



# news

Killybegs Fishermen's

ORGANISATION LTD.

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## Joey Murrin

Ireland's Fishing Industry Stalwart

**Joey Murrin, the iconic voice of Irish fishing for decades, died in Killybegs on June 3rd last. His loss is felt throughout the Irish fishing industry and, indeed, further afield, but his passing is even more poignant for the Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation which he led for so many years.**

Joey Murrin was born in Killybegs in February 1937 and, not surprisingly for a boy growing up in a busy, successful fishing port, joined the fleet as a deckhand in 1954. He worked in that role for the following twenty years and gained a deep knowledge of the business which was to shape his life, and those he represented, for many more years. His first foray into the world of

and lows, but Joey kept a firm hand on the helm, bargained with politicians, scientists, bureaucrats at home and abroad, fishers themselves, to guide the industry onwards until his retirement in 2000.

Joey Murrin did not seek personal publicity; social media had not yet been heard of during those years, but the public took Joey to their hearts as a symbol of a traditional way of life, a part of Irish heritage, which was not alone being kept alive, but developed into a 21st century business which any country could be proud of. He was consulted on all issues concerning fishing and became a familiar face, and voice, on news media throughout the country.

His position of authority did not happen by accident; Joey worked extremely hard to ensure he could get to the best possible result for both individual fishermen and wider fishing issues when necessary. Over the course of his years in representative office, governments came and went; fishing had a different priority rating every time, but Joey dealt adeptly with 15 different ministers to ensure the best possible deal for the sector.

Joey Murrin did not confine his role to fishing alone. Safety at sea was a cause he championed and, as a member of the West Coast Search and Rescue Action Committee, successfully lobbied for a State-funded search and rescue helicopter service for the Atlantic coast. He had a long and prominent association with BIM both as board member and Chairman and served on the board of the Marine Institute from 1998 to 2008. In 1984 he ran as a Fine Gael candidate in the European elections and, though not elected, focused attention on many issues concerning fisheries and the marine.

Joey Murrin had a huge interest in all local affairs but particularly the sporting success of his own County Donegal; he himself was a keen golfer. He is survived by his wife, Betty, daughters Eilish and Edel, sons Malachy, Joseph and Alan, grandchildren, and extended family. Go ndéana Dia trócaire ar a anam usal.



fishing industry representation was in 1958 when he took on the role of Secretary of Killybegs Fishermen's Association leading to his election as Chairman of the Association in 1973, quickly followed by election to the Irish Fishermen's Association the following year which he led for a further five years.

In 1979 Joey moved on to set up the Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation, a producer body, which signified a new approach to the relationship of the Irish fishing industry with the European Union and, indeed, the wider world. This would be a new era of negotiation, regulation, and growth; in Killybegs it was the real start of the pelagic fishing which would become the bedrock of the Irish industry and put Killybegs on the global map. Throughout the following three decades there were enormous highs

## ICES Issues Advice for a Number of Stocks for 2019

ICES released 2019 single stock advice for a number of stocks in the Celtic Sea, North Sea and Bay of Biscay on June 29. Mixed-fisheries (cod, haddock, whiting) advice was also released for the Celtic Seas. The advice documents are available for download from [www.ices.dk](http://www.ices.dk)

### Herring

ICES released advice for three herring stocks (NW, Celtic Sea and Irish Sea), all of which are based upon the MSY approach. The advice for NW herring is once again for zero catch. ICES considers that the development of a stock recovery plan continues although it is unable to evaluate the current proposed plan without improvements in the assessment, particularly in relation to the mixing between the 6aN and 6aS,7bc stocks which are combined for assessment purposes.

The advice for Irish Sea herring is reduced by 2 per cent to 6,896t and Celtic Sea herring is down by 13 per cent to 4,742t, compared to 2018. This represents a 53 per cent reduction on the 2018 TAC which was set using the management plan. This plan is no longer considered precautionary and does not provide a basis for future advice.

### West of Scotland

ICES is advising substantial increases in advice for Rockall haddock (103 per cent) and saithe in 4,6 (18 per cent) as both stocks are assessed to be in favourable condition. A more modest increase of six per cent has been advised for megrim in 4a,6a with advice for haddock in 4a,6 down by 27 per cent on that for 2018 due to poor recent recruitment.

### Irish Sea

There are increases in catch advice for haddock (nine per cent), plaice (five per cent) and sole which has the first non-zero advice since 2012. The advice for cod is down by 25 per cent but remains above the 2018 TAC.

