KFO news

Killybegs Fishermen's ORGANISATION LTD.

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IRISH QUOTAS 2024

FISHERIES COUNCIL AGREES 2024 TACs AND QUOTAS

Additional mackerel quota secured

2023 is the first time in three years that the EU/UK bilateral negotiations were completed in time for the December Fisheries Council, which was held on December 10 and 11, so it is possible to present complete TACs and quotas tables rather than interim tables. These TACs have already been agreed at the EU/UK bilateral, EU/Norway bilateral, EU/Norway/UK trilateral and the Coastal States agreements in terms of mackerel, blue whiting and Atlanto Scandia herring.

There is a welcome additional quota in mackerel, one of our key stocks, with the agreement on sharing arrangements for mackerel in Norwegian waters of 4a and 2a after two years of a dispute between Denmark and Ireland. Under the agreement, Ireland will get an additional mackerel quota of 2,495 tonnes for 2023 and 1,769 tonnes for 2024 which can be fished in the western area. This is wholly merited and overdue, but doesn't undo the woeful impact which BREXIT has had on our pelagic fisheries with a hit of up to 25 per cent on our bottom line on this stock alone.

There are a number of significant changes this year in the quotas available to Ireland. The mackerel quota has decreased by nine per cent due in part to the lingering effects of BREXIT and the TCA and also due to the five per cent decrease in advice for 2024, a likely effect of the massive overfishing by the non-EU Nordic states. Had the ICES advice been followed for the past number of years then there would likely have been a 10-20 per cent increase in the 2024 advice.

The horse mackerel by-catch TAC remains at a very low level for another year but with the upcoming benchmark assessment in early January 2024, it is hoped that an in-year revision will be possible if a new assessment is accepted. Though the boarfish has seen a 20 per cent increase in 2024, this quota should be significantly higher given the abundance of fish on the ground. As boarfish will also be benchmarked with the horse mackerel in 2024 it is hoped that a new Category One assessment will be possible, which will lead to a significant increase. There were also increases in blue whiting (23 per cent), albacore (14 per cent) and NW herring (20 per cent).

The recent changes to the assessment of 6a cod and its incorporation into the North Sea assessment have caused difficulties. The quota allocation for 6a cod must now be agreed trilaterally between the EU, UK and Norway rather than bilaterally between EU and UK. These discussions are ongoing and as such only an interim TAC could be agreed which is why there has been little change in the 6a cod quota for Ireland in 2024. The trilateral agreement also specifically noted that genetic sampling should be included to resolve the issues with the assessment and that ICES would be approached for guidance. There was better news for the 6a haddock, which sees a significant increase for 2024.

In the Celtic Sea the news was less positive where there were reductions for the majority of species including haddock (-33 per cent) and also the introduction of a by-catch only TAC for pollack. There are further issues with whiting as the TAC had been divided into two management areas, with 80 per cent allocated to the Eastern Channel (7d) and 20 per cent allocated to the Celtic Sea (7b, c, e-k) but only as a by-catch TAC. This is a major concern and will have a significant impact on the fleet operating in the Celtic Sea.

Finally, the KFO would like to acknowledge the commitment and efforts of Minister McConalogue and his officials during and before the Council and their very active engagement with the industry. The tables attached present the Irish quotas for 2024.

