management as stock assessments or scientific advice. A rapidly changing environment poses a range of threats never envisaged by the fishing industry.

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), setting the framework for biodiversity conservation worldwide with the adoption of Post 2020 Biodiversity Targets, has already been launched. It will become a very familiar term for those in fishery management. The CBD process will be a priority for governments, international organisations and NGOs, including the European Commission, as these targets will form the core of all policy development for the next decade. The Fisheries Expert Group (FEG), under the umbrella organisation International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), aims to bring balance to the discussions over the next year to encourage the adoption of realistic and achievable targets. Achieving biodiversity targets will guide a wide range of future policies including the next reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMs) are receiving increasing political support and pose a big challenge for the fisheries sector. Officially there are 78 MPAs in Ireland but their status varies widely; Ireland is under considerable pressure to meet the current target of 10 per cent of its sea area being designated MPA. A logical approach would be to use the "other effective conservation measures (OECMs)" option whereby protection of spawning grounds and juveniles or sea corals can be counted as MPAs. However, many NGO groups object to this tactic and will mount considerable opposition to OECMs when the MPAs target is expected to rise to 30 per cent of a country's sea area soon. While several agencies continue to work on the issue, it is expected to become an ongoing controversy which could block progress on several fronts in coming years.

The serious problem of marine plastic pollution is finally being addressed on a global scale. The Irish fishing industry has been to the fore, and well ahead of many other countries, in addressing the issue. BIM has been driving the very successful "Fishing for Litter" scheme since 2015 which prepared the ground for the more ambitious "Clean Oceans Initiative." The role of BIM in raising awareness and facilitating the wider seafood sector in tackling marine plastic pollution, in addition to its other sustainable development programmes, has earned the organisation the accolade of United Nations "Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Champion."

At a European level the North Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC), based in BIM headquarters, Dun Laoghaire, joined with the Markets Advisory Council (MAC) to host a workshop in Brussels on Plastics and the Seafood Supply Chain with the theme "Clean Oceans, Healthy Fish, Healthy People." Experts from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the Oslo Paris Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) agreed that plastic is the most widely used material on the planet. Unfortunately, a huge amount, from many sources, ends up in the seas. The participants learned of the efforts being made in member states to limit, remove and develop alternative options to plastic usage in the marine

environment. The seafood industry, along its entire supply chain, can provide solutions at many critical pinch points and must be supported in developing the necessary skills to do so.

This workshop was the first in a series being held by Advisory Councils to address the challenges for the seafood industry posed by the introduction of the Single Use Plastics (SUP) Directive, the Port Reception Facilities Directive and the overarching EU Circular Economy Package. The next workshop "Re-Imagining Fishing Gear in a Circular Economy" will be held in Brussels in late January 2020.

The development of Ireland's Marine Spatial Plan has reached another critical milestone with the publication of the **Draft National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF)**. Following a period of consultation, which ends on February 28, and the amendments which this process may necessitate, the NMPF will become the overarching implement for objectives, policies and actions to support the effective management of marine activities and resources. Every activity in the marine environment, every plan and proposal, licensing, foreshore access, offshore installations and as yet unforeseen activities will be subject to the final terms of this framework. It is vital that stakeholders examine the draft NMPF and make their views known before final decisions are made.

The draft NMPF considers fisheries in a comprehensive and positive manner with considerable safeguards included. However, there is an onus on the fishing industry to engage with the process and examine the terms of the draft in detail; they can be found on the Department of Planning, Housing and Local Government website. Several consultation meetings have already been held around the coast with KFO requesting a Killybegs event in late January 2020 (date and venue to be announced). This will provide an opportunity to pose questions and get assurances on areas of concern.

Climate Change has already happened and will continue until at least mid-century, no matter what efforts are made to halt or slow it. What happens thereafter depends on how successful the various adaptation plans currently being implemented will be. Climate change will have a particularly significant effect on the oceans which themselves are major regulators of global climate.

The FAO has recently published "Impacts of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture. Synthesis of current knowledge, adaptation and mitigation options," which is a very comprehensive overview of the current state of fisheries and aquaculture and, in particular, the role of climate adaptation plans.