### Celtic Sea

ICES is advising a zero catch for Celtic Sea cod with decreases also for the other species caught in this mixed fishery. Haddock advice is

(Continued on page two)

reduced by 24 per cent and whiting by 18 per cent. All these stocks are assessed as declining over recent years. ICES has also published a mixed fisheries analysis for cod, haddock and whiting in the Celtic Sea, illustrating likely over/undershoot for these species under various management scenarios.

A 20 per cent increase in advice is given for plaice in 7fg whereas the zero catch advice given for plaice in 7h-k for 2018 is repeated for 2019 and 2020. The advice for sole stocks in these areas is increased by 16 per cent for 7h-k and reduced by 7 per cent in 7fg. Following strong recruitment in 2016 and 2017, the advice for megrim is up by 21 per cent. This is also the case for hake with a 23 per cent increase in advised catch compared with 2018. The combined advice for the two anglerfish species is little changed, up three per cent.

The advice issued for sea bass includes a revision of that for 2018 which was previously zero but has been re-issued as 880t. This applies to total removals (i.e. including both commercial and recreational fishing), as does the 2019 advice of 1,789t.

## D-day for the Landing Obligation fast approaching

The consequences of the Landing Obligation will become very evident for the fishing industry at the start of next year as the final phase of implementing the "No Discards" rule is applied. Going forward the effect of choke species becomes more complicated, and threatening, as a choke species in the demersal sector can have a disproportionate effect in the pelagic sector and vice versa and will prematurely close a vast array of fisheries unless solutions are found. In addition, there are scenarios where multiple Member States can be affected very rapidly with the closure of fisheries, for example a low TAC species could immediately prevent further fishing of all and any species which might accidentally occur in the catches of the low TAC species.

It is very important that such high-risk choke species are identified, and awareness raised regarding the implications for the areas concerned. Unfortunately, the problem was not recognised until recently so counter-measures are only being developed at this late stage. The North Western Waters Member States Group has produced a draft proposal to address the most immediate threats which would include exemptions from the Landing Obligation for those species already recognised as "live survival" and which can be returned to sea, a combined *de minimus* for cod, haddock and whiting and possible removal of cod and whiting in 6a and whiting in 7a from the TAC and quotas regulation. This is at last recognising the major problem with high risk chokes but we are still a long way from a fully satisfactory solution and the avoidance of closure of fisheries prematurely.

## KFO is Adamantly Opposed to Exclusion of Vessels from the 6nm Zone

**The Minister for Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (DAFM), Mr Michael Creed TD, has launched a Public Consultation on a review of trawling activity inside the 6nm zone with three possible options for consideration:**

- No change to the status quo;
- An exclusion of all vessels using trawls over 18m length from inside 6nm and baselines; and
- An exclusion of all vessels using trawls over 15m length from inside 6nm and baselines.

KFO is adamantly opposed to any such changes and fully endorses the "No change to the status quo" option. The strong grounds for the KFO stance are based on what the organisation views as both a number of general issues and specific issues.

This consultation follows a previous consultation with fishing industry representatives, including KFO, following the production of perfunctory reports by BIM and the Marine Institute outlining the impact, economic and biological, of excluding vessels greater than 12m from the 6nm zone, including internal waters. The response from the Producers Organisations and processors industry representatives was an emphatic rejection of any such proposal. The current consultation differs only in that it considers the over 15m and over 18m size categories for possible exclusion.

With regard to general issues:

- There is no attempt in this Public Consultation to identify the drivers of the proposals nor has there been an Impact Assessment other than a very cursory flawed economic analysis based on the hypothetical economic effects of excluding all vessels over 12m;

- There is no justification or alternative option suggested to offset the greatly increased risk to over 15 metre vessels displaced from inshore waters to outside the 6nm limit. There has been no consultation or Risk Assessment carried out by the search and rescue services e.g. Coastguard, in this regard;
- The consultation document, and both the MI and BIM analyses, do not justify the exclusion of vessels over 15 metres on conservation and rational exploitation grounds which the Minister has a responsibility to ensure, and;
- The proposal to deprive the over 15m sector, in particular the smaller portion of that fleet, of its access to traditional fishing grounds is in complete contradiction of what the fishing industry has been striving towards in recent years regarding sustainability, innovation and market development all of which have been supported by State funding and encouragement. Not alone will the catching sector suffer enormous financial losses, the inshore sector cannot replace the supply chain which keeps Irish fish processing businesses and Irish exporters in hard-won foreign markets.