IRISH FISH QUOTAS 2024

PELAGIC STOCKS 2024

SPECIES	ICES AREA	TAC 2023 (tonnes)	TAC 2024 (tonnes)	TAC Change %	2024 Pre BREXIT Quota (tonnes)	2024 Full BREXIT Losses (tonnes)	Quota Change %	Quota Change (tonnes)	Quota 2023 (tonnes)	Quota 2024 (tonnes)
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J	K	L
Mackerel	2a, 5b, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14	782,066	739,386	-5.5	62,584	-15,025	-9.2	-4,825	52,385	47,560
Mackerel	2a, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 4, 4a (see footnote)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	-29.1	-726	2,495	1,769
Horse mackerel	2-4-6-7-8-5b, 12, 14	13,157	13,250	0.7	3,379	0	1	31	3,213	3,244
Horse mackerel	4b, 4c, 7d	8,969	9,730	8.5	283	-84	2.1	4	194	198
Blue whiting	1-8, 12, 14	1,359,629	1,529,754	12.5	60,764	-819	23	11,232	48,761	59,993
Herring	1, 2	511,171	390,010	-23.7	2,252	-233	-23.7	-627	2,646	2,019
Herring	5b, 6b 6aN	1,212	1,454	20	220	-31	17.4	28	161	189
Herring	6aS, 7b, 7c	1,892	2,270	20	2,063	0	20	343	1,720	2,063
Herring	7a	7,309	7,279	-0.4	1,893	-1,675	-50.4	-221	439	218
Herring	7g, 7h, 7j, 7k	869	869	0	750	0	0.0	0	750	750
Northern albacore	Atlantic Ocean	37,801	47,251	25	3,913	-32	16.8	570	3,398	3,968
Greater silver smelt	3a, 4	809	748	-7.5	5	0	-3	0	5	5
Greater silver smelt	5, 6, 7	8,124	8,398	3.4	592	0	3.4	19	573	592
Boarfish	6, 7, 8	22,791	27,349	20	18,898	0	20	3,150	15,749	18,899
Sub-total		2,755,799	2,777,748	0.8	157,596	-17,900	6.8%	8,977	132,489	141,467

AREA VI WHITEFISH STOCKS 2024

SPECIES	ICES AREA	TAC 2023 (tonnes)	TAC 2024 (tonnes)	TAC Change %	2024 Pre BREXIT Quota (tonnes)	2024 Full BREXIT Losses (tonnes)	Quota Change %	Quota Change (tonnes)	Quota 2023 (tonnes)	Quota 2024 (tonnes)
Cod	6a; 5b	1,210	1,392	15	313	-128	-1.8	-3	188	185
Cod	6b; 5b	74	74	0	17	-4	-9.9	-1	14	13
Megrim	5b; 6; 12, 14	5,499	6,029	9.6	781	-136	6.6	40	605	645
Anglerfish	6; 5b; 12, 14	4,082	4,082	0	408	-74	-2.7	-9	343	334
Haddock	5b 6a	6,507	11,301	73.7	1,423	0	60.4	536	887	1,423
Haddock	6b	4,078	4,078	0	320	-67	-4.2	-11	264	253
Whiting	6; 5b; 12, 14	2,636	3,163	20	920	14	16.5	132	802	934
Plaice	6; 5b; 12, 14	592	592	0	234	-11	-0.4	-1	224	223
Pollack	6; 5b; 12, 14	125	93	-25.6	13	0	-26.1	-5	18	13
Saithe	6; 5b, 12, 14	5,538	6,939	25.3	397	-32	2.3	8	357	365
Common sole	6; 5b; 12, 14	57	57	0	46	0	0.8	0	46	46
Norway lobster	6; 5b	13,311	13,141	-1.3	178	0	-0.8	-1	179	178
Sub-total		43,709	50,941	16.5	5,049	-438	17.4	685	3,927	4,612

