



## Irish fish producers' organisation

To Josie Briody  
Clerk to the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2  
15/06/2017

### **RE: Presentation to the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine on Quota Management in Ireland**

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee. (For clarification purposes, I have with me today, Dermot Conway, Cara Rawdon, Michael Flannery, and Niall Connolly.

I would like to begin by thanking you all for the opportunity to present to you today on Quota Management issues within the Irish Fishing Sector. As many of you are aware Ireland operates a demersal quota management system by allocating quota to fishing vessels on a monthly basis. That is done as part of a quota management committee to which the IFPO and other stakeholder groups are members of. This committee is chaired by DAFM and meets once a month to allocate fish quotas in line with market demand and actual quota availability. The recommendations of that committee are sent to the Minister of the day. He or she signs off on those recommendations with advice from DAFM. Those recommendations then become part of an authorisation to fish so to speak.

In recent years, this committee has adopted a pragmatic and vigilant approach to quota management ensuring that various percentages of quotas for various species are held back to avoid specific fisheries closures. Ireland is issued with quotas as part of an overall Total Allowable Catch (TAC) which is divided out among the EU member states.

Ireland does not have a perfect demersal quota management system but I believe that our system to manage same is the best available to us at present. This is reflected in that most of our whitefish stocks are showing good recovery patterns. Equally, it would be fair to say that the sector is enjoying a good period with low diesel prices coupled with strong fish prices. Ireland is allocated fishing opportunities under relative stability keys agreed as far back as 1983. We had an opportunity to create a better track record between 1976 and 1983 but it is generally considered that we did not avail of this opportunity to the best of our ability.

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The sharing arrangements for pelagic stocks are managed differently in Ireland. The 23 Refrigerated Sea Water vessels (RSW), six of which are members of the IFPO have access to pelagic stocks only. Four of those vessels are based in Killybegs and two in Castletownbere. We also have polyvalent vessels that fall under a mixture of pelagic and demersal quota management regimes. Some are limited to demersal species only; others have access to demersal and pelagic stocks. Most if not all vessels that have full or limited access to pelagic stocks have so under a ministerial policy directive. For example, 11.7% of the share out of Ireland's Horse mackerel quota is given to six polyvalent vessels from the south of Ireland exclusively. The rest of the polyvalent fleet do not get a specific allocation. This decision for example has caused much controversy since 2005. Equally, there are other anomalies in that some of the dedicated 23 RSW vessels have been excluded from the pelagic Celtic sea Herring fishery. There are also RSW vessels that do not enjoy a specific entitlement in the boarfish fishery while some polyvalent vessels do. Much of this, and in particular the exclusion of RSW vessels from the Celtic sea herring fishery has caused much friction and damaged relationships in recent years within our industry. Many of the current pelagic policies took a significant amount of time and political capital to settle in the past, as access to fishing opportunities is always competitive. This is true of both the RSW and polyvalent sectors.

This issue has again come into sharp focus as a result of the review by Minister Creed into the sharing of Mackerel between the RSW sector and the Polyvalent sector with mackerel entitlements. Minister Creed embarked on this review in January 2017 on foot of a proposal submitted to him in October 2016, from the Irish South and West Fish Producers Organisation. In that proposal, they asked that the increase in this year's mackerel allocation be given exclusively to polyvalent vessels with mackerel entitlements. There have been over 300 submissions as part of this review and the Minister has yet to make a decision. The review in my opinion is therefore still ongoing and I call on the Minister to make a decision to reduce tension at a time when the Irish Fishing industry needs to be united as Brexit is now underway. It is also important to point out that the TAC for mackerel will be reduced in 2018.

The Irish Fish Producer Organisation discussed the proposal to allocate the extra mackerel to the polyvalent vessels at its AGM in December 2016. The majority of members voted to keep sharing arrangements as they are at 87% for the RSW sector and 13% for the polyvalent vessels with access to mackerel. However, our polyvalent members with access to mackerel voted at our AGM to support the proposal. Following on from our AGM I organised a meeting at our offices in Killybegs in Early January 2017, with my RSW and polyvalent members separately.

The position is that the IFPO does not support any change to the current sharing arrangements for mackerel, while respecting the minority position within our membership. We also support the current

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management system for demersal fisheries; while it is not perfect, it works and is very much based on transparency.

In conclusion, there has been some discussion of late on the merit of assigning quota for pelagic stocks direct to factory owners. This would not be acceptable to the catching sector. Processors can buy fish if they are prepared to pay the correct price for it. This would be a move towards an Individual Transferable Quota system which is against national policy at present.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for listening.

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