



Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation CLG

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Irish South and West Submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee JCAM meeting on 7th December 2022

This statement by the Irish South and West Producers Organisation 12 months from our appearance before this committee on the 8th December 2021 can now confirm that every concern in our presentation to this committee is just as bad if not worse than we predicted this month last year. I wish to ask the members of this committee to consider a visit to our fishing ports and harbours in the summer recess next year and see for themselves the evidence by sight of the loss of fishing activity in many small fishing ports all along our coastline where fishing boats and the families who operated are set to become part of the local history & folklore.

The give away that started in the 1970's and 1980's continues to accelerate with the latest giveaway access to our waters for a prize worth we estimate to be worth 400 million Euros, of which a non EU COUNTRY, Norway will take 50% worth in excess of 200 million for this great giveaway this is what Minister is valuing our Demersal fleet at. Europe gives away this fish in quantitative voting at the EU Council and our Representative will do nothing to stop it.

The Irish South and West Producers Organisation predicted the destruction of our fishing industry through a Third Decommissioning Scheme proposed by the Task Force to Minister McConalogue we did not support the scheme as it is written as it requires the wiping out of a third of the 180 vessels operating in Ireland's off-shore Demersal/Whitefish fleet, leading to the ultimate destruction of our Irish Demersal Fishing Fleet.

What we did not predict last year was the devastating effect the Russian invasion had on all Industry with the decision by the Commission to refuse to buy Russian fuel both oil and gas that sent prices skyrocketing.

In response to the pleas from those operating in Ireland's Seafood Industry the IS&WFPO raised the issue not only at home with our Minister but through our membership within European advisory councils and our fellow producer Organisations raised this with the European Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius and in person with members of his DG Mare department. As a result of our consultation, action was taken and within a few weeks the EU Commission acted and evoked Article 26.2 of the EMFAF Regulation 2021/1139 which provides for in case of exceptional events causing a significant disruption of markets, compensation to operators of the fishery and aquaculture sector for their income foregone or additional costs.

The Seafood representatives from all the seafood sectors met with Minister McConalogue in June with the specific issue of financial aid to our sector where we were told there was unallocated money within the 2014-2020 EMFF but the amount is 5,5 million Euro, in total we have met the Minister four times in the past 8 months to repeat- our joint request for the immediate introduction of a national scheme

to compensate the operators of the processing sector, fishery and aquaculture sector for the increased costs of production, processing and marketing caused by the effects of the military aggression of Russia against Ukraine as set out in the Commission's technical note of March 2022.

Minister four times in the past 8 months to repeat- our joint request for the immediate introduction of a national scheme to compensate the operators of the processing sector, fishery and aquaculture sector for the increased costs of production, processing and marketing caused by the effects of the military aggression of Russia against Ukraine as set out in the Commission's technical note of March 2022.

In the meetings with the Minister all representatives outlined to him the crisis that was forcing serious disruptions to businesses in the Seafood Industry from the smallest Island fisherman to the largest pelagic vessels in the catching sector, the daily increases in prices paid by those operating in the Aquaculture sector to the massive increase in operating costs for the processing sector to such an extent business were forced to cease operating and job losses are evident right across the sectors. Following our most recent meeting with the Minister and his Officials this month his opening address to Industry was his continuing assessment of the situation and his acknowledgement action may now have to be taken.

Fellow Member States have for several months received EU funds. The aid measures helped them reduce fuel costs by up to 30 %. Ireland has failed to introduce this aid, which continues to create an uneven competitive playing pitch, as we still face higher fuel costs.

It is also understood the Minister has confirmed €5.5 million of unspent funds will be either spent in other areas or be required to return this unspent money to Europe.

We have made the case that a national fuel aid scheme must be introduced urgently and there are no other areas that are of such critical importance as providing a level playing pitch to compete with our visiting foreign fleets who have the support of their Ministers providing them with aid of up to 30 cent per litre.

Irish fishermen have been very responsible in this matter, but we still have no decision from our Minister on what he will do with the 5.5 million that he will be obligated to give back to the EU if not spent by 31st December 2022.

This on top of the proposed loss of one third of our Demersal Fleet thousands of jobs will be lost in the most remote part of our Island nation all along our coastline. Where jobs are already scarce and our services are even less. Family businesses built up over generations are to be wiped out, left with nothing more than bad memories and accumulated debts.

Our hard-working Fishing families will sit down to yet another bleak Christmas but this year on top of the loss of fish they now told wind turbines will take their place on their traditional grounds.

