



Press Release
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Fishing Organisations Respond to BIM Report

Report points to “a worrying decline in the seafood industry”

Today, the alliance of five Irish fishing producing and processing seafood organisations issued a response to the annual Business of Seafood Report recently published by BIM.

In acknowledging BIM for compiling the synopsis on the performance of the seafood industry, the organisations pointed out that, taken with the recently published SFPFA landings data, it is further confirmation of the worrying decline in the seafood industry.

The alliance, which works together to affect change in fishery policy at national and EU level comprises The Killybegs Fisherman’s Organisation (KFO), the Irish Fish Producers Organisation (IFPO), the Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation (IS&WFO), the Irish South & East Fish Producers Organisation (IS&EFO), and the Irish Fish Processors and Exporters Association (IFPEA).

Patrick Murphy of the IS&WFO highlighted, *“The report shows the predicament the sector now faces. The value of catches is down, the level of exports is down, employment is down, private investment has reduced, and the profitability of the Irish fleet and the processing sector have fallen off a cliff”*.

In releasing the report, the headline from BIM focuses on the significant Government investment in the sector largely from funding under the Brexit Adjustment Reserve (BAR). Unlike other years this funding is treated as part of the revenue, which masks the actual situation in the ports around Ireland.

Brendan Byrne of the IFPEA said *“One off supports such as BAR cannot be used to distort the realities and challenges that all of industry are facing at present. We have businesses that are genuinely under massive pressures from catching sector to processing and the 2023 report is further evidence we are in a deepening crisis”*.

John Lynch of the ISEFPO added, *“It is only right and proper to acknowledge the support provided to the sector, and we have consistently commended the work of the Minister in securing this funding. The investment along with the short-term support are all welcome and badly needed. However, this funding alone does not address the systemic challenges facing the sector of having no fish to catch nor raw material to process. Costs are going up exponentially while revenues are falling rapidly”*.

Contrasting the plight of the Irish industry, Dominic Rihan of the KFO highlighted, *“In the Faroese and Norway we are seeing unprecedented growth and investment. More than a dozen new pelagic vessels with increased capacity to catch and store fish on board have entered*

these fleets, with more on order. Processing capacity has increased almost fivefold to meet the supply of fish coming from these vessels". He went on to say, "While their vessels have access to fisheries all year round and struggle to catch their inflated quotas, contrast this to Killybegs, where the entire fleet has been tied up since April and factories closed due to a lack of fish to process".

"Our industry is in freefall" is the stated position of the Seafood Alliance said Aodh O' Domhnaill of the IFPO. "We hope that recent reports are the necessary catalyst that convinces the Government to act to prevent the sector going into terminal decline. There are opportunities, but we need the Government to acknowledge the challenges for these opportunities to be realised. Only by working collaboratively can we return the industry to the vibrant, profitability sector that it once was".

Patrick Murphy concluded by highlighting, *"As we approach a General Election, we are asking that all our political representatives take a fundamental look at our national seafood sector and prioritise the development of the undeniable need for a recovery strategy post-election. We of course as representatives of vessels accounting for close to 95% of Irish landings are willing to meet and discuss how resources can be best allocated to instigate recovery".*

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Further information:

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