AREA VII WHITEFISH STOCKS 2024

SPECIES	ICES AREA	TAC 2023 (tonnes)	TAC 2024 (tonnes)	TAC Change %	2024 Pre BREXIT Quota (tonnes)	2024 Full BREXIT Losses (tonnes)	Quota Change %	Quota Change (tonnes)	Quota 2023 (tonnes)	Quota 2024 (tonnes)
Cod	7a	165	165	0	108	-26	-0.5	0	83	83
Cod	7b, 7c, 7e-k, 8, 9, 10	644	644	0	368	-33	-0.3	-1	336	335
Megrim	7	21,348	21,995	3	3,641	-281	1.9	63	3,297	3,360
Anglerfish	7	45,724	48,175	5.4	3,651	-221	4.5	147	3,283	3,430
Haddock	7b-k, 8, 9, 10	11,901	8,252	-30.7	1,689	-173	-33.4	-759	2,275	1,516
Haddock	7a	2,648	2,263	-14.5	979	-141	-16.4	-164	1,003	839
Whiting	7a	721	721	0	415	-152	-2.2	-6	269	263
Whiting	Celtic Sea 7b,c,e-k	9,650	4,813	-50.1	1,309	-7	-66.4	-2,576	3,877	1,301
Whiting	Eastern Channel 7d	NA	18,896	NA	5,138	-29	NA	NA	NA	5,109
Plaice	7a	2,039	1,902	-6.7	838	-268	-25.7	-197	767	570
Plaice	7b, 7c	19	15	-21.1	14	0	-20.6	-4	17	14
Plaice	7f, 7g	402	402	0	187	-46	-3.9	-6	147	141
Plaice	7h, 7j, 7k	132	132	0		59	-3		1.4	1
Pollack	7	6,410	832	-87	64	-5	-87.2	-395	453	58
Saithe	7, 8, 9 10Nor S 62° N	2,541	1,525	-40	977	-114	-38.5	-541	1,404	863
Small-eyed Ray	7f, 7g	86	86	0	11	-4	-12.2	-1	8	7
Common sole	7a	605	203	-66.4	61	0	-35.1	-33	94	61
Common sole	7b, 7c	19	15	-21.1	14	0	-20.6	-4	17	14
Common sole	7f, 7g	1,338	1,267	-5.3	37	-2	-10.1	-4	39	35
Common sole	7h, 7j, 7k	213	170	-20.2	77	0	-20.1	-19	96	77
Norway lobster	7	18,353	18,903	3.0	6,972	-878	1.1	67	6,027	6,094
Norway lobster	FU 16	7,018	4,560	-35	1,655	0	20.5	281	1,374	1,655
Sub-total		124,958	131,376	5.1	26,609	-2,384	2.9	-4,431	23,547	24,225

AREA VI, VII & OTHER WHITEFISH STOCKS 2024

SPECIES	ICES AREA	TAC 2023 (tonnes)	TAC 2024 (tonnes)	TAC Change %	2024 Pre BREXIT Quota (tonnes)	2024 Full BREXIT Losses (tonnes)	Quota Change %	Quota Change (tonnes)	Quota 2023 (tonnes)	Quota 2024 (tonnes)
Cod	Nor 1, 2	9,150	9,983	9.1	149	132	9	23	258	281
Hake	6 7; 5b; 12, 14	46,335	40,599	-12.4	2,240	-71	-12.7	-316	2,485	2,169
Redfish	5; 12, 14 (shallow)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ling	6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14	12,371	10,907	-11.8	803	-47	-12.6	-109	865	756
Blue Ling	2, 4	27	22	-18.5	1	0	-31.7	-1	2	1
Blue Ling	5b, 6, 7	10,952	10,972	0.2	32	-2	-1.5	0	30	30
Tusk	5, 6, 7	4,294	6,940	61.6	391	-9	61.1	145	237	382
Greenland halibut	2a, 4; 5b, 6	2,571	2,571	0	29	0	-0.3	0	29	29
Skates and rays	6a, 6b, 7a-c, 7e-k	9,797	9,756	-0.4	1,273	-82	-1.3	-16	1,207	1,191
Undulate Ray	7d, 7e	3,192	3,974	24.5	465	-58	22.4	74	332	406
Picked dogfish	1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14	10,889	11,204	2.9	2,179	-293	0.9	16	1,871	1,887
Sub-total		100,428	106,928	6.5	7,562	-430	-6.4	-184	7,316	6,851

DEEPWATER STOCKS 2024

SPECIES	ICES AREA	TAC 2023 (tonnes)	TAC 2024 (tonnes)	TAC Change %	2024 Pre BREXIT Quota (tonnes)	2024 Full BREXIT Losses (tonnes)	Quota Change %	Quota Change (tonnes)	Quota 2023 (tonnes)	Quota 2024 (tonnes)
Black scabbardfish	5, 6, 7, 12	1,813	1,370	-24.4	39	0	-24.3	-13	52	39
Roundnose grenadier	5b, 6, 7	2,317	1,659	-28.4	108	0	-28.2	-42	150	108
Roundnose grenadier	8, 9, 10, 12, 14	1,545	1,965	27.2	3	0	29.2	1	2	3
Alfonsinos	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14	179	179	0	6	0	14	1	5	6
Red seabream	6, 7, 8	105	105	0	3	0	0	0	3	3
Sub-total		5,959	5,278	-25.6	158	0	-25.3		212	158
Grand-total		**3,030,853**	**3,072,271**	**1.5**	**196,826**	**-21,284**	**5.9**	**5,047**	**167,491**	**177,313**

