



news

Killybegs Fishermen's

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Commission Launches Common Fisheries Policy Reform Proposals

Since the EU Commission adopted a Green Paper on Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in April 2009, there has been a process of consultation and debate among all stakeholders on the future of European fisheries. That process reached a conclusion with the publication of the Commission's Proposals for Reform of the CFP on July 13, 2011. Commissioner Damanaki, when launching the proposals, referred to three pillars on which the reforms would be based: sustainability, efficiency and coherence.

The Commission has presented the reform proposals in a total package consisting of a Regulation setting out the new rules for the CFP, a new Market Policy, a communication on the external dimension of the CFP and an overarching communication explaining the links between these elements. This package will be submitted to the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers for adoption under co-decision.

To attain the goals of sustainability, efficiency and coherence the following objectives are proposed:

Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) to be achieved by 2015. MSY is the maximum amount of fish that can be harvested each year without jeopardizing the sustainability of the stock. It is a worthy aspiration but difficult to attain and its application in mixed fisheries will not be straightforward. The EU Commission committed to this target at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002.

Ecosystem Approach to Management (EAFM) This is highly dependant on good data and is theoretically sound, but where good data is not available the EAFM reverts to the precautionary principle. A more integrated management system allows for environmental protection but also supports socio-economic activities particularly traditional operations such as fishing. There is no timeframe indicated for implementing the EAFM.

Multi-Annual Management Plans will replace the current single-stock-based approach. Fishing opportunities and targets will be based on multi-annual plans which, by their nature, will have defined timeframes but they will also have to comply with the principles of EAFM.

Discarding will be phased out. There will be an obligation to land all catches of managed stocks caught by fishing activities in EU waters or by EU vessels. Landings that do not comply with minimum landings sizes will not be available for human consumption. This obligation will be applied by groups of species in defined timeframes, starting with pelagics in 2014.

Regionalisation of the decision-making process was much sought after throughout the consultative phase of the review. In its introductory remarks the Commission outlines a system where key decisions regarding objectives, targets, minimum standards, results and timeframes will remain at EU level but Member States will be able to implement legislation as they see fit to achieve the necessary outcomes. The Commission envisages this process extending to

increased self-management by encouraging fishermen to become more involved through their organisations. However, other than various references to Regional Advisory Committees and Producer Organisations, there is no mention of a specific structure which would be responsible for this process of decentralisation.

Relative Stability, which ensures an individual Member State's share of fishing stocks, will not change. This will guarantee some degree of certainty regarding access to resources, but Ireland needs to see the Hague Preferences, which have been in place since 1976 and give Ireland an additional quota share in many important stocks, reiterated in the Articles.

Transferable Fishing Concessions (TFC), which is another term for ITQs, will be mandatory for all vessels of length 12 meters and over. Member States will manage their individual quota and it is not proposed at this juncture that TFCs will be traded between Member States or internationally.

Common Organisation of the Market reform proposals have been issued concurrently with the CFP proposals (see article page two.)

Consumer Information will play an integral role going forward with specific standards on labeling, quality and traceability which will enable the consumer to make informed decisions on buying product from sustainable fisheries. Certain labeling will be compulsory e.g. to differentiate product from aquaculture and fisheries sources, while other information regarding quality, etc., will be supplied on a voluntary basis.

External Relationships will undergo substantial review. Going forward the EU will only enter agreements where there is a surplus to fish. It will play a stronger role in Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and international bodies such as the UN and FAO in an effort to promote sustainable resource management. It will combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing wherever possible. These proposals do not mention so-called "Northern Agreements".

Funding will be geared to support the reformed CFP going forward and will be linked to compliance for both Member States and individual operators. A proposal for a new financial instrument, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) for the period 2014-2020 will be issued at the end November. The proposed budget is in the region of €6.7 billion.

ICES Issues Advice for Widely Distributed Stocks in 2011

In September 2011, ICES released advice for widely distributed stocks. The stocks concerned were mackerel, western horse mackerel, North Sea horse mackerel, blue whiting, and Atlanto-Scandian herring. Also, there was advice for three new species, boarfish, sea bass and grey gurnard. The advice is quoted below for each stock.

Mackerel: "ICES advises on the basis of the Norway, Faroe Islands, and EU management plan that catches in 2012 should be between 586,000 tonnes and 639,000 tonnes."

Western horse mackerel: "ICES advises on the basis of the MSY approach that catches in 2012 should be no more than 211,000 tonnes." It also gives management plan advice of 183,000 tonnes.

North Sea horse mackerel: "ICES advises on the basis of the precautionary considerations to reduce catch."