90% of the waters of Irish waters in the Irish sea had been applied to host these structures, each one bigger than the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

Science says these structures will dramatically change the ecology of our Marine environment but we hear nothing about this from our environmentalists who are stuck blaming fishermen for the destruction of our fish stocks.

The Marine Institutes November 2022 Stock Book continues to highlight the injustice of what our Government gave away in 1982 but Deputies and Senators, just 101 years after the Treaty that gave us our Independence, agreed and signed on 6th December 1921. The publication I refer to is called The Stock Book and consists of 495 pages detailing the truly enormous wealth surrounding our Island Nation with our Irish Fishermen being allowed to catch less than 2 out of every ten caught in our waters as set out in our Departments fisheries Fact sheet of May 2022.

It is ever more evident from what the Irish South and West has been saying based on the work we have done in the past 6 years and more, that we would pay the biggest price and will be left to continue to pay more than any other EU State BOTH to the UK and other Coastal state including non-EU Coastal states

We have been shouting that Brexit was going to hit our Industry harder than any other in Europe. We continuously warned against the Fishing Fleets of other EU Member States that depend so much on our waters and our fish. We predicted that our European neighbours would be Wolves who would treat us like Lambs to the slaughter and sadly despite their acknowledgement of this refuse to lift a finger to put it right.

The Task Force Report “**Navigating Change – The way forward for our Seafood Sector in the wake of the EU/UK Trade & Cooperation Agreement**” sent to Minister McConalogue with its recommendations on how he can use the powers of his Office to mitigate the “*profoundly damaging effects for Ireland’s fishing sector and the coastal communities that depend on fishing*” we predict this year will fail to achieve its objectives and the plans we worked so hard to design will fail under administration red tape and criterias set to cripple rather than support our coastal communities.

The Directors of the Irish South and West FPO, still maintain Irish Fishing Communities were **robbed by the EU** of a quarter 25% of the fish our Fleet catch and land and the 15% outlined in the Departments Documents include paper fish that are not caught thus this distorts the real figure we say is the real figure 25%.

Last year we informed this committee of the facts and figures outlined in the report **Navigating Change** below

On page 13 of the report it states:

The Terms of Reference of the Task Force were to examine the implications arising from the EU/UK TCA for the Irish Fishing industry and coastal communities particularly dependent upon it. It will, in particular, outline initiatives that could be taken to provide supports for development and restructuring so as to ensure a profitable and sustainable fishing fleet and to identify opportunities for jobs and economic activity in coastal communities dependent on fishing.

The seafood sector and dependent coastal communities are amongst the areas most negatively impacted by the TCA. The impacts are significant, immediate and long lasting. The impacts of the TCA on the Seafood Sector and Coastal Communities need to be addressed.

On Page 14, as shown by the graph below, is the financial package recommended by the Report to bring our fishing fleet back within financial viability following the loss of 25% + of our Total Allowable Catch:

Decommissioning	Million Euro
Whitefish	€63.50
Inshore	€6.00
Off Register/Inshore Inactive	€3.70
Total	€73.20

Last year at this committee meeting we said **only the IS&WFPO** recorded as **not agreeing** with the terms and conditions of the Decommissioning Scheme as set out in the Report, this year we must amend this statement for we learned two other participants also said they could not support a decommissioning scheme.

To inform the Task Force on the scale of restructuring required, a profitability analysis was carried out by BIM.

This analysis quantified the number of vessels required to be removed from the Irish Fleet in order to return the various fleet segments to the current level of profitability (estimated at 16%), pre-TCA. This analysis focused on the polyvalent and beam trawl fleet segments and estimated that some **60 whitefish polyvalent and beam trawl vessels of a Gross Tonnage of 8,000 GT and engine power of over 21,000 KW would need to be removed so as to return these fleet segments to profitability**. This equates to 26% of the vessels in number, and 29% of the engine power and Gross Tonnage. Removing this amount of capacity would, apparently, potentially free up approximately €38 million worth of quota.

We can now confirm 64 vessels have applied for the decommissioning scheme, 19 of which are from our home port of Castletownbere.

Desperation and the stark reality of the failure by those who were meant to protect and support us leaves them with no choice but to take what is offered and we in the IS&W say once again the money allocated to support the scheme is simply not enough i.e. 8,000 gt multiplied by the maximum figure 12,000 per gt requires a fund 96 million and not the 63 million our Minister has provided this is a shortfall of 33 million.