LEGEND

New mackerel TAC area (North Sea & Norwegian Waters): Denmark transfers quota to Western TAC area. Ireland's quota may only be fished in 2a, 5b, 6, 7, 8d, 8e, 12, 14 (Western TAC)

Exclusively for bycatch. No directed fisheries for this stock are permitted.

Nephrops FU16 is a subset of Nephrops area 7 quota and should not be considered as additional.

Brexit Impact: Column F shows the quota (tonnes) Ireland would have received before Brexit reductions applied.

Brexit Impact: Column G shows the quota (tonnes) Ireland lost to date as a consequence of BREXIT.

Dominic Rihan Appointed as new CEO of the Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation

The chairman of the board of the KFO recently announced that Bord Iascaigh Mhara Director of Economic and Strategic Services, Dominic Rihan, has been appointed as its new CEO and will take up the position in January 2024. Dominic began his professional career in BIM in 1990 as a Fishing Gear Technologist, becoming the Marine Technical Executive in charge of the Fishing Technology Unit within the Fisheries Development Division in 2003. He worked in this role until December 2010. From January 2011 to December 2015, he was on secondment to the European Commission as a Seconded National Expert, working in Unit A2 of DG MARE that dealt with the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and Aquaculture Development. His duties in the Commission comprised working with a team that dealt with the implementation of the CFP. In January 2016 he returned to BIM, working as the Fisheries Development Manager in the Fisheries Development and Training Division before becoming the Economic and Strategic Services (ESS) Manager in 2018. From February 2020, he was Acting Director of the ESS Unit, before being appointed Director on September 1, 2020.

Dominic has represented BIM and Ireland regularly at national and international meetings and forums and provided support to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine on a regular basis on a range of fishery policy issues, including providing expert advice to the Minister at the annual December Fisheries Council, as well as extensively on BREXIT over the last 18 months. He is also the current Chair of the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF), which is an expert committee appointed by the European Commission to advise on European Fisheries Policy.

Brown Crab Fisheries Encounter Market and Management Issues

Following several years' expansion of European brown crab fisheries, 2023 has seen some negative trends with both landings and prices falling. In Ireland there are processing plants which are not buying brown crab, which is extraordinary at this time of year. These trends are not unexpected; the fall in landings has been widely reported and was discussed at the June meeting of the Joint NWWAC-NSAC-MAC Focus Group (FG) in Paris which was attended by a representative of the EU Commission. The advice delivered by the FG has been acknowledged by the Commission which indicated continued support for the industry's cooperative-based approach. It is hoped a further meeting of the members of the FG will take place in the near future where further action can be discussed.

Ironically, the crab fishery problems developed at the same time as the resolution of the long-running issue of Health Certificates regarding cadmium levels in brown crab being exported from Ireland to China. The previous per-consignment cadmium testing regime has been replaced from November 1, 2023 with a routine export certification model, supported by a cadmium-specific background monitoring programme under which Irish Food Business Operators (FBOs) will export crab to China. This will align with current routine controls and will be supported by sampling results provided by the Marine Institute. The compliance standard will be the new Chinese limit of 3.0 mg/kg.

The management of Kilowatt Days at Sea for brown crab in the BSA has not functioned as smoothly this year as previously. It was apparent from October that the compilation of KW Days for brown crab was on a trajectory which would see the fishery closed before the end of the year. This necessitated negotiations for additional effort which has a serious impact on other quota species and in particular mackerel. The management of the available KW Days – existing and sourced with swaps – has worked very effectively until this year, which indicates the need for an urgent review of the 2023 management to identify how the overshoot developed. It is essential that the fishery management does not encounter the same difficulties in 2024.

