Killybegs Fishermen's ORGANISATION LTD.

KFO news

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IRISH QUOTAS 2015

SATISFACTORY OUTCOME TO FISHERIES COUNCIL EXCEPT FOR COD, HADDOCK AND WHITING IN THE CELTIC SEA

Early indications of possible huge quota cuts for some of Ireland's key commercial fish species made for an apprehensive run-up to this year's EU Fisheries Council. When the European Commission published its proposals regarding fishing opportunities for 2015, large reductions were indicated in 26 out of the 32 stocks of interest to Ireland; this did not take into account another 16 stocks where no proposals were given. These proposals were made despite quite positive ICES advice regarding increasing stock size and decreasing fishing mortality for a number of these species. In the event, common sense prevailed and most of the whitefish reductions were eliminated or increased except for cod, haddock and whiting in the Celtic Sea. In fact, for the first time in a number years, there is an overall eight per cent increase (see table below) in the whitefish stocks in the North West.

Pelagic Quotas 2015

In recent years the pelagic quotas are negotiated and confirmed in advance of the December Council meeting. In this instance, the preliminary work had been done during a series of meetings. A five-year mackerel agreement was agreed by EU, Norway and Faros after protracted and difficult negotiations in March of this year. The same parties agreed on the mackerel TAC for next year in Bergen on November 21, where a total allowable catch (TAC) of 1,054,000 tonnes was set for 2015.

The Irish mackerel quota for 2015 will be 89,220 tonnes and, unlike recent years where negotiations and eventual agreement dragged on into the following year, it is the total and final quota. This is the highest mackerel quota for Ireland, leaving aside this year which was set at

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PELAGIC STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2014 (t)	Quota 2015 (t)	Diff. %
Mackerel [1]	VI, VII	104,967	89,220	-15%
H. Mackerel [2]	IIa, IVa, VI, VIIa-c, VIIe-k, VIIIa,b,e	29,708	21,621	-27%
H. Mackerel [3]	IVb, IVc, and VIId	843	347	-59%
Blue Whiting [4]	I, II,III, IV,V, VI, VII, VIII a,b,d,e XII,XIV	21,934	23,313	6%
Herring [5]	I, II	2,419	1,215	-50%
Herring [6]	VIaN	4,240	3,427	-19%
Herring [7]	VIaS, VIIbc	3,342	0	-100%
Herring	VIIa	1,367	1,264	-8%
Herring	VII ghjk	19,324	13,527	-30%
Tuna [8]	North Atlantic	2,698	2511	-7%
Argentines	III, IV	7	7	0%
Argentines	V, VI, VII	305	305	0%
Boar Fish	VI, VII,VIII	88,115	36,830	-58%
Total		**279,269**	**193,587**	**-31%**

Footnotes for 2015 pelagic quotas

1. 53,847 tonnes of the mackerel quota may be fished in EU waters IIa; EU & Norwegian waters of IVa during the periods from 1 January to 15 February 2015 and from 1 September to 31 December 2015. 6,166 tonnes of the quota may be fished in Norwegian waters of IIa & 7,426 tonnes in Faroese waters.
2. 5 per cent of this quota fished in division VIId may be accounted for as fished under the quota concerning the following zone: EU waters IIa, IVa, VI, VIIa-c,VIIe-k, VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIId & VIIIe; EU & international waters Vb; international waters XII & XIV
   At least 95 per cent of landings counted against this quota shall be of horse mackerel. By-catches of boarfish, haddock, whiting & mackerel are to be counted against the remaining 5 per cent of the quota . Shall not apply to the landing obligation catches.
3. 5 per cent of this quota fished in EU waters IIa or IVa before 30 June 2015 may be accounted for as fished under the quota concerning the zone of EU waters of IVb, IVc & VIId. At least 95 per cent of landings counted against this quota shall be of horse mackerel. By-catches of boarfish, haddock, whiting & mackerel are to be counted against the remaining 5 per cent of the quota. Shall not apply to the landing obligation catches. 50 per cent flexibility between IIa and VIIIc
4. Provisional quota pending consultations between NEAFC Coastal States in 2015.
5. Provisional quota pending consultations between NEAFC Coastal States in 2015.
6. Prohibited to fish or retain any herring in the part of the ICES zones subject to this TAC that lies between 56° N and 57° 30 N outside 6 miles limit.
7. Zero herring quota VIaS, VIIbc. Revision possible after benchmark in February 2015.
8. Maximum 50 licences in Ireland.