There will be large-scale changes to the seas such as warming, acidification and lowering of oxygen and these effects need to be factored into future management plans. Accurate data to inform such plans and strategies is essential if they are to be effective. Climate adaptation needs to be an ongoing and adaptive process and not an ad hoc reaction when the damage has gone beyond repairing.

2019 – A Turbulent Year for Irish Brown Crab Stakeholders

Brown crab, a non-quota species but not without substantial constraints, has undergone a year of uncertainty and mixed fortunes.

A positive outcome for the brown crab industry, following consultation and requests from a substantial number of crab fishermen, was an increase in the MCRS (Minimum Conservation Reference Size) which came into force on March 1, 2019. While many in the catching sector were already grading above the original MCRS of 130mm, the protection to the stock by raising the MCRS to 140mm in ICES Areas 6 and 7 was generally welcomed.

In early 2019 there was concern for those fishing in the Biologically Sensitive Area (BSA) regarding a repeat of 2018 early closure of the crab fishery due to insufficient KwDays at Sea. This fishery has only been able to operate in recent years with the support of substantial quota swaps with France which creates considerable uncertainty from year to year. The fleet affected, consisting of vessels less than 15m, mostly less than 12 metre day-vessels targeting a variety of inshore species, was using the available days very quickly even if they only spent a short period fishing crab. In 2019 a pragmatic solution was found when the SFPA defined a KwDay at Sea for crab fishing as being one where the crab catch was 90 per cent or more of the total catch. This has had a significant positive effect and reduces the need for large swaps of scarce quota from other sectors.

However, the steadily increasing and lucrative trade in brown crab exports to China, both live and processed, and worth almost €16.5 million in 2018, has been brought to a halt. Both product types require Export Health Certificates as they are being sent outside the EU and, while both the EU and China have the same permitted level of the heavy metal Cadmium (0.5mg per Kg), the Chinese authorities apply the level to "all edible parts" including the brown meat in the crab back, while the EU only apply it to the white meat of the claws and legs. Brown crab may display levels greater than 0.5mg/Kg if a combination of brown and white meat is tested which has created concerns among Irish authorities regarding the Chinese certification requirements.

Exports of brown crab to China have had a huge impact on price to fishermen. Already there are reports of substantial falls in both demand and price. This will have very serious consequences for those in peripheral fishing communities where brown crab fishing has been the backbone of their industry in recent years. Ironically, our competitors are now our best customers as UK demand is strong for crab which is being exported to other EU countries where there is no difficulty obtaining Health Certificates and onward shipping to China. The industry will continue to make every effort to find a resolution to the problem, including further research into the actual risk to consumers of brown crab.

Editorial

by Sean O'Donoghue

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, KFO



December 2019 may have seen the final Fisheries Council in its contemporary format. The annual Council of Fisheries Ministers which is widely attended by a host of stakeholders had become a landmark event for all those involved in the fishing and seafood industries, but the departure of our UK colleagues will create a gap which will require a complete revision of how we do this work. A "No Deal" Brexit is, yet again, a likely option in light of what Boris Johnston said on Tuesday about inserting into UK law that the trade deal has to be done by the end of 2020. This would have catastrophic consequences for a number of other EU countries, including Ireland and particularly for our fishing industry with its very high dependence on access to UK waters.

The Fishery Council itself was lengthy and ran into a third day but was a reasonable outcome in view of the proposals first presented by the Commission back in November. The unworkable proposals for cod and whiting in the Celtic Sea were changed to setting appropriate by-catch and catch levels for these species and a range of workable technical conservation measures to avoid a vast array of sustainable fisheries being closed. There were significant sustainable increases in a number of species such as a 41 per cent increase in mackerel; 23 per cent and 30 per cent increases respectively in haddock in areas 6a and 7bk; a seven per cent increase in monkfish area 7 and a doubling of small sole quota in area 7gf. The reduction in *Nephrops* our second most important economic stock was not unexpected but none the less it will have an effect on the demersal fleet. The 30 per cent reduction in monkfish in area 6a and the 40 per cent reduction in pollock areas 6 are disappointing as they are based on dubious science.