Editorial

by Sean O'Donoghue

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, KFO

For the first time since BREXIT three years ago the EU/UK bilateral negotiations were completed in time for the December Fisheries Council, which was held on December 10 and 11. In addition, the EU/Norway, EU/Norway/UK and Coastal States negotiations have also been completed, so it was possible to present complete TACs and Quotas Table for 2024 (see pages one and two.)

I welcome the outcome of the agreed sharing arrangements of mackerel in Norwegian waters of 4a and 2a giving Ireland an additional mackerel quota for 2023, 2024 and future years which has been a 'bone of contention' between Ireland and Denmark over the last two years. While this is wholly merited and overdue, it does not undo the woeful impact which BREXIT has had on our pelagic fisheries with a hit of up to 25 per cent to our bottom line on this stock alone. We will therefore continue our campaign of 'burden sharing' with gusto whereby all coastal member states share the pain of BREXIT equally and proportionally and also the percentage sharing arrangements at Coastal States level.

The final outcome of this Council is both positive and negative with increases in blue whiting, herring 6a, 7bc, boarfish, albacore tuna, monkfish 7, haddock 6a and, for the first time since 2011, a TAC has been established for cod in 6a albeit the sharing arrangements have still to be resolved. As against this positive news, is a nine per cent reduction in mackerel which is due to the setting of unjustified, huge autonomous quotas by Norway and Faroes. This is totally unacceptable and is putting the sustainability of the stock in question, which is the mainstay of the Irish Pelagic industry. Another worrying aspect of the Council outcome is the large reduction in Celtic Sea whitefish stocks which undoubtedly will have negative socio-economic effects.

As expected, environmental issues have become even more prominent in 2023 and are increasingly the main focus of much of the work of the KFO as we continue to monitor and engage in the several environmental issues of interest to our fisheries. In previous editions of the newsletter we have reported the KFO's input on such initiatives as participating in the European Bottom Fishing Association (EBFA) regarding the Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VME) issues (see our previous detailed articles in issues no. 87, 88 and 90 at www.kfo.ie.) The VME and SAC issues identified and highlighted by the KFO and the resulting lack of engagement from ICES, NPWS and Minister Noonan are a damning indication of their lack of regard for the industry. It is time that scientists, policy makers and regulators realised that the industry recognises the need for conservation and restoration of sensitive marine habitats and ecosystems and wants to work together to achieve this. Excluding the industry from these processes and ignoring the vital role of the industry in supplying a low carbon footprint, low-input high-nutrition food source will not help achieve biological, ecological, social and economic sustainability.

On a positive note, the NEPTUNUS Interreg project has now been finalised and, despite our short time working with the project we can now claim very satisfactory Carbon Footprint results for all our sectors – Pelagic, Demersal and Crustacean.

We are also pleased with the outcome of the Northwest Herring scientific fishery which, after nine years, has finally reopened on November 15, thanks in large part to the hard work and perseverance of the industry. The KFO was recently elected Chair of the North-West Herring Advisory Committee (NWHAC). This will continue to play an important role in the future management of the fishery. It is vital that both the ringfenced and non-ringfenced fishery are fished and managed sustainably to ensure that the hard work will not be in vain.

Encouraging progress has been made in the areas of the seafood industry and ORE interactions, which is evidenced through the change from a developer-led to a state- and plan-led approach to ORE in Irish waters. The recent seafood industry submission to the south coast DMAP process has also highlighted the benefits of the entire seafood industry working together and it is hoped that this can continue into the future. There is still significant work to be done over the coming years, especially as focus shifts to the potential for ORE in the northwest.

The new Control Regulation, which comes into effect on January 1 will see significant changes to vessel operations and stronger enforcement of top-down control and monitoring from the authorities in an already over-regulated industry. It is important that KFO members stay updated with the changes and are not caught off guard as they are implemented. The KFO has and will continue to be actively engaged with the new Control Regulation with particular emphasis on the implementing and the delegated acts which will contain the detail.