AREA VI WHITEFISH STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2014(t)	Quota 2015 (t)	Diff. %
Cod [1]	VIa	0	0	0%
Cod	VIb	16	16	0%
Megrim	VI	528	535	1%
Monkfish	VI	443	531	20%
Haddock	Vb VIa	653	743	14%
Haddock	VIb XII XIV	95	203	114%
Whiting	VI	87	78	-10%
Plaice	VI	261	261	0%
Pollock	VI	56	56	0%
Saithe	VI	421	389	-8%
Sole	VI	46	46	0%
Nephrops	VI	207	192	-7%
Total		**2,813**	**3,050**	**8%**

Footnotes for 2015 whitefish quotas

1. Zero TAC with maximum 1.5 per cent cod retained on board.

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an artificially high level to reach agreement, since TACs and quotas were first introduced in 1987. It is in line with the scientific precautionary approach and a reflection of the large stock of mackerel on the fishing grounds.

The bilateral negotiations between EU and Norway that took place in Clonakilty, Co Cork, from December 1-5 finalised the transfer of quotas and access arrangements between the parties. The key stocks of interest to Ireland in these negotiations were mackerel, blue whiting and for the first time, haddock, in area VIa. The outcome was satisfactory with a small percentage reduction in the quantity of blue whiting transferred to Norway and, most importantly, new sharing arrangements for haddock in area VIa leading to a 12 per cent increase for next year. The Coastal States discussions taking place in London this week on blue whiting and Atlanto Scandia herring have not been finalised and further meetings are scheduled for January. This means quotas shown for blue whiting and Atlanto Scandia are preliminary at this stage, but quota shown for blue whiting is likely to be the final quota. The most disappointing outcome of this round of TAC and Quota negotiations has been the setting of zero TAC for herring in the North West; this is not supported by the reality on the fishing grounds where stocks appear to be at their most plentiful for years. This stock is due for a scientific benchmark assessment in February 2015 (see article page three), and the declaration at Council clearly states that it will be revised after the benchmark assessment, provided that data justifies a revision.

Boarfish has been subjected to a drastic reduction of nearly 60 per cent due to it being considered a data-poor stock rather than an analytical assessment (see editorial page four.)

Whitefish Quotas 2015

In the opening exchanges of these negotiations, the EU Commission indicated some stringent cuts, particularly in ICES Area VII. The proposed cuts included 64 per cent cod; 41 per cent haddock; 12 per cent monkfish; 30 per cent whiting; as high as 73 per cent in sole; 21 per cent in megrim; plaice varying between five and 86 per cent; and, despite ICES advice to the contrary, 14 per cent in the prawn fishery. The outlook for the whitefish sector began to look very bleak.

This year for the first time haddock in Area VIa was part of the EU/Norway agreement as the scientific advise issued by ICES at the end of June stated that haddock in VIa and the North Sea was the same stock. There has been a substantial increase in Ireland's quota for 2015 but, more importantly, the Irish percentage share has increased from 8.6 per cent to 9.6 per cent which will be the relative stability key in future.

Regarding other whitefish species, particularly in Area VII, a considerably better picture emerged from the Council meeting after a lengthy period of negotiation. The increases in haddock, monkfish and megrim in Area VI and a three per cent increase in nephrops and the 11 per cent increase in hake are welcome, as are the rollover in a significant number of stocks, notably the monkfish, megrim, pollack in the Celtic Sea, and ling and skates in areas VI and VII. The Hague Preferences which ensure Ireland and the UK get enhanced quotas for a number of key species when reductions are proposed, were delivered as expected due, in part, to the reinforcement of this measure in the new CFP. The importance of keeping our Hague Preference was clearly shown at this Council in relation to Celtic Sea cod. Without the Preference, Ireland would have got a cut of 26 per cent rather the 13 per cent cut finally agreed.

Deepwater Quotas 2015

Ireland does not have a direct interest in deepwater quotas (see table right) but notes an overall small increase in quotas in this area which will have a positive impact on the "swapping" value regarding other species.