The pelagic sector will also be pleased to see a reversal of the downward trend for mackerel last year brought about by erroneous ICES advice. This was one of several similar occasions where inaccurate advice had catastrophic results for the fishing industry. ICES has now taken the issue on board and are developing a quality assurance system to ensure this cannot happen in the future. Overall the pelagic sector quota will have gained by a small margin.

The recent notification from the SFPA regarding new weighing controls for pelagic fisheries is not acceptable and it seems as



if we are back again to weighing water as fish. As an organisation we have made considerable efforts in this area and have put forward solutions which would facilitate the SFPA without this totally flawed approach which will only ensure that there will be no pelagic landings into Killybegs in the New Year. This action is similar to the progress of the new EU Control Regulation which is once more with the European Parliament with the same unacceptable components, namely weighing of fish at the point of landing and CCTV overseeing fishing activities.

The Brown Crab sector has had its share of problems this year (see page three.) The very valuable export of live and frozen product to China has been halted due to fears by Irish authorities that Brown Crab does not reach required health standards in China despite the approval of the Chinese authorities for a monitoring system being operated by the SFPA. Exporters fear being excluded at this peak demand time may result in long term or permanent loss of their market. In my role in the Markets Advisory Council (MAC) I have been active in bringing this problem to the attention of DG MARE and DG Sanco and appealing for an approach to the Chinese authorities to adopt the same testing regime as the EU.

The inshore fleet in the Biologically Sensitive Area (BSA) had also benefitted enormously from the growth in the Chinese market with prices to fishermen being exceptionally high throughout the year. A recurring problem in the BSA was closure of the fishery due to the KwDays at Sea limit being exceeded. A proposal from the SFPA to define a crab fishing day as one where crab was 90 per cent or more of the total catch, provided a sensible solution and had the further positive effect of reducing the need for large swaps of scarce quota from other sectors. Ironically, prices to crab fishermen in Ireland are plummeting due to withdrawal from the Chinese market.

This past year saw the Brexit process bogged down in political stalemate which absorbed huge time and other resources but never made any significant headway. This scenario has now changed and we can expect rapid manoeuvring by the UK in the coming months with the possibility of "No

Deal" Brexit on January 1 still very much on the cards. It is imperative that no stone is left unturned to protect the Irish seafood sector in the future trade negotiations which, last year alone, was valued at €1.25 billion, employing more than 14,300 people predominantly in rural, coastal locations. Michel Barnier and Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan will play key roles, along with our Government, to negotiate the retention of the close linkage between fisheries and the wider trade relationship in order to maintain existing access to fishing waters and existing resource allocations. This linkage is absolutely critical. Aside from Brexit, our next greatest challenge is the array of environmental issues which we need to deal with in the near future. Environmental problems may be linked with knock-on consequences which are frequently unpredictable. In this instance, climate change, and the adaptations which will be required by every sector, is probably the most serious and far-reaching for the fishing industry in this century. Not alone will we have fewer fish, the diesel-fuelled vessels we use to catch them will probably be phased out as the world struggles to produce less carbon dioxide. However, the FAO report urges us to plan and cooperate to manage the changes which, if properly handled in a timely fashion, may be inevitable but not disastrous.

On the bigger EU stage, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) 2021-2027, is continuing to make headway along the usual slow and complicated route; it has currently reached the Trilogue stage. This EMFF will have a reduced budget in real terms of €5.45 billion. Its overall objectives are fostering sustainable fisheries; contributing to food security; supporting growth of a sustainable blue economy and strengthening international ocean governance. As a Producer Organisation, KFO has a number of obligations as described in its Production and Marketing Plan, from promoting sustainable fishing to reducing unwanted catches and a number of essential economic activities. It is essential and makes sense that the new EMFF adequately supports these activities.

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. Similarly, we are indebted to the staff at the Marine Institute and BIM for their continued input.

I would like to congratulate our Chairman, Michael Cavanagh on his recent 70th birthday and his innovative celebration concert which raised a very substantial sum for the very worthy cause Cystic Fibrosis.

Finally, on behalf of all the KFO staff I would like to wish all our members a very happy Christmas and prosperous fishing in 2020. I look forward to continuing to work with you to address both the challenges and opportunities of the year ahead.