KFO deals below in more detail with the key points of this public consultation. The suggested benefits for excluding one or both size categories of vessel from inside the 6nm zone, which are listed in the Minister's Consultation Paper are:

Suggested benefits for excluding larger vessels from inside 6nm limit	KFO Response
Improved security and economic opportunity for smaller vessels	Reduced safety, security, and economic opportunity for displaced vessels
Risk of environmental impact from trawling	Risk of environmental impact from trawling would be increased by the replacement of 182 over 15m vessels by 1,210 smaller vessels
Re-establishing links between local fish resources, local fleets and local economies	Re-establishing links between local fish resources, local fleets and local economies will be damaged by undermining the existing chain of supply and will divert landings to less lucrative markets such as bait for crustacean and mollusc fisheries
Conflicts between mobile and static gear	Conflicts between mobile and static fishing gears is not a valid topic for the consideration of this consultation but exclusion of over 15m vessels could drive increased pressure on crustacean fisheries
Improving availability of fish in inshore waters	There is nothing in this section to show how excluding over 15m vessels from the 6nm zone will improve the availability of fish for the under 12m sector
Protection of fish recruitment and stock components	These issues are currently dealt with by monitoring programmes and enforcement of national quotas
Improved management of inshore waters	Improved management of inshore waters must take account of the socio-economic factors which apply to <u>all</u> current stakeholders

# Large Increase In International Blue Whiting Acoustic Survey 2018

In March the RV Celtic Explorer took part in the 2018 International Blue Whiting Acoustic Survey. This survey, the fifteenth in the time series, acoustically measures the size of the spawning stock of blue whiting (*Micromesistius poutassou*) in western waters and is conducted by vessels from Ireland, Faroes, Netherlands and Norway.

## Area coverage

The Celtic Explorer started the survey in the south Porcupine (51°30'N) on March 19, joined by the Dutch (RV Tridens), Norwegian (FV Kings Bay) and Faroese vessels (RV Magnus Heinason). Combined effort ensured almost continual synoptic coverage over 20 days from the south Porcupine northwards to the Faroe/Shetland Ridge including Rockall and offshore banks south of the Faroes (see figure one). The survey covered over 7,296nmi (nautical miles) of transects representing almost 129,030nmi<sup>2</sup> of spatial coverage. The overall spatial coverage, sampling effort and timing were comparable to that of the 2017 survey.

The survey was designed so that each vessel worked in a northwards direction interlacing transects with the other vessels and so providing high resolution transect spacing. Overall, the weather was favourable and the survey achieved the designed coverage. In total, the survey trawled 49 times on various blue whiting aggregations in the main spawning areas and along the western and northern periphery of the survey area.

## Stock distribution

Blue whiting were detected along the shelf edge and extended into the deeper waters of the Rockall Trough area for up to 75nmi. The highest density of blue whiting occurred in a region from the west of the Porcupine to west of the Barra Head (see figure one) with the

spatial extent of blue whiting aggregations this year being particularly noteworthy. An almost continuous layer of blue whiting extended from the Porcupine to west of the Hebrides and in places extended westwards to 75nmi from the shelf edge.

## Stock composition

To investigate the age composition of the stock over 2,600 individual blue whiting were aged and over 5,300 individual length measurements were taken from the 49 trawl samples (see figure two). Individuals ranged 1-18 years old with the stock dominated by three age classes (ages three, four and five) which accounted for 86 per cent of the biomass. The 2014 year class (four year old fish) accounted for over 50 per cent of the total biomass observed, the most dominant age class ever recorded in the survey time series.

## Stock size

The total stock biomass estimate of blue whiting for the 2018 survey is 29 per cent higher than in 2017 and represents the largest in the current time series (2004-present). The strength of the 2014 year class clearly dominates the stock in terms of both biomass and numbers. The strength of subsequent year classes are unclear at present but by 2019 the strength of the recruiting 2016 and 2017 year classes should be fully evident.

# Island Fisheries (Heritage) Bill 2017 Reaches Committee Stage

On Tuesday, June 12, the Island Fisheries (Heritage) Bill 2017 came before the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine (JC DAFM) for the second time. On this occasion, Irish Producer Organisations represented stakeholders from other sectors of the fishing industry in Ireland and Mr Jeremy Percy, LIFE (Low Impact Fishers of Europe) represented supporters of the proposed Bill.

KFO had previously made a written submission following the first consideration of the proposed Bill by the Joint Committee AFM and was also represented at this hearing.

KFO fully supports the concept of a special status for island residents whose livelihood is based on fishing and whose permanent residence is an Irish off-shore island. Many of KFO members come from such a background and indeed are still closely connected with their island roots. KFO was fully supportive in promoting the special status of islands when the current Common Fisheries Policy was being drawn up as KFO is aware of the additional and extreme challenges this environment poses.

