

Fisheries Quota Management in Ireland

The fish quota management system is designed to ensure, having regard to fishing patterns and market conditions, the best possible spread both between fishing vessel operators and in terms of take up of quota during the year. The arrangements have been set and developed over many years since the commencement of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and the introduction of quotas. Any amendments or changes to the overarching policy on management arrangements are determined by the Minister following detailed analysis and full consultation with stakeholders, in particular the fishing industry.

A key objective of whitefish quota management is the avoidance of very early closure of fisheries through rapid exhaustion of quota. This is important because our whitefish fisheries are mixed and an early closure may lead to discarding of marketable fish. In Ireland, quota is a public resource and is managed to ensure that property rights are not granted to individual operators. This is seen as a critical policy in order to ensure that quotas are not concentrated into the hands of large fishing companies whose owners have the financial resources to buy up such rights. In Ireland, any movement towards privatisation and concentration of rights into the hands of large companies would seriously risk fishing vessels losing an economic link with Ireland's coastal communities and undermining the socio-economic importance of the fishing industry in the coastal communities, dependant on fishing. The result of this long-standing policy is that the Irish fishing fleet involves a balanced spread of sizes and types of fishing vessels who have retained a strong economic link with our coastal communities and have delivered economic activity including vital employment in these communities, where there are very limited alternative economic activities.

Under the arrangements, a formal Quota Management Advisory Committee (QMAC) involving fishing industry representatives from the catching and processing sectors, meet each month, and as far as possible, the Minister follows their recommendations for monthly regimes for particular stocks. Additional meetings are organised as required to discuss specific issues in particular fisheries that may arise. The Committee is currently composed of:

- Representatives from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (including a senior Departmental official acting as Chairperson);
- Representatives from the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority;
- One representative from each of the 5 Producer Organisations:
 - o Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation,
 - o Irish Fish Producers Organisation,
 - o Irish South & East Fish Producers Organisation,
 - o Irish South & West Fish Producers Organisation,
 - o Irish Islands Marine Resource Organisation,
- One representative from the Irish Fish Processors and Exporters Association,
- One representative from the National Inshore Fisheries Forum,
- One representative from the Co-Operative group.

The QMAC operate by examining in detail each month the operation of each fishery, available quota and uptake patterns for the different métiers of fishing vessels, including inshore fishing vessels. There are detailed discussions each month on catch limits taking account of the divergent situation of the fleet, including that of smaller inshore fishing vessels, and of the market. The Committee may also take

account of the weather/sea conditions in the preceding quota period and the impact this may have had on the industry during that period, particularly in respect of the smaller vessels. It also has the possibility of recommending additional catch limits to incentivise the introduction of environmentally friendly fishing gear in particular fisheries or for particular types of vessels. The Minister introduces Statutory provisions which, in most cases, give legal effect to the recommendations of the QMAC and which are enforceable by the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority and the Irish Naval Service.

The fishing of pelagic species is generally confined to the spring and autumn months with the fisheries being opened and closed by the Minister on the basis of industry recommendations and catch levels.

Under the Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006 the Minister has the power to make the following legal instruments to manage fisheries:

Fisheries Management Notices – Fisheries Management Notices are used to open and close fisheries as well as set catch limits (generally monthly) in certain fisheries for Irish vessels. These provisions are used to manage whitefish stocks primarily.

Authorised fisheries: The Minister may **determine** under what circumstances an Irish vessel will require an authorisation from the Department to fish for particular species. The Minister will issue such **authorisations** to appropriate vessels. As part of this management process approx 2,000 authorisations and amendments are issued each year.

Statutory Instruments (S.I.s) – The different provisions of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) are implemented through the Minister making Statutory Instruments under *Section 14* of the Act. National conservation measures, that go beyond what is required in the TAC – such as the requirement for Irish vessels with monkfish catches to land at certain designated ports – are implemented through the Minister making S.I.s under *Section 15* of the Act.

Determination of the need for an Authorisation - As part of the determination document, the Minister **determines** under what circumstances an Irish vessel will require an authorisation from the Department to fish for particular species. The Minister also determines the circumstances for those fisheries where an authorisation is not required such as certain small boat fisheries.

Detailed Quota Management – Arrangements

Following consultation with Member States, the Council agree the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and Quotas at the December Fisheries Council each year. These Regulations set out for each Member State the total tonnage of catch for certain species in specific areas of the sea that they are allowed to catch. It is the responsibility of each Member State to manage their fisheries within these quotas. There are three categories of species to which Quotas apply. These are:-

- Whitefish Species;
- Deep Sea Species; and
- Pelagic Species

In Ireland, quotas are a public resource and are managed by the Minister. The Minister decides on the management of fish quotas following consultation with industry representatives of the Quota Management Advisory Committee.