The Commission produced its report on the CFP in February this year and found that the current CFP legal framework is fit for purpose, and that no reform is required but rather further implementation is needed. This is why we expected a report, which they are legally required to do, and not a revision. The KFO totally disagrees with this and as outlined in some detail in the August 2022 report of the CFP Review Group recommends there is an urgent need for a full review of the CFP. We will continue to demand that the Minister and the Government follow through on their endorsement of the CFP Review Group recommendations. This is a key priority for 2024.

The appointment of Dominic Rihan as the next CEO by the KFO board as my replacement on retirement is welcome news. Dominic has vast experience of the fishing industry at national and EU level and he is more than capable of leading the KFO through what will be a transformative and transitional period for Irish fisheries. I wish him every success in what will be a challenging and demanding role but I am certain he is more than capable of meeting this challenge.

Finally, this is my last newsletter as CEO of KFO. I have decided to retire at the end of year having spent 23 years at the helm of the KFO and 43 years in total involved at official, semi-state and industry levels. During my 23 years at the helm, I had the pleasure of working with exceptional KFO staff Ted, Olga, Norah and more recently with Ed, and with supportive Chairmen and Boards. It has been challenging and demanding but never dull and as a KFO management team, I feel very confident that we delivered for our members. I will finish off my last December newsletter by wishing all the KFO members and staff a very happy Christmas and prosperous fishing New Year.

New Control Regulation Enters into Force in January 2024

After a long-running five year saga, the European Parliament and Council recently voted in favour of the new Control Regulation, which will come into force during January 2024. The regulation will see changes to 70 per cent of the existing control rules, with six of the regulations of key interest to KFO members being amended. The sum of the changes will be staggered and introduced after six months, two years, four years or in 2029/2030. Many of these are concerned with a move towards an increase in electronic monitoring of vessel activities. Perhaps one of the most significant changes will be the implementation of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM), which will apply to all vessels greater than 18 meters by 2028. The REM provisions will include the fitting of CCTV cameras to sectors that are determined to be at a high risk of non-compliance with the landing obligation. It is not clear yet what sectors will fall under this definition and an implementing act will be required to enact the regulation and define the sectors involved.

Similarly, the geolocation requirements will be significantly increased with a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) required by all vessels in the coming years. It will also be mandatory to have an Automatic Identification System (AIS) enabled at all times in vessels greater than 15 meters, except in exceptional circumstances, and this will also be used for control purposes unlike the present control situation. Electronic logbooks will become mandatory for all 12-15 meters vessels within two years and will be extended to all other vessels within four years. There will also be changes to existing electronic logbooks, with vessels greater than 12 meters having to record catch haul-by-haul within two years. In practice this means all the electronic logbooks that are currently on board the vessels will have to be changed.

There will also be changes to the 10 per cent margin of tolerance for unsorted small pelagic, industrial and tropical purse seiner fisheries with specific rules under fulfilment of certain conditions in Implementing Acts to follow six months from enforcement of the Control Regulation. The important aspect of this from an Irish perspective is the change in the existing control rule, i.e. the ten per cent margin of tolerance for bulk pelagic landings had to be per species on board, including the by-catches, while the new control rule stipulates the ten per cent margin of tolerance applies to total quantities on board. This significant change does not come into effect until the Commission has designated the ports it will apply to after implementation of the Control Regulation scheduled for July 2024 which is only six months away.

In addition to the increased digitalisation of fisheries monitoring and data collection, there will be a revised system of sanctions and enforcement. New infringements have been defined, including forced labour and disposing of fishing gear at sea, which will be subject to fines and a new harmonised points system for serious infringements.

Engine Power

The new Control Regulation contains a new provision on the continuous monitoring of power installed which will enter into force on January 1, 2028. It will be based on risk assessment and a high risk of non-compliance. Like a lot of provisions in the new Control Regulation the details of the rules for this new provision will be set out in the implementing act.

Overall, the new Control Regulation significantly changes several of the existing control rules. Some of key ones that will affect KFO members are covered above. The detail is yet to be sorted out in the delegated and implementing acts and the KFO will be keeping a very close eye on these over the coming months and years.

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