

EU Budget Shake-Up Could Undermine Irish Fishing

Industry Raises Alarm Over Reduction in Ring-Fenced Funding

Ireland's seafood industry is warning that a major shift in EU funding could seriously dilute support for Ireland's seafood sector unless key changes are made. The proposed Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) from 2028 to 2034 removes the dedicated seafood fund, EMFAF, which has long been a vital lifeline for the sector.

This funding will instead be absorbed into a broader funding pool shared with agriculture, regional development, and other areas. **Just 1% of the proposed €865 billion fund would be ring-fenced for fisheries under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)**—a drop that could significantly reduce targeted support for the industry.

The **Seafood Industry Alliance (SIA)** warns this could amount to a two-thirds cut in funding, putting **16,000 Irish jobs at risk**, especially in rural and coastal communities. Of additional concern, decisions about funding will now rest entirely with individual EU Member States.

“Without a dedicated funding stream for seafood, we risk losing essential investment,” said Dominic Rihan of the Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation. “This could push us to the margins when we should be front and centre in providing food security and maintaining coastal communities.”

The sector recognises the complex choices facing Government but stresses that fishing must be recognised as a national priority within this new framework.

“Without clear backing at national level, Irish seafood will have to compete with larger, more influential sectors,” said Patrick Murphy of the ISWFPO. “We're asking for fairness, not favours.”

Brendan Byrne of the IFPEA added: “This is a chance for Ireland to reaffirm its commitment to our seafood communities. We hope this Government will seize that opportunity.”

The sector points to long-standing challenges that have left Ireland at a disadvantage within EU policy. “This funding model is likely to leave our industry in an even worse position compared to our EU neighbours,” said Aodh O'Donnell of the Irish Fish Producers Organisation. “We're asking for the Government's help to make sure Ireland's voice is heard at the EU table.”

John Lynch of the IS&EFPO warned that the current MFF proposal runs counter to the EU's Ocean Pact, which stressed the importance of food sovereignty and community resilience. “Instead, we risk reducing local supply, raising prices, and relying even more on imports.”

The SIA is calling on the Irish Government to work with the EU to secure ring-fenced support for seafood and protect the economic and cultural future of coastal Ireland.

“We welcome the leadership of Minister Timmy Dooley and call on all Irish MEPs to back a fair deal,” said Rihan. “This is a moment for strong action. Our seafood sector depends on it.”

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