

Call for Urgent Action as Seafood Taskforce Convenes

Ireland's seafood industry is calling for immediate, practical measures to protect fleets and coastal communities as the new Seafood Task Force begins its work today.

The Seafood Ireland Alliance has welcomed the establishment of the Task Force but warned that urgent delivery is now essential. The sector cannot afford further delay, warns Aodh O'Donnell, of the Irish Fish Producers Organisation (IFPO).

Major quota reductions for 2026, combined with ongoing instability in key stocks such as mackerel, Dublin Bay prawns and several whitefish species, have placed fleets, processors and marine service industries under severe strain. Coastal communities including Killybegs and Clogherhead are already feeling the impact.

The SIA say projections indicate first point of sale losses of €94 million this year, with a further €18 million linked to the EU's failure to apply Hague Preferences. "More than 2,300 full-time equivalent jobs are at risk without swift intervention," says Dominic Rihan of the Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation.

Action Plan — Not Another Process

Industry leaders say the Task Force must move quickly to develop a five-year strategic plan backed by Government and EU funding, with clear early implementation timelines.

Priority measures include fleet restructuring, quota optimisation, and coordinated tie-up schemes, says Patrick Murphy of the Irish South and West Fish Producers Organisation. "We also need a review of quota management and licensing policies to allow consolidation in a commercially viable and carbon-efficient manner."

Emergency economic and social supports are also required to help fleets and processors manage the immediate shock and transition sustainably.

Fairness and a Level Playing Field

Brendan Byrne of the Irish Fish Processors and Exporters Association says the sector needs decisive leadership.

"The industry is under extreme pressure. The scale of quota cuts and continuing imbalances in shared stocks now threaten the viability of fleets, processors and the communities that depend on them."

John Lynch of the Irish South and East Fish Producers Organisations says the EU's failure to invoke Hague Preferences has compounded the impact.

"That safeguard exists for circumstances like these. Its absence has intensified the economic shock facing Irish vessels."

Aodh O'Donnell adds that Irish fleets have consistently operated within scientific advice.

"We need a genuine level playing field on shared stocks such as mackerel. Sustainability cannot be one-sided. If Irish fishers are complying, others must be held to the same standard."

He concluded that the Task Force must deliver practical outcomes.

“Our fishing communities are prepared to adapt and modernise. But they cannot continue to shoulder disproportionate losses while others benefit. The focus now must be on implementation.”

The industry reaffirmed its commitment to working with Government to secure a competitive, sustainable and resilient future for Ireland’s seafood sector.

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