

Fishing Sector Welcomes FG Manifesto

20th November 2024: Statement from Seafood Ireland alliance, representing fishing and seafood processing sectors:

The fishing and seafood processing sector have welcomed FG manifesto support for a dedicated Minister of State for Fisheries and a review of the EU Common Fisheries Policy.

The Seafood Ireland alliance say they are delighted that the manifesto reflects most of what they recently outlined to the party in a joint industry 10-point plan.

Aodh O Donnell is chief executive of the Irish Fish Producers Organisation, one of five groups which forms the alliance. “Should the party return to Government, we will work with them to establish a 5-year strategy for developing the fishing sector,” says O Donnell. “This strategy should enable the sector to harness our ocean wealth on a sustainable long-term basis.”

Dominic Rihan of the Killybegs Fishermen’s Organisation says the alliance shares FGs ambition to deliver a plan for the sector within 100 days of the new government taking office. “We have the vision to help them develop a workable strategy to underpin coastal employment. This employment should cross all sectors of the industry, from catching to processing and service enterprises”.

Brendan Byrne of the Irish Fish Processors and Exporters Association described the manifesto as “an assertive stance to protect our waters and this vital sector of the Irish economy. The seafood sector has been the Cinderella industry for far too long.”

Patrick Murphy of the South and West Fish Producers Organisation welcomed the FG undertaking to have more effective liaison and improved engagement with the industry at Department levels. “We also welcome the promise to boost Ireland’s presence in Brussels, which is needed to increase our bargaining power.”

John Lynch of the South and East Fish Producers Organisation said the manifesto commitments need to be implemented in order to revitalise a sector which currently accounts for 16,500 jobs. “Ireland has the richest waters in Europe so we are uniquely placed to develop the sector, if the political commitment is there.”

Aodh O Donnell says Ireland needs to “emulate our Nordic neighbours and be ambitious for our fishing and seafood sectors. They have grown their blue economy at significant rates for the last 20 years. This has often been at the expense of exploiting access to Irish waters and overfishing our shared marine resources. It’s time to end this overfishing and give Ireland a fair share of fishing access to our own waters.”

He says the alliance see the FG manifesto as a solid basis for a programme for government “that would serve coastal communities well. Seafood Ireland would like to acknowledge the assistance of Cllr Manus Boyle, Minister Jennifer Carroll MacNeill and MEPs Maria Walshe and Nina Carberry who have taken the time to meet and engage with the sector. This is a vital first step and a sea change in political support for our seafood communities.”

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