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

AREA VII WHITEFISH STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2014 (t)	Quota 2015 (t)	Diff. %
Cod	VIIa	150	120	-20%
Cod	VII b-k	1,030	900	-13%
Megrim [2]	VII	2,878	2,878	0%
Monkfish [3]	VII	2,540	2,540	0%
Haddock [4]	VII b-k	2,106	1,853	-12%
Haddock	VIIa	511	511	0%
Whiting	VIIa	46	46	0%
Whiting	VIIb-k	5,747	5,029	-12%
Plaice	VIIa	854	769	-10%
Plaice	VII bc	63	63	0%
Plaice	VII fg	202	202	0%
Plaice	VII hjk	59	59	0%
Pollock	VII	1,030	1,030	0%
Saithe	VII	1,491	1,491	0%
Sole	VIIa	41	38	-7%
Sole	VII bc	36	36	0%
Sole	VII fg	31	26	-16%
Sole	VII hjk	171	171	0%
Nephrops [5]	VII	7,740	7,973	3%
Total		**26,726**	**25,735**	**-4%**

AREA VI, VII AND OTHER WHITEFISH STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2014 (t)	Quota 2015 (t)	Diff. %
Cod	I,II	307	307	0%
Hake [6]	VI, VII	2,532	2,811	11%
Redfish	Int Waters V, XII, XIV (Shallow)	0	0	0%
Redfish	International Waters V, XII, XIV	1	1	0%
Ling	VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	623	623	0%
Blue Ling	II,IV international waters	4	4	0%
Blue Ling	Vb,VI,VII	6	14	133%
Tusk	V, VI, VII	53	53	0%
Greenland Halibut	IIa, IV, VI	11	17	55%
Snow Crab	Greenland Waters	25	16	-36%
Porbeagle	I, II, III, IV, V, IV, IVV, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	0	0	0%
Skate & Rays [7]	VI, VIIa-c, & e-k	1,049	1,049	0%
Spur Dogs	I, II, IIII, IV, V, IV, IVV, VIII, XII, XIV	0	0	0%
Basking Shark	EU Waters	0	0	0%
Total		**4,611**	**4,895**	**6%**

Footnotes for 2015 whitefish quotas

2. 5 per cent megrim flexibility with area VIIIabde. 1 per cent additional quota under certain conditions to Member States participating in fully documented fisheries.
3. 10 per cent monkfish in VII may be fished in area VIIIa,b,d,e. 1 per cent additional quota under certain conditions to Member States participating in fully documented fisheries.
4. 5 per cent additional quota under certain conditions to Member States participating in fully documented fisheries.
5. Only 691 tonnes of nephrops quota may be fished in porcupine functional unit 16. Closure period one month, May 1- 31, 2015.
6. No more than 281 tonnes hake VI & VII maybe fished in ICES area VIII a,b,d,e. 1 per cent additional quota under certain conditions to Member States participating in fully documented fisheries.
7. Separate reporting of seven species of ray. Prohibits catches raja undulata. Five per cent maybe fished waters VIId.

DEEPWATER STOCKS

SPECIES	ICES Area	Quota 2014 (t)	Quota 2015 (t)	% Diff	Quota 2016 (t)	% Diff[1]
Black Scabbard	V, VI, VII, XII	113	104	-8%	96	-15%
Roundnose Grenadier	Vb, VI, VII	279	260	-7%	265	-5%
Roundnose Grenadier	VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	4	5	25%	5	25%
Orange Roughy	VI	0	0	0%	0	0%
Orange Roughy	VII	0	0	0%	0	0%
Orange Roughy	I, II, III, IV, V, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIV	0	0	0%	0	0%
Red Seabream	VI, VII, VIII	5	5	0%	5	0%
Deep Sea Sharks	I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIV	9	9	0%	9	0%
Forkbeards	V, VI, VII	260	312	20%	312	20%
Deep Sea Sharks	V, VI, VII, IX	0	0	0%	0	0%
Deep Sea Sharks	XII	0	0	0%	0	0%
TOTALS		**670**	**695**	**4%**	**692**	**3%**

Footnotes for DEEPWATER STOCKS

1. Difference compared with 2014.

Control and Enforcement of the Discards Ban is in Tatters

The landings obligation, more commonly referred to as the "discards ban," will come into effect for the pelagic and migratory species fisheries on January 1, 2015 and for demersal fisheries from the beginning of 2016. However, it will immediately create a dilemma for the fishing industry as it runs in direct contravention to existing regulations, in particular Council Regulation (EC) No 850/98, usually referred to as the Technical Conservation Measures Regulation. The Omnibus Regulation was proposed to bring the conflicting regulations into line and it was intended to be agreed by both the Council and the European Parliament (EP) before the end of 2014. However, the Council and EP have failed to reach agreement and it appears unlikely to do so before 2015.