Boarfish: "This is the first time that ICES has provided advice for boarfish. Based on precautionary considerations, ICES advises that catches in 2012 should not be allowed to increase." As supporting information, ICES suggested that, "it would be cautious for catches not to increase above the average of landings (82,000 tonnes)," recorded during the period 2008-2010.

Blue whiting: "ICES advises on the basis of the management plan agreed by Norway, the EU, the Faroe Islands, and Iceland and endorsed by NEAFC, that catches in 2012 should be no more than 391,000 tonnes. Because of poor recruitment, SBB is forecasted to continue to decline in the future and will likely fall below B_{pa} in 2013."

Atlanto-Scandian herring: "ICES advises on the basis of the EU, Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway and Russia management plan that landings in 2012 should be no more than 833,000 tonnes."

Sea bass (Northeast Atlantic): "Currently there is no TAC for this species and it is not clear whether there should be one or several management units. There is insufficient information to evaluate the status of the European sea bass in the Northeast Atlantic area. Therefore, based on precautionary considerations, ICES advises that catches should not be allowed to increase in 2012."

Grey gurnard: "This is the first time that ICES has provided advice for grey gurnard. Currently there is no TAC for this species and the stock structure of the species is unknown. There is insufficient information to evaluate the status of the grey gurnard in the Northeast Atlantic. Therefore, based on precautionary considerations, ICES advises that catches should not be allowed to increase in 2012."

Current prices and demand for live crab are reasonable, with demand expected to increase. However, this is set against a background of exceptionally bad weather since the end of August, which has kept a large number of inshore crab vessels tied up and crab processing plants working below full capacity.

Bait for pot fisheries has become a major headache for operators this year. For many years, scad or horse mackerel, was the bait of choice, but supplies were used up very quickly this season. What is available has become very expensive, to the extent that the price of a kilo of bait is rapidly approaching the price of a kilo of brown crab! Vessel operators have been forced to explore new species such as Sardinella, landed as far away as Morocco, and combinations of whitefish frames, mackerel and herring. Coupled with persistently high fuel prices, the profit margins for this industry are being eroded at an alarming rate.

Several additional crab vessels have applied for accreditation under BIM's Seafood Stewardship Programme. They will be audited in the near future which will result in a significant number of KFO vessels landing certified product to both home and international markets before the end of 2011.

KFO continues to lobby against the implementation of the requirement to mark potting gear as described in EU Regulation No 404/2011. We have been in communication with our colleagues in the UK and France on this issue. France in particular is very much against the change and we will continue to make representation in this matter.

We were all shocked and saddened to hear of the loss of *MFV "Amy Jane"* off Malin Head on Friday morning (7/10/11). The *Amy Jane*, built in 1990, was the first Irish *vivier* crabber and, under the guiding hand of owner Hugh McBride, pioneered the modern Irish brown crab industry. *Amy Jane* was still leading the way 20 years later when, late last year, it was the first vessel to achieve the BIM Seafood Stewardship Certification.

Heartfelt thanks to all those involved in the successful rescue of the *Amy Jane* crew – Malin Head Coastguard, Belfast Coastguard, RNLI lifeboats from Portrush and Lough Swilly and the Rescue Helicopter.

The Commission published its proposal to reform the common organisation of the markets regulation at the same time as the CFP proposal. The proposal advocates a new approach to the common organisation of the markets by:

- upgrading market incentives to support sustainable production practices;
- improving the market position of EU production;
- improving the connection between EU production and EU structural market changes, and short term fluctuations should be better reflected in producers' strategies;
- enhancing the market potential of EU products; and
- supporting better governance, reduction of administrative burden and simplification of the legal framework.

The Producer Organisations (POs) have a central role to play in the proposal. However a number of significant changes are proposed that will impact on the running of POs. Each

PO will be required to submit a production and marketing plan to their competent national authorities. The POs will have to deal with the implication of the proposed discard ban in disposing of the unwanted catches; "disposing of landed products which do not conform to the minimum marketing sizes". The withdrawal of fish from the market will no longer be available. There is however a "storage mechanism" for fish which does not reach a trigger price. POs will set this trigger price based on not more than 80 per cent of the average of prices in the previous three years in the region.

The funding of these two measures is not covered in the proposal, however the Commission has indicated that it will be covered in its funding proposal to be issued at end of November.

KFO Develops Rebuilding Plan for North West Herring

A rebuilding plan for the herring stock was developed by the KFO, with some inputs from the Marine Institute, during the summer 2011. The Federation of Irish Fishermen and the Pelagic RAC have since adopted it.