However, there are a number of flaws in the current Bill which would render it unworkable. Firstly, island fishermen must meet all the criteria regarding licencing that fishermen in any other sector do and a fishing quota can only be allocated to a fishing vessel; it cannot be attached to a person or group of people. The examples quoted in support of the Bill are not applicable as, in most cases, they are taken from countries where quota is tradable which is not possible in Ireland.

The notion of ring-fencing the island fisheries, as described in the Island Fisheries Bill, contains constraints which could prove very negative in future. The specific reference to vessels with overall length of less than 12 metres and not using towed gear would stifle development in anything other than static gear. Also, it is not clear if this Bill would limit the island fisherman to fishing within the 6nm limit of the island where resident i.e. that fisherman could not move to other areas or fisheries or use any other gear or avail of seasonal opportunities in other areas.

A workable, and advantageous, solution for Island fisheries could be to explore aspects of branding, marketing, the route to market, and exploiting species which have not been targeted so far. The quotas already available to inshore fishers are currently under-exploited and many of the species targeted, such as crab and lobster, do not require quota. Such actions are currently considered very favourably; they can avail of substantial financial and expertise support, that would benefit job creation and sustainability far in excess of catching only.

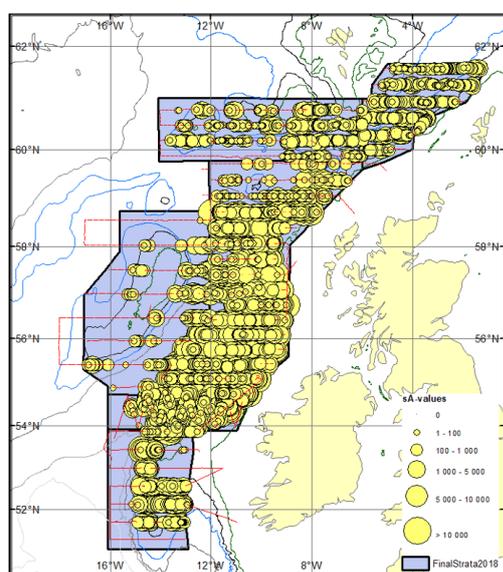


Figure 1: Blue whiting distribution (acoustic density) from combined survey effort.

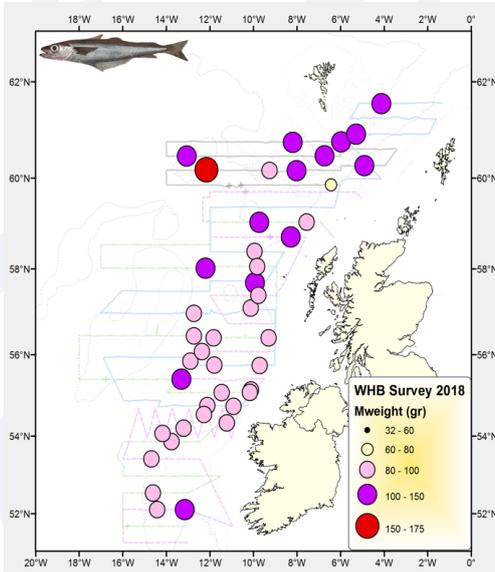


Figure 2: Mean weight of blue whiting (g) from 49 survey trawls.

# Editorial



by Sean O'Donoghue

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, KFO



It is with great sadness and a lot of pride we dedicate this issue of the KFO Newsletter to our founder and first Director, Joey Murrin. Joey died at the age of 81 in his native Killybegs following a full and eventful life in the service of the Irish fishing industry. Our front page article attempts to capture some of his achievements but it would require a great deal more space than we have here to do him justice. I succeeded him as CEO of KFO on his retirement in 2000 and hope I have filled the role as he would have wished. On behalf of all the staff and members of KFO I would like to express sincere sympathies to his wife, Betty, daughters Eilish and Edel, sons Malachy, Joseph and Alan, grandchildren and extended family. Go ndéana Dia trócaire ar an anam uasal.

The annual Seafest event was held in Galway at the end of June and, as has become the norm, BIM hosted a spectacular conference under the Harvesting Our Ocean Wealth banner. Brexit was a key element again this year and, worryingly, there is very little additional clarity from the UK side since a year ago. If there is a positive to be taken from this situation it is the co-operation and support EUFA has created among the fishing nations of north-western Europe, which all face serious problems as a result of Brexit. There were some excellent presentations from experts in the economics, customs and excise and food regulatory aspects of Brexit which, if somewhat

chilling, were very informative and were offset by more upbeat messages on new opportunities.