EAPO's Northern Pelagic Working Group (NPWG) had already proposed the establishment of a Regional Adaptive Management Group to ensure the buy-in of the fishing industry and provide a hands-on, pragmatic rapid response structure to deal with the problems which will inevitably arise with the rollout of the landings obligation. Commissioner Vella, DG MARE, has warmly welcomed this initiative.

The EU Commission believes the outstanding issues will be resolved but, in the meantime, enforcement of the landing obligation requires a common sense approach. At a meeting convened after the EP and the Council talks broke down the Commission outlined the options available. KFO pointed out the serious pitfalls this legal uncertainty will create for the pelagic fishing sector on January 1, 2015 and sought clarification on a number of specific issues such as what rules would be enforced on the pelagic fishing grounds on January 1; the need for a level playing field on control issues across the different control agencies, and the urgency for the Commission to immediately set up the Forum advocated by the pelagic industry.

The Commission answered a number of specific questions posed by Member States and RACs and was very clear the penalty points system did not apply to the landing obligation on January 1, as it was not listed as a major offence under the control regulation. This may change in the Omnibus Regulation. The Commission finished the session with a commitment to a list of action points:

i. Produce a Commission non-paper as soon as possible covering all the questions and the Commission's replies;

ii. Set up the Forum immediately as requested by the pelagic industry;

iii. Set out guidelines for the inspection services in the Member States on the enforcement issues with the assistance of EFCA to try to ensure a uniform approach on control and enforcement;

iv. Learn the lessons from the present experience for the future; and

v. The Commission will actively engage with both institutions to try to reach an agreement on the Omnibus regulation.

Underwater Television Surveys Yield Data on Nephrops for Scientific Assessment

Since 2002 the Marine Institute has been using underwater television surveys to assess nephrops stocks. The nephrops fishery is extremely valuable to Ireland with first sale values in excess of €41 million in 2013. Nephrops stocks are difficult to assess using traditional fisheries assessment approaches. They spend a large proportion of their time hidden in burrows, resulting in varying catch rates, depending on emergence. Age and growth rates are also not readily determined. The UWTV technique involves estimating burrow density over the known distribution of the stock and then calculating future catch advice based on a maximum sustainable yield, harvest rate and recent data on mean sizes and numbers in the landings and discards.

Ground	F ~MSY	SSB ~ Btrig	ICES Advice ('000 t) 2014	ICES Advice ('000 t) 2015
Irish Sea East (FU14)	✓	↘	< 0.951	< 0.662
Irish Sea West (FU15)	✗	✓	< 8.244	< 8.223
Porcupine Bank (FU16)	✓	→	< 1.848	< 1.850
Aran Grounds (FU17)	✗	↘	< 0.591	< 0.524
Ireland SW and SE Coast (FU19)	✗	→	< 0.521	< 0.715
Celtic Sea - Labadie etc. FU 20-21	✓	↗	< 2.500	< 2.500
Celtic Sea - Smalls FU 22	✓	→	< 2.674	< 3.409
FU 18 & other rectangles	?	?	< 0.235	< 0.235
Agreed TAC ('000 t)			20.989	21.619
Irish Quota (tonnes)			7,947	8,165

Table 1: Nephrops in VII stock status indicators for 2013 and ICES advice for 2014 and 2015.

This year, the Marine Institute collaborated with scientists in Northern Ireland, England, France and Spain to carry out 434 UWTV stations in VII. This involved 30 days on RV Celtic Voyager and ten days on RV Corystes. The results of these surveys were presented to ICES in October and are available to view at the Marine Institute Open Access Repository http://oar.marine.ie/handle/10793/59/. In area VII, four stocks are fished below FMSY in 2013 (FU 14, 16, 20-21 and 22). Two stocks are fished above FMSY (FU15 and FU19) in 2013, but harvest rates for these stocks have been fluctuating around FMSY. In the case of FU15, it is well above the biomass trigger levels. The remaining stock on the Aran Grounds FU17 has been fished well above FMSY in the last two years and has declined to the lowest level in the time series in 2014. Based on the 2014 survey results, the overall advice from ICES for TAC area VII represents a three per cent increase on the advice given for 2014. The cumulative ICES advice of 18,118t remains well below the current TAC of 20,989t (see table one above.) This was a major issue at the Fisheries Council (see article page one-two.) Continued good sampling of landings and discards, together with UWTV surveys, are essential if we are to ensure that these stocks are sustainably fished.