*The Irish South and West retain our stated position last year that as this scheme is introduced to deal with the catastrophic effects of an unforeseen extraordinary event that will end a tradition for up to one third of the families in our Industry **forever**, the Irish State should not prosper one cent for this tragedy and therefore these payments should be fully Tax exempt otherwise our state profits from the misery it is inflicting on our fishing families forced from their livelihoods culture and traditions.*

Last year I submitted pictures of the extensive work carried out on their vessels to make sure they were safe and sea worthy to face the ever worsening sea conditions due to climate change.

The pictures below supplied by just two of our Directors demonstrate the extensive work carried out by both on their vessels in 2019.









I ask you Deputies and Senators which one of these two vessels will be sent to the scrap yard in 2023? To add to the hurt, **Open Market Value** is not used to calculate what should be paid to the family losing all, with no consideration given to the loss of their income, no understanding that each vessel, regardless of age has the same opportunity as the distribution of quota is not decided by the age of one's vessels.

€400 million plus, is to be spent across our Fishing Industry and Fishing Communities, from pier upgrades to processing grants, Aquaculture, tie up schemes all to be taken from the **One point two Billion in EU Funding out of the Five Billion in total set aside by the EU** with this compensation for the loss of future Billions of Euros from Irish Fishing Communities and from the Irish people I hope I am not before you next year asking why are we returning a huge portion of this money to Europe. The Irish South and West looked to bring our Industry together and Sail our fleet up Cork's River Lee and conduct a "Show and Tell" public awareness event to address the Irish people of the dire and uncertain futures we were facing following the theft of 25 % of our National fleets Total Allowable Catch as a result of Brexit. How sad it is that the pictures of many of these vessels will be all that is to remain of them after their scrapping in 2023.

Below is a Table drafted by BIM

Table 39: Estimated average, minimum and maximum payments at a rate of €10,600 GT

Segments	Count of Vessels	Final Segment Payment	Average Vessel Payment	Minimum Vessel Payment	Maximum Vessel Subtotal
Beamers	-2	1,588,907	794,454	525,259	882,188
Hake Gillnetters	-2	708,988	354,494	258,547	416,990
Prawns 12-18m	-4	1,339,941	334,985	222,905	455,169
Prawns 18-24m	-12	12,637,243	1,053,104	611,414	1,524,938
Prawns 24-40m	-8	13,752,191	1,719,024	1,024,140	2,268,842
Seiners	-2	2,383,295	1,191,647	918,955	1,300,051
Tier 1	-4	9,769,357	2,442,339	1,278,339	3,060,795
Whitefish 12-18m	-6	1,946,787	324,464	202,932	490,953
Whitefish 18-24m	-8	8,185,094	1,023,137	615,542	1,432,884
Whitefish 24-40m	-4	6,477,967	1,619,492	923,239	2,256,614
Whitefish/Prawn <12m	-8	591,327	73,916	57,202	139,815
Total		-60		59,381,098	

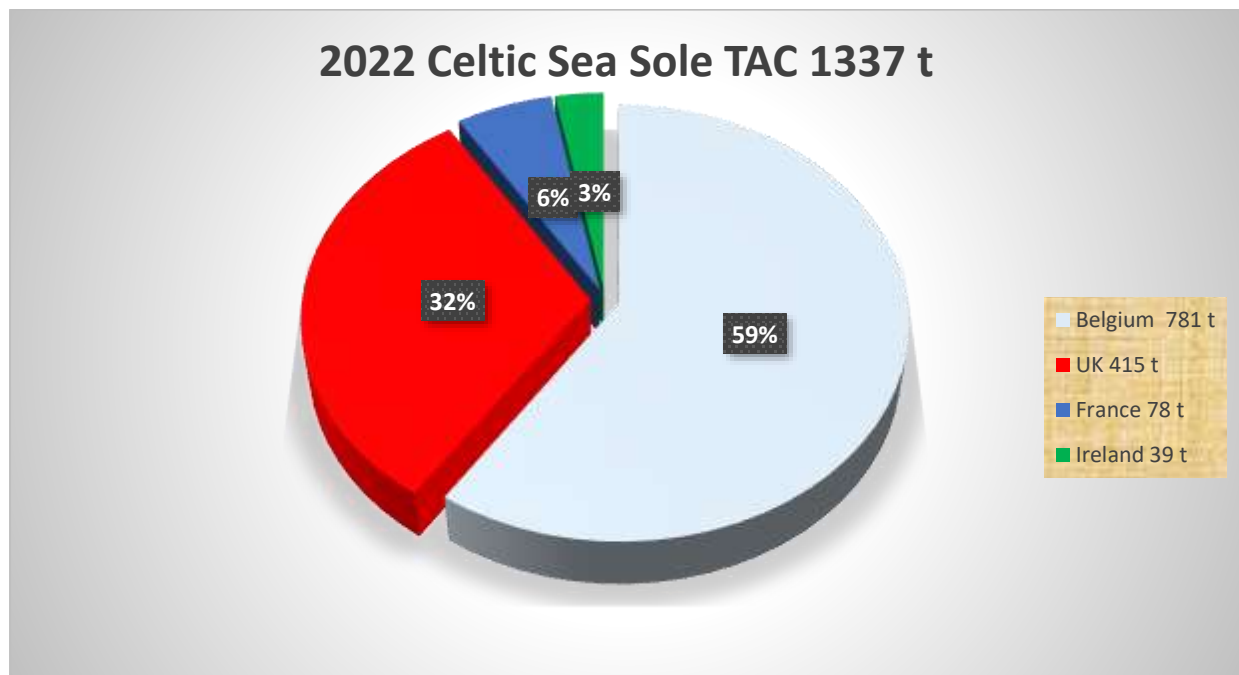
Members of the Committee, this the **THIRD Decommissioning** of the Irish Fishing Fleet and I ask you all to please study the graph below put together by a member of the Marine Institute a couple of years ago.