1. Every effort shall be made to maintain a minimum level of Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) greater than B_{lim} .
2. For 2012, the TAC shall be set at 4,471 tonnes, the same level as in 2011. This is to achieve a transition towards $F_{0.1}$.
3. For 2013 and subsequent years, the TAC shall be set consistent with $F_{0.1}$ ($F=0.2$), based on ICES and STECF advice.
4. If ICES and STECF are unable to provide an assessment and forecast for 2013, or any subsequent year, then *status quo* TAC shall apply in that year.
5. Notwithstanding paragraphs three and four, if the SSB in any year is estimated to be at or below the level consistent with recruitment impairment, then the TAC for that year shall be set at a lower level.
6. ICES and STECF shall be requested to evaluate this rebuilding plan.
7. When a suitable, benchmarked assessment method is available for this stock, this rebuilding plan shall be superseded by a long-term management plan.
8. If a benchmark assessment is not available by 2014, the terms of article three shall remain in place until a benchmarked assessment and forecast is available.
9. In order to provide for separate management of this stock, relative to that in VIaN, every effort shall be made to disaggregate abundance-at-age data in the wider VIa Sub-area.
10. This arrangement shall commence January 1, 2012.

The advice from ICES is that catches should be reduced. The stock is considered to be below the level at which recruitment impairment can occur. What this means is that, although it is not possible to estimate the exact size of the stock it is clear that it is below the level at which sufficient numbers of young herring can be produced to replenish the stock.

The European Commission has published a proposal to reduce the TAC for this stock by 25 per cent to 3,353 tonnes, in 2012. The proposed rebuilding plan seeks to fix the TAC for 2012 at the same level as it was at in 2011. The rebuilding plan represents a substantial reduction of 66 per cent over the total catch in 2010. In future years the plan aims to harvest the stock at the level of $F_{0.1}$. This is often considered to be a precautionary exploitation rate. However, if the stock continues to suffer from recruitment impairment, article five allows for a more precautionary TAC to be set. It is hoped that STECF will evaluate this plan at its next plenary meeting in November.

That time of year has rolled around again and, with advice being drafted and the December Fisheries Council looming, it is a good opportunity for an update on the progress of the boarfish project. It's been an eventful and productive year with many important results emerging from the project and feeding directly into the advice process.

Detailed knowledge of the life-history of boarfish has now been established and three manuscripts with results have been submitted to peer-reviewed journals. In summary, boarfish are a relatively long-lived species with a maximum recorded age of 31 years at 18cm. This longevity is not unusual for previously unexploited pelagic species and should not be confused with age-at-maturity. They grow rapidly in the first three years prior to reaching maturity at 3.4 years and 9.7cm, after which growth slows considerably, as energy is allocated to reproduction. According to International Bottom Trawl Survey (IBTS) data there appears to be a length-based latitudinal distribution of boarfish, with smaller immature fish to the south and a progressive increase in length to the north. The commercial catches are taken mainly from ICES Area VIIj and primarily comprise 12cm, six-year old fish. There is still a high abundance of older fish in the catches though, which indicates a relatively large stock size. It also indicates that the boarfish is not just a 'boom and bust' species like the snake pipefish, but more likely the boarfish stock has been accumulating biomass over quite a number of years. This may have been enhanced by a few years of high recruitment, which may be related to the fact that given suitable conditions boarfish are capable of spawning repeatedly over an extended period of time. This highlights the importance of the project results and the need to get the management right from the start.



In July the first specific boarfish acoustic survey took place aboard the *MFV Felucca*. The survey was designed to extend the Malin Shelf Herring Acoustic Survey conducted aboard the *RV Celtic Explorer* to the south, which increased the range of continuous coverage from approximately 58.5°N to 47.5°N (Figure 1). The combined surveys resulted in a continuous coverage over 33 days, 90,000 nmi² and transect coverage over 4,500 nmi. Unfortunately there is currently no specific target strength for boarfish so it is not possible to make meaningful estimates of boarfish abundance based on this solitary survey. The value of the survey will be realised in a few years when a time series is available, at which point the survey data will be important for the annual assessment. Further work is also underway to try to establish a specific target strength for boarfish which will enable an estimation of spawning stock biomass in the survey area.

This year's survey provided an important insight into the spawning behaviour of boarfish. The fish were encountered almost exclusively along the shelf edge

in relatively small shoals compared to those during the fishing season. During daylight hours they formed mid-water shoals but these broke up and dispersed in the evening. These are believed to be spawning aggregations as all mature fish were found to be in the spawning state. Boarfish were also absent from the main areas targeted during the fishing season, which indicates a seasonal migration to the shelf edge for spawning and then back onto the shelf during the winter months. Further work is now underway to investigate larval movements along the shelf edge and to see if this accounts for the apparent latitudinal variation in length frequency.