Critical Benchmark of NW Herring Assessment by ICES Scheduled for February

In February 2015, ICES will perform a benchmark assessment of NW herring. A benchmark is a standard operating procedure, which when developed, would be followed for a number of years to come. The kinds of things to be decided are the choice of mathematical model for the herring population, and the combinations of catch, ageing and survey data.

The position of the KFO is that the NW herring stock is in very good shape, and is higher than it has been in 15 years. ICES' position is that the stock is depleted to the lowest level in its entire history; has already collapsed, and is in danger of catastrophic depletion. Both cannot be correct but the benchmarking assessment should be able to answer many such questions. A major consideration is stock identity i.e. which population does a given shoal of herring belong to? Since 1981, Sub area VIa has been divided along the 56° line of latitude. There is no doubt that there is a difference between the west of Scotland (VIaN) herring and those in VIaS. The VIaN fish spawn off NW Scotland primarily in August and September. VIaS fish primarily spawn off Glen Head and NW Donegal, after Christmas.

The benchmark will establish if this separation at the 56 degree line is still valid and whether or not the two stocks should continue to be managed separately. To continue to treat the stocks separately, the two components need to be distinguishable which should be possible using a variety of statistical and biological measurements. If the two stocks cannot be distinguished then perhaps a joint assessment will have to be conducted. Preliminary analyses by the Marine Institute and ICES suggest that the combined VIaN and VIaS herring stocks are in poor shape. When taken together a pattern emerges of very low recruitment in recent years, a record low stock size and fishing mortality that is too high right across VIa.

It is important to have up-to-date baseline samples of known spawning fish from NW Ireland. For this reason the MI obtained special derogations for some tank boats to enter the Achill and Rossbeg spawning grounds on a once-off and strictly controlled basis, to collect known spawning fish, fishing against their own existing quotas. This work is to be backed up by genetic analyses being conducted by UCD, and funded by the KFO. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, the exercise of catching spawning fish in Rossbeg or Achill has not been successful. Scientists do agree that carrying out the necessary survey in summer is appropriate but, when attempted prior to 2007, it proved impossible to survey a stock in any given time window when that stock spawns from Malin Head to Rossaveal any time between August and February.

So how is the difference of opinion between science and the industry explained? Perhaps, some would say, the whole VIa population, north and south, is now located off the Donegal coast in winter, when Irish boats encounter it. Perhaps the aggregations off Donegal, large though they seem in relation to the neighbouring Irish and Celtic Sea stocks, are still small relative to the previous size of the VIaS stock. Whatever the reason, it is the aim of the benchmark to find out what is going on. Initial results suggest that the answer will not be pleasing for either VIaN or VIaS, or the two considered together.

The benchmark will also look at natural mortality, i.e. the death rate of herring not due to fishing. At present the death rate is assumed to have been stable over time and to be about 20 per cent on average across all ages, with much higher mortality on younger fish and lower on older ones. This has remained constant since the 1980s, and was based on calculations taken from the North Sea at that time. But was the North Sea natural mortality rate ever appropriate? Now the relationship between herring and its predator species, such cod, haddock, whiting, up to and including seals, must be taken into account. Re-assessment of natural mortality could have a very significant impact as has been shown in the Celtic and North Seas where it has already been revised.

KFO is confident the benchmarking assessment will resolve many of the major issues encountered with the northwest herring fishery over the past number of years and cannot accept the concept of a zero TAC in view of the reality of fish stocks on the grounds.