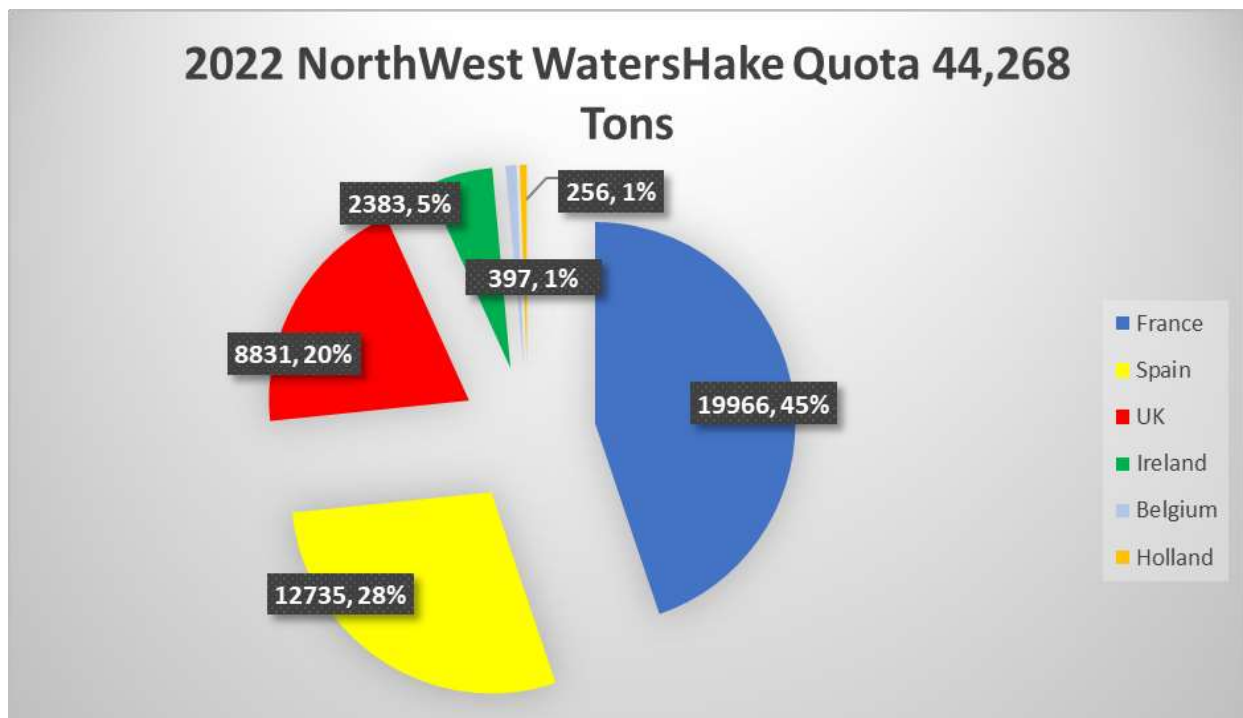
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
15-18m:	50	41	37	35	30	24	21	20	18	18	19	18
Over 18m:	280	204	162	165	164	164	171	170	169	164	165	164

The number of boats fishing off shore in 2006 was 330 this will be 120 in 2023 is this deemed a success or a failure?

Deputies and Senators, this submission once again highlights the desperate situation our Industry continues to find itself in and our only way out is to seek a fair and equitable share of what is not shown below and that is what our fellow Member States will be allowed to catch in our Waters during 2023 if we fail in securing more fish I fear there will be more Irish fishing families asked to leave our Industry.