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) has just issued 2019 single stock advice for a number of stocks in the Celtic Sea, North Sea and Bay of Biscay. Mixed fisheries (cod, haddock, whiting) advice was also released for the Celtic Sea (page one) but is not used for formal advice. Herring in 6aN follows the same pattern as recent years with a scientific quota to facilitate sampling, and ICES looks for improvements in the assessment particularly in relation to being able to differentiate between the mixed stocks. We expect very positive input in this regard from the genetics research we have sponsored. Advice for Herring in the Irish Sea is slightly reduced but there is a substantial reduction for herring in the Celtic Sea where the management plan is no longer considered precautionary. West of Scotland advice is positive, with increases for Rockall haddock, saithe and megrim, but haddock in 4a, 6 is down by 27 per cent. Celtic Sea advice is a mixture of increase and reduction with some substantial increases for plaice and sole.

The results from the most recent blue whiting survey are very positive (page three) with the total stock

biomass estimate of blue whiting for the 2018 survey being 29 per cent higher than in 2017. However, in 2016 the total biomass contained a higher proportion of immature fish. These fish have now recruited to the stock as active spawners and so increasing the biomass of the spawning stock.

A proposal for a new Control Regulation was recently published by the European Commission. It is totally unacceptable and fails in my view to meet the Commission's own criteria in terms of amending EU legislation i.e. simplification, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and acceptability. The articles of major concern and that require significant amendments are sanctions; weighing, transport, sales procedures and data; Landing Obligation; fishing capacity; Logbooks e.g. margin of tolerance; traceability; landing declarations, inspection and surveillance. All these, and many other areas of this proposed regulation, need detailed examination by industry and our own regulators.

KFO held its AGM at the end of May. Following the success of inviting our local politicians to the AGM last year we asked them to attend again this year and we were delighted with their response. Brexit was again the main agenda item and we urged our representatives to maintain pressure whenever possible to protect our industry particularly regarding access to our traditional fishing grounds and maintaining the all-important link between access to UK waters and trade.

We had several other critical issues to bring to their attention including penalty points for the fishing industry which has not been resolved despite protracted debate, attempts to re-jig the legislation and court judgements. Since our AGM the most recent attempt to introduce new legislation was also voted down in the Dáil thanks to an outstanding effort from Deputy Pat the Cope Gallagher. We also discussed the upcoming issue for those vessels which have fished in Area 6a in recent years. The so-called Cod Recovery Plan (Council Regulation (EC) No 1342/2008) is due to be repealed in the near future which will remove the current capacity constraints. During the period of constraint only 46 vessels with track records were entitled to fish in Area 6a, but there are potentially an additional 1,334 polyvalent vessels which could fish once the Regulation is repealed. In the interests of conservation and rational exploitation we appeal to the Minister to put a national measure in place to prevent a free for all. We call on our public representatives to lobby the Minister in this regard also.

After the AGM the Board met to elect a Chairman and co-opt Directors onto the Board. The new Board of Directors, which did not change from 2017, is as follows: Michael Cavanagh, Chairman; Pete McBride, Vice-Chairman; Cathal Boyle, Jens Bach, Eamonn McGuinness, Ciaran Doherty, Pauric Conneely, Tony Byrne and Eamonn McHugh.

## Important Dates July - September 2018

DATE	MEETINGS	VENUE
Jun 28 - Jul 1	Harvesting Our Ocean Wealth Conference /Seafest	Galway
Jul 3	NWWAC EXCOM, WG 2,3	Brussels (Ghent)
Jul 4	NWWAC WG 1, 4.	Brussels (Ghent)
Jul 4	NWWAC Horizontal WG on Technical Conservation Measures	Brussels (Ghent)
Jul 5-6	Pelagic AC, WG 1& 2, ExCom	Copenhagen
Jul 10	North West Herring industry meeting	Killybegs
Jul 12	Sea Fisheries Liaison Group (SFLG)	Clonakilty
Jul 17	Markets Advisory Council (MAC)	Brussels
Jul 19	NWWAC FG on Landing Obligation (provisional)	Dun Laoghaire
Jul 16	Fisheries Council	Brussels
Jul 24	Monthly Whitefish Quota Management Meeting	Dublin/Clonakilty
Jul 28	Blessing of the Fleet	Killybegs
Aug 28 - Sept 3	ICES WG WIDE (Pelagic Stocks)	Copenhagen
Sep 5	MAC	Brussels
Sep 10	Fisheries Council	Brussels
Sept 12 - 14	ICES WG WIDE (Pelagic Stocks)	Copenhagen
Sept 13 - 14	NWWAC, General Assembly, ExCom, WGs	Dublin
Jul 19	Marine Spatial Planning Advisory Group	Dublin
Sep 28	ICES Advice (Pelagic Stocks) Published	Copenhagen

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