In August, boarfish was included in the ICES Working Group on Widely Distributed Stocks (WGWIDE) for the first time. All of the accumulated data from the project was prepared as a chapter for the working group report and an exploratory assessment was undertaken. Though the assessment was somewhat preliminary, all indications are that boarfish has a large stock size and is not currently overexploited. It is now considered to be a single Northeast Atlantic stock. In September, ICES issued advice for boarfish, for the first time. The advice recommended that catches should not be allowed to increase. This is standard ICES advice for stocks being assessed for the first time. However as supporting information to the advice, ICES noted that landings should not be higher than the average landings from 2008-2010, which is 82,000tonnes. ICES acknowledged the scientific work done on boarfish, as part of the science-industry co-operation. This demonstrates what can be achieved by such partnerships.

Without the co-operation and hard work of all parties involved, from the fishery to the science, such rapid progress could not have been made. It is hoped that the boarfish project will act as a model for future industry-science partnerships and further strengthen the relationship between these sectors. For now the project proceeds and new opportunities continue to develop, such as the feasibility of developing uses other than fishmeal and oil.

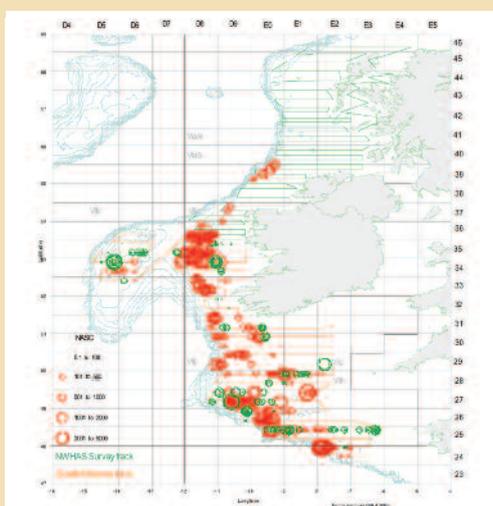


Figure 1. NASC plot of boarfish distribution from the boarfish acoustic survey (red tracks) and the MSHAS (green tracks). Circle size proportional to NASC value. Red circles represent 'definitely' boarfish category and green 'probably boarfish.'

The High Level Group on Job Creation in the Killybegs area which was appointed by Minister Simon Coveney T.D. on June 3, 2011 is near completion. It has been actively working to deliver a strategy that will see 250 jobs created in the Killybegs area by 2014. The Group was set up following the launch of an economic report for the European Commission, which assessed the status, development and potential diversification of Killybegs as a fisheries dependent community.

Five key areas for development potential were identified:

1. promoting seafood value added activity;
2. enhancing ancillary services;
3. developing offshore supports;
4. promoting tourism and marine leisure; and
5. promoting green economy/renewable energy.

The eight-member Group held three meetings and also six sub-group meetings to discuss specific items in more detail for the various key areas. A wide range of growth opportunities were identified during this period. However it was also vitally important that issues that are currently impacting on growth and job creation were discussed in detail and solutions found. All of the findings from the meetings are currently being used by the Group to draft the Strategy Report that will be delivered to Minister Coveney in the coming weeks. It is hoped that the findings of this strategy will be acted upon through developing an industry/agency collaborative model backed up by government support. The Chairman of the Group is confident that the mandate to deliver a jobs strategy to create 250 jobs within the five key areas will be achieved for the Killybegs area.

Editorial

by Sean O'Donoghue

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, KFO



The launch by the EU Commission of its CFP reform proposals on July 13 (see article page one) is a lost opportunity for real reform and rectifying the major problems that exist with the current policy. The Commission launched its Green Paper in April 2009 promising real reform and widespread consultation. Unfortunately what started out with such optimism of real reform and meaningful consultation has ended up as a mess and fails to address the key underlining problems with the current policy. It now falls to the European Parliament and Council of Fisheries Ministers to rectify the situation over the next two years. It looks likely that it will be the Irish Presidency, at the start of 2013, that will be faced with trying to get agreement on a new reformed (hopefully) policy.

From an Irish perspective the Commission's proposals leave a lot to be desired, and do not to any extent take account of our views submitted as part of the consultation process. In a number of key areas, we - both the industry and the state bodies -- must continue to actively work together to affect the necessary changes to ensure a sustainable and viable future for the Irish fishing sector. These changes can be summarised as: permanent incorporation of the so called "Hague Preferences" which have been a de-facto feature of the distribution of quota between

countries since the inception of the CFP in the early 1980s and which are critical to the future of the Irish fishing industry; the meaningful devolution of responsibilities to manage fisheries in a regional/decentralised framework which would include stakeholder involvement in decision-making; the putting forward of workable discards solutions that avoids in the first instance, and then progressively reduces over time, such discards to a minimum and provides a range of incentives which would enable the fishing sector to remain productive and economically sustainable; the optional rather than mandatory proposals for Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQ) to apply at a Member State level, and the incorporation into the proposals of the biologically sensitive area around Ireland commonly know as the Irish Box.

