

# Seafood Ireland Alliance Welcomes Sinn Féin Support

## **21<sup>st</sup> November 2024: Statement from Seafood Ireland alliance, representing fishing and seafood processing sectors on the Sinn Fein manifesto:**

The Seafood Ireland Alliance, comprising five organisations welcomes the strong support by Sinn Féin for the seafood sector and the commitment to robustly defend Irelands marine interests as outlined in their manifesto.

The manifesto acknowledges the crisis facing the seafood industry and gives a clear commitment to appointing a dedicated Marine Minister. Brendan Byrne Chief Executive of the Irish Fish Processors and Exporters Association commented, “The provision of a dedicated Minister for the Marine is key to revitalising the sector and providing an economically sustainable future for the 16,500 working in seafood”. He went on to say, “The creation of a ‘Fish Ireland’ office in Brussels to place the Irish fishing and seafood industry front and centre in the EU is also an important initiative that the Alliance has advocated previously”.

The Alliance also welcomes the proposed initiative to carry out an independent root & branch review of the Irish fishing and seafood industry. Dominic Rihan, CEO of the Killybegs Fishermen’s Organisation said, “Commissioning the development of a long-term rebuilding and growth strategy for the industry is long overdue. This will provide a clear direction for the industry going forward, which it has sadly lacked for many years”.

The Sinn Féin manifesto commitment to establish an ‘independent oversight and complaints body for the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA)’ also makes sense to the Alliance. Aodh O’Donnell, CEO of the Irish Fish Producers Organisation of the IFPO and a member of the SFPA Consultative Committee highlighted, “The legislation relating to this control authority is outdated. Effective oversight is needed to ensure public accountability. Effective and fit for purpose policing of our waters is welcomed by Irish fleets to provide a level playing field for all fishermen operating in Irish waters”.

The Sinn Fein manifesto also highlights the need to engage with EU fisheries ministers and Irish industry representatives to identify, negotiate and secure new fishing and quota opportunities. Patrick Murphy, CEO of the Irish South and West Fishermen’s Organisation said, “Given that Ireland has 12 % of the EU Waters and less than 6 % of fishing quotas, this long-term injustice needs to be addressed and the ‘fight for a fair share of the fish’ needs a focus to address the decades of neglect suffered by the industry”.

John Lynch of the Irish South and East Fish Producers Organisation complimented Sinn Fein on their commitment ensure that fishermen and their representatives are actively engaged in the process of establishing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and in designating sites for offshore renewable energy developments. Lynch stressed, “The fishing industry is not against offshore wind farms or the creation of MPAs, but we do want to be treated fairly and the impacts on our livelihoods of such developments fully acknowledged and properly evaluated”.

In concluding Aodh O’Donnell acknowledged the Sinn Fein manifesto as providing solid grounds for securing a viable future for the Irish fishing industry. He said, “That while we may not agree with everything, it is a good start point for discussion”. Seafood Ireland would like to acknowledge

the assistance of Pádraig Mac Lochlainn T.D. for his commitment to the fishing industry and MEPs and Kathleen Funchion who has taken time to meet and engage with the sector.

ENDS/