Whitefish quotas

Whitefish and deep-sea quotas are generally managed on a monthly basis. Consultation is carried out each month at the Quota Management Advisory Committee meeting involving representatives of the industry, the Department and the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority. The whitefish quotas are generally managed on the basis of catch limits set for each month. Some 28 whitefish stocks are currently managed in this way. For some stocks at certain times of the year, the catch limits may be set for a two or three month period. The catch limit set generally involves a quantity for smaller vessels and double that quantity for larger vessels (vessels under and at or over 55ft /16.76m). Vessels using seine fishing gear may receive increased catch limits for certain stocks.

Pelagic Management

There are 8 principal managed pelagic stocks (Mackerel, Celtic Sea Herring, North West Herring, Atlanto-Scandian Herring, Horse Mackerel, Blue Whiting, Boarfish and Albacore tuna) and the particular management of each is further subdivided between various sectors of the fleet.

Mackerel

The mackerel quota is divided between the large dedicated Pelagic fleet, known as the Refrigerated Seawater Tank (RSW) vessels and the Polyvalent (multi-purpose) vessels on the basis of 87% : 13% share. The sharing arrangement has been reviewed and amended on occasion in the past and has involved an increased share being made available to the polyvalent segment of the fleet. The allocation arrangements for the RSW Pelagic segment, which were based on historic vessel length, have been in place for many years. The allocation to the polyvalent vessels is now set based on track record of fishing over the 2007/2009 period which qualifies them for an allocation and determines the level of that allocation. The vessels from both fleets receive a catch limit for the year; any uncaught fish for each fleet may be re-allocated to that fleet at the end of the year. Vessels in the polyvalent segment under 18m in overall length, without a track record, have access to a periodic boat catch limit and 2.5% of the polyvalent segment allocation is available for these vessels.

Horse Mackerel

The allocation of the horse mackerel quota is established based on track record of fishing vessels in the period prior to 2005. These vessels are given an annual catch limit. Vessels without the annual catch limit in the polyvalent segment of the fleet may apply for a periodic catch limit which is available from a modest proportion of the quota set aside each year, which varies from year to year.

Herring Fisheries

*Celtic Sea herring fishery**: The access arrangements for vessels to the main fishery was established in 2012 based on track record in 2010 and earlier years*. The Minister is advised on the management arrangements for this fishery by the Celtic Sea Herring Management Advisory Committee comprising of industry representatives. The fishery takes place in the autumn and is managed for qualified vessels with a weekly catch limit established for the fishing season. A sentinel fishery around the Dunmore East area is separately managed with 11% of the quota set aside for this fishery. This sentinel fishery is restricted to smaller vessels (under 17m in overall length) and is not restricted to vessels with track record. It is usually an autumn fishery with weekly catch limits set for vessels which book into the fishery. Up to 5% of the quota is also made available for vessels under 20m without a track record on the basis of modest monthly catch limits. The fishery is closely monitored and reviewed by the Celtic Sea herring Management Advisory Committee who may from time to time recommend amended

arrangements for the fishery.

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*North West Herring**: The access arrangements for vessels to the main fishery was established in 2012 based on track record in 2010 and earlier years. This is an autumn fishery and vessels qualified for this fishery are allocated an annual catch limit. Up to 5% of the quota is also made available for vessels under 20m without a track record on the basis of modest monthly catch limits.

**In recent years, as the stock was under a monitoring quota, the 2012 policy has been set aside to facilitate the collection of scientific data.*

Atlanto Scandian herring fishery: This is a fishery in Norwegian waters and catch limits are made available each year, following consultation and an objective selection process, to an agreed small number of selected vessels. The fishery usually takes place in the early part of the year.

Blue Whiting fishery

This fishery is managed on the basis of 91% of the quota set aside for vessels in the RSW Pelagic segment and 9% for vessels in the polyvalent segment. The vessels given a catch limit are nominated by industry each year. Where there is no agreed industry position, the Minister will seek applications and a draw will take place to select the vessels to receive an Authorisation.

Boarfish fishery

This fishery is managed on the basis of 85% of the quota set aside for vessels with the determined track record and 15% for vessels without track record. A small amount to the set aside for by – catch.

Albacore Tuna fishery

Under EU Regulation, this fishery is restricted to 50 Irish vessels each year. In recent years, all interested vessels have been accommodated within the fishery. A per trip limit on the quantity landed is set for all vessels.

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