The Commission also issued its proposals for the reform of the Common Organisation of the Markets (COM) (see article page two) at the same time as the CFP proposals. These proposals have not been given the same media attention but are obviously very important for the primary producers in terms of prices

received for their catches. A new approach to achieving improved prices is proposed in the form of production and marketing plans; however the proposal is very short in details. On face value, the proposal places a whole raft of new responsibilities on Producer Organisations without any incentives for taking on these responsibilities. The Commission has assured us that these incentives will be part of their funding proposals to be issued at the end of November. The jury is still out on these proposals until the details of both the funding and production and marketing plan are known.

The ICES scientific advice for the main pelagic stocks, namely mackerel, horse mackerel blue whiting, Atlanto Scandia herring and boarfish was issued on September 30 (see article page one). Even though the projected mackerel catches for 2011 are 44 per cent higher than the scientific advice due to the reckless and irresponsible actions of Iceland and the Faros, the scientific advice is almost identical to this year's advice approximately one per cent lower. If this massive over-catch continues, the advice does indicate it is only a matter of time, possibly as early as 2013, before this very healthy stock will be below the precautionary levels leading to a huge reduction in the TAC. As I predicted last year, the blue whiting advice is massively higher for next year showing an increase of 875 per cent due to the exclusion of the 2010 acoustic survey. It was very obvious last year the survey was flawed, but unfortunately it was accepted. There still remain major problems with the assessment and management plan. It is hoped that the initiative taken by the PRAC on both these issues will be successful leading to a much improved and reliable approach for 2013. For the first time, scientific advice was issued for boarfish. The advice states no increase in catches which it specifies as the average catch over three years 2008-2010 equating to an advised TAC of 82,000tonnes for 2012. This advice shows how important it is have scientific information, even if it is preliminary.

The Commission has issued its TACs and quotas proposals for 2012 for most of the whitefish and nephrops stock of interest to Ireland. Unfortunately this proposal follows the same flawed methodology as articulated in their policy document issued in May, applying a 25 per cent reduction automatically where there is no scientific advice or where the data available is inadequate. In Ireland's case it makes for very gloomy reading as the vast majority of our stocks fall into this category meaning that almost all of our whitefish and nephrops stocks are showing significant reductions. In the case of cod in the Irish Sea and North West it is proposing a zero catch. This is a flawed proposal based on arbitrary cuts that do not take into account stock trends such as stock size, abundance, fishing mortality rates or recruitment and will lead to increased discarding particularly for cod and haddock. In addition, the Commission is intent on seeking approval of its proposals at November Fisheries Council rather than usual December Council. These proposals cannot be taken seriously and must be rejected by Council and replaced with a workable set of proposals.

Important Dates October - December 2011

DATE	MEETING/EVENT	VENUE
October 3-4	Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (MEFEPO) Project	Brussels
October 4	EP Fisheries Committee Seminar on Regionalisation/Decentralisation	Brussels
October 5	Blue Whiting Focus Group PRAC & General Assembly & Executive Committee	Amsterdam
October 6	PRAC Working Group 1 & 2	Amsterdam
October 7	Commission Seminar Review Cod Management Plans	Brussels
October 10	SFPA Consultative Committee	Dublin
October 10-12	Blue Whiting Coastal States	London
October 13-14	Atlanto Scandia Herring Coastal States	London
October 18	ACFA Working Group 111 Markets	Brussels
October 18	Whitefish Quota management meeting & TACs & Quotas 2012 Consultation	Dublin
Oct 19-21 & Oct 26-28	Mackerel Coastal States	London
October 21	Fisheries Council	Luxembourg
October 25-27	Pelagic Benchmark Workshop	Copenhagen
November 7-11	NEAFC General Meeting	London
November 14-15	Fisheries Council	Brussels
November 15-18	EU/Norway 1st Round Negotiations	Brussels
November 21	Extended Bureau EAPO	Brussels
November 22	ACFA Working Group IV	Brussels
Nov 28-Dec 2	EU/Norway 2nd Round Negotiation	Bergen, Norway
December 8-9	Bureau & Plenary ACFA	Brussels
December 12-13	Fisheries Council	Brussels

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