

Seafood industry unite around sustainable development of offshore renewable energy.

Representatives of Ireland's seafood industry have come together to propose a comprehensive road map for the selection and management of sites for offshore wind in Ireland's maritime zone. In a joint submission to the Minister for the Environment, Eamon Ryan, the **Seafood Industry Group** warn that alternative forms of sustainable energy, including Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) must be developed in a way that "creates consensus and avoids any repeat of past – especially planning – mistakes".

In a unique show of unity, representatives of the catching, fish-farming, processing, and inshore sectors have made a series of recommendations that stress the importance of engagement, communication, cooperation, and co-existence in the development of offshore wind. Seafood, the submission points out, is a low carbon, healthy, and sustainable part of our food supply. Increasing our adaptability to climate change and encouraging low greenhouse gas emissions in a way that doesn't threaten our food supply is at the heart of new approach proposed by the group.

Speaking at the launch of the joint submission, John Lynch, CEO of the Irish South & East Fish Producers Organisation said that "Ireland's seafood industry recognises that an orderly development of offshore wind is critical to the future relationship between the seafood and offshore renewable industries. And that relationship is essential if the state is going to meet its targets for ORE development".

The **Seafood Industry Group** submission is in response to the launch, in July, of a proposal to facilitate a 900-megawatt (MW) wind farm off the south coast of Wexford or Waterford. This plan, a designated marine area plan or DMAP, sees the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, Eamon Ryan, as the first Competent Authority appointed under the Marine Area Planning Act 2021.

The South Coast DMAP is the first in a series of Government led plans that will shape the future of offshore development. Similar plans for the west and north-west coasts are expected in the coming months.

Sean O'Donoghue, CEO of the Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation, also welcomed the move to a state managed and plan-led approach but added that the true test would be whether the Minister and Department for the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) accepted the recommendations made in the Seafood Industry Submission. "While the initial signs from DECC are encouraging, if these recommendations are not taken onboard, we are doomed to repeat the failings of the past and this would be unacceptable".

With a sea area seven times that of our land, the opportunities this presents for offshore wind power are significant and it is not surprising that Ireland is a key emerging market. If this market is to be realised, DECC must ensure that the investment environment remains attractive; simply put Ireland cannot afford a repeat of previous planning debacles.

This point was reiterated by Seamus Breathnach, a director of the National Inshore Fishermen's Association, who spoke of the "poorly structured, often opaque, developer led approach" used for a series of wind farms recently sanctioned in the Irish Sea and Sceirde Rocks in Connemara. It remains to be seen whether these projects will deliver in the long run, or will they instead become embroiled in bitter planning hearings and mounting local resistance? It is certainly not too late to apply the principles, agreed over the last decade and set out in detail in the Seafood Industry submission, to these projects.

End/

Note to editors.

The Seafood Industry Group comprises representatives of the 8 major seafood industry groups.

- Theresa Morrissey, IFA (Aquaculture).
- Brendan Byrne, Irish Fish Producers and Exporters Association.
- Aodh O'Donnell, Irish Fish Producers Organisation.
- John Lynch, Irish South and East Fish Producers Organisation.
- Patrick Murphy, Irish South and West Fish Producers Organisation.
- Sean O'Donoghue, Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation.
- Seamus Breathnach, National Inshore Fisherman's Association.
- Liz Geoff, South East Regional Inshore Fisherman's Forum

For more general information on the Seafood Industry Submission please contact the rapporteur:

Michael Keatinge,
Seaview Marine,
Dun Laoghaire, A96 T611
Email: Keatinge@hotmail.com