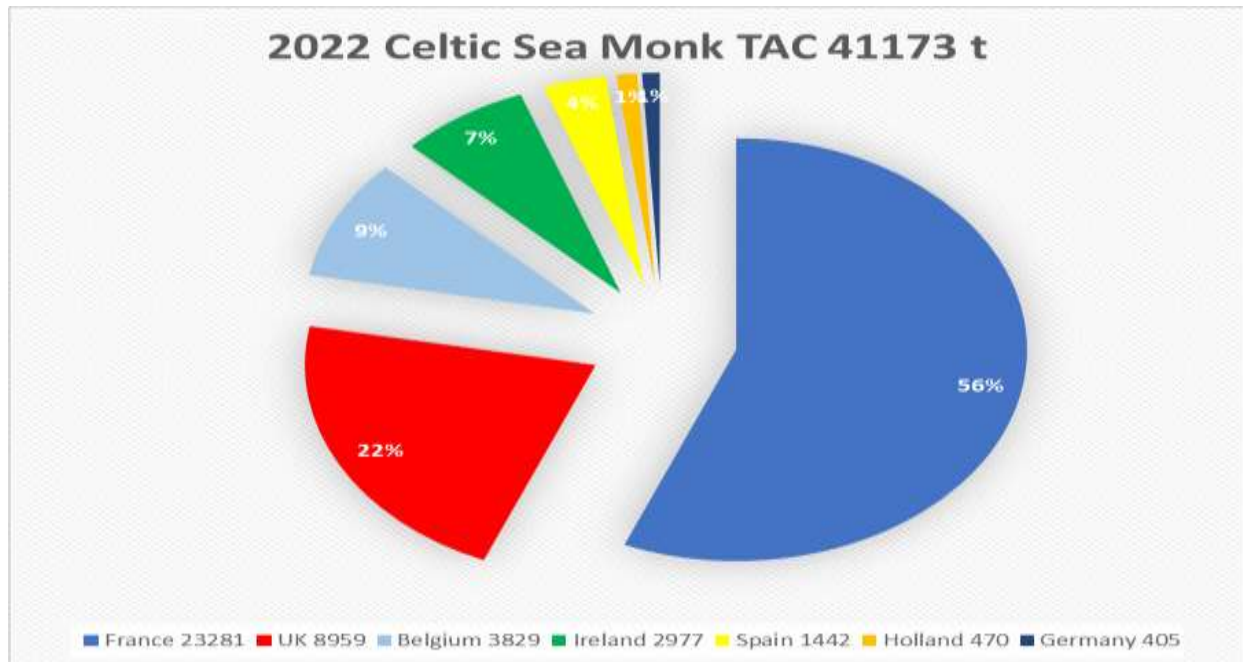
Deputies, Senators please see the pie chart below that shows clearly the disproportionate share Irish fishermen have of the valuable Sole species in our Celtic Sea. This is highlighted by the truth Belgium is investing in their Industry building new boats to prosecute the fish in our waters and not their own.





Above in the Pie chart shows the distribution of a key stock for our Demersal fleet is the well-known fish, Hake, once again the picture shows the unfair share Ireland has in this fish that inhabit the waters around our Island.

Below is the pie chart for another critical part of the demersal fleets targeted stocks Monk Fish.



One can see we kept the colours for the countries fleets the same to show how our fishermen fishing in the Irish EEZ are the fleets with the smallest share and this is what is forcing our fishermen to voluntarily take decommissioning.

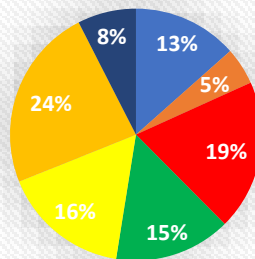
We are asking this committee to advise our Minister a deal at any cost is something we should reject out of hand, below is the Pie chart that is positive news for all fishermen.

The Blue whiting stock has amazed us all and its explosion in numbers can mean a life line is there for the Irish pelagic fleet if our country will stand firm with Industry in seeking a rebalancing of the unfair burden that Ireland suffered within the EU & UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

We are asking for an additional 80,000 Tons of this fish for our people and in return we will agree to the Norwegians request to catch their 400,000 ton allocation in the area south the 56.5 degree line previously known as the Irish Box.

2022 Blue Whiting EU North East Atlantic TAC 192,886

ICES TAC FOR 2023 is 1,359,629 Tons



■ France 25557 ■ Sweden 9084 ■ Denmark 36723 ■ Ireland 28438
■ Spain 31133 ■ Holland 44780 ■ Germany 14279