Editorial

by Sean O'Donoghue

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, KFO

2014 has been an eventful year for all stakeholders in the fishing industry. The new CFP, landings obligation, maximum sustainable yield, global political and market instability have all played their part, but a focal point of the year remains the negotiations at the December Fisheries Council. When the EU Commission issued its proposals for 2015 fishing opportunities in October there were drastic cuts to many of the stocks of crucial interest to the Irish fleets. If implemented, those cuts would have had huge negative effects on both fishing communities and the wider economy. However, while the reductions for cod, haddock and whiting in the Celtic Sea are disappointing, unnecessary and will lead to increased discards, the overall increase of eight per cent in whitefish stocks in the North West and the small increase in nephrops were most welcome (see tables pages one and two.)

2014 saw resolution of the mackerel crisis which dominated 2013, with agreement being reached between the EU, Norway and the Faro Islands; of course Iceland did not join the talks which may be another day's work but, all in all, the setting of the TAC of 1,054,000 tonnes – the highest TAC (with the exception of this year which was an anomaly to get an agreement) since the TACs and quotas were introduced for mackerel in 1987 and fully supported by the scientific advice – was a significant milestone. The Irish quota for next year will be in the region of 89,200 tonnes which is also the highest Irish quota since 1987 with the exception of this year notwithstanding the significantly reduced share in the five-years agreement. However, the quota of 89,200t is finalised and all pelagic fishermen know where they stand on January 1, 2015, unlike previous years where the final figure was not known until well into the following year.

The setting of a zero TAC for herring in the North West is incomprehensible. This action does not reflect the reality on the fishing grounds where the stock has been so abundant for years. The issue is now being actively addressed by ICES and we had strongly advocated for a declaration at Council that the decision on the TAC for this herring stock be revised after the ICES benchmark in February. I am glad to say that it was included in the agreement. Blue whiting has gained a modest six per cent increase even though the Coastal States negotiation will not be finalised until the New Year. The western horse mackerel is reduced as expected given that there is no management plan in place. Boarfish has been significantly cut back mainly as a result of downgrading of the assessment to a data limited stock. The KFO is determined to address this with the scientists in the first half of next year, with a view to having a new assessment model on the table for ICES evaluation next autumn.

The landings obligation, usually referred to as the "discards ban," has been a major item on everyone's agenda this year. Here at home, the Discards Implementation Group, under the chairmanship of Dr Noel Cawley, continues to prepare the Irish industry for coping with the resultant landings but in a wider European context the situation has become steadily more chaotic. On January 1 next, pelagic fishermen and enforcement agencies will be faced with conflicting regulations. This farce has been brought about by the failure of the EU institutions to agree on the Omnibus Regulation before the end of 2014. However, there may be a positive side to this, as the Commission has engaged with industry in a very pro-active manner in an effort to restore some confidence. At a recent meeting, arranged at very short notice, the Commission indicated that a common sense approach would be used during the initial stages of the implementation of the landings obligation and, most importantly, the penalty points system would not apply to the landing obligation infringements on January 1, as it was not listed as a major offence under the control regulation. Also, the request from the pelagic industry to establish a Forum to facilitate communication and deal with problems quickly was accepted and will be acted upon immediately. The Commission will also set out guidelines for the inspection services in the Member States on the enforcement issues with the assistance of the European Fisheries Control Agency to try to ensure a uniform approach to control and enforcement. This atmosphere of cooperation with the industry and a willingness to adopt a common sense approach may go some way towards avoiding chaos in enforcement terms on January 1.

Despite coming away from the TAC and Quota negotiations with adequate opportunities for 2015, Ireland will still need to implement a major whitefish fleet restructuring scheme, including a new quota management system, without delay during the coming year. The funding provided under the EMFF affords an opportunity to financially support this critical issue. At present most of the demersal whitefish fleet are struggling to remain profitable and we must address this very difficult situation now.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Minister Simon Coveney and all his team for the support and hard work undertaken on behalf of the fishing industry. Similarly, we are indebted to the staff at the Marine Institute and BIM for their continued input. Following the resolution of the very serious dispute between the pelagic fishing industry, the pelagic processors and the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA), weighing of pelagic fish landings has proceeded in a satisfactory manner; the parties involved ensure issues are now dealt with in a timely manner with a weekly conference call throughout the fishing season. We hope to continue working with all our professional colleagues in the coming year.

Finally, on behalf of all the KFO staff, I would like to wish all our members a very happy Christmas and prosperous fishing in 2015. I look forward to continue to work with you to address both the many challenges and opportunities in order to achieve a sustainable and profitable Irish fishing industry.

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