

Mackerel Deal Welcomed Despite Quota Imbalances

Brussels, 30th Mar '26 Fishing industry leaders have welcomed a €32 million mackerel agreement secured by the Marine Minister at the EU Agrifish Council today.

The Seafood Ireland Alliance say the deal is a win which help provide a level of stability to the fishing industry although it does not fully restore fairness at EU level for Ireland. Irish fleets still face the loss of over half of their 2025 EU fishing quota due to EU cuts and are now being crippled by rising fuel costs.

The agreement reflects sustained lobbying by the Seafood Ireland Alliance and what they credit as 'strong engagement' by Marine Minister, Timmy Dooley, T.D. They also acknowledge the work of Irish MEPs in raising the sectors concerns.

The SIA say Ireland benefits significantly from the deal due to our large mackerel quota, reflecting our role in developing this fishery over decades. However, they say structural inequality persists at EU level because Ireland controls 12% of EU waters but receives less than 6% of quotas.

SIA and Government Efforts Deliver Progress

Aodh O'Donnell, CEO of the Irish Fish Producers Organisation, said the deal reflects months of pressure. "We welcome this outcome. It follows sustained campaigning by the Seafood Ireland Alliance and direct engagement with Minister Dooley.

"This deal secures landings of mackerel worth €32 million. That matters for coastal jobs and processors. But let's be clear. Ireland still has 20,000 tonnes less of mackerel to catch in 2026. This is major progress."

Restoring Balance After International Pressure

Brendan Byrne, CEO of the Irish Fish Processors and Exporters Association, said the agreement corrects recent instability. "Non-EU coastal states like Norway excluded the EU from key negotiations. They inflated quotas and undermined sustainability.

"This deal restores the level playing field with our competitors in the short-term for mackerel. It protects markets and supports Ireland's processing sector. Credit is due to Minister Dooley who led and worked effectively at EU level to secure this outcome."

Collaboration Was Key

Patrick Murphy of the Irish South and West Fish Producers Organisation said cooperation drove results. "Industry and government worked closely together since December. That alignment was critical.

"Minister Dooley built support across Member States. The Alliance kept pressure on throughout. The result is a more balanced quota. It includes a 48% reduction in mackerel quotas to protect future stocks."

Critical for Coastal Economies

Dominic Rihan of the Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation highlighted the local impact.

"Mackerel underpins key ports like Killybegs, Rossaveal, and Castletownbere. This deal secures important fishing opportunities for the autumn. It protects jobs at sea and onshore in Killybegs."

"But we still need a long-term agreement to protect our fishermen and the mackerel stock."

Costs Add Further Pressure

John Lynch of the Irish South and East Fish Producers Organisation warned of rising costs:

"This deal is important. Ireland holds the largest EU mackerel share for good reason. But fuel costs have doubled in the last fortnight, so many vessels are facing real viability challenges. The Minister must now push for targeted EU supports, particularly for the whitefish fleet."

Work Still To Do

Aodh O'Donnell said the deal is a step forward, not the final solution. "This agreement stabilises the fishery. It reflects strong advocacy and effective political engagement."

"But the imbalance remains. Ireland cannot continue with less than 6% of EU quotas. We need a fair, long-term review of the Common Fisheries Policy so that Ireland gets our fair share. That must be the next priority."

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