



Michael Walsh,  
Chairman,  
FIF,  
Fitzwilliam Business Centre,  
26/27 Upper Pembroke Street,  
Dublin 2.

9 June 2008

Dear Michael,

I refer to your letter of June 5<sup>th</sup> regarding the fuel crisis facing Irish fishermen, and our very productive and informative meeting of May 29<sup>th</sup>.

The escalation of fuel costs, as a result of global economic and political conditions, is as you correctly state, a matter of concern for all sectors of industry.

Let me assure you that I am fully cognisant of and sympathetic to the current plight of Irish fishermen in the current climate of increasing fuel prices. Furthermore, my officials and I are fully committed to bring about a situation whereby our fishing fleet has a viable and sustainable future.

It is apparent that the crisis fishermen find themselves in at present is a European wide issue. I welcome the detailed briefing you gave at our meeting on the EAPO meeting with Commissioner Borg and, in that regard, the statement issued by the Commissioner on the 29<sup>th</sup> May which focused on the need for measures to tackle the structural problems of fleet over capacity and fuel-inefficient equipment and practices.

On foot of our meeting, Minister Smith had a lengthy telephone conversation with Commissioner Borg on June 5<sup>th</sup>, in which he outlined, in detail, the situation for Irish fishermen and sought a full discussion of the issue at the Fisheries Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> June in Luxembourg. In this regard, he asked the Commissioner to consider options available at European level to address the current difficulties being experienced by fishing fleets across the EU. I am pleased to say that Minister's Smith's request has been acceded to and the issue has been included on the Council Agenda for June 23<sup>rd</sup>.

In addition and following Minister's Smith's telephone conversation with Commissioner Borg, arrangements are being made for a bilateral meeting with the Commissioner at which Minister Smith and I will have the opportunity to further discuss the issues of concern to Irish fishermen.

I understand that the Commissioner is currently preparing a paper outlining the options for an urgent response at European level to the current difficult situation for fishing fleets with a view to the planned discussions at the Council meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> June.

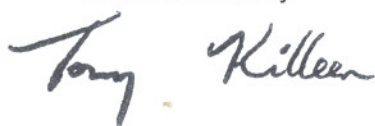
At the Council meeting, I will also be pushing for the adoption of new rules addressing IUU (Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported) fishing. We have strongly supported the introduction of strong measures that will eliminate and prevent fishing by IUU vessels which are undermining legitimate fishing activity by our fishing fleet. These measures will include a certification scheme designed to cover all imports of fishery products whereby products entering the EU must be certified as having been caught legally. I will be seeking the urgent adoption of the proposal which I consider will provide the necessary strong protection to Community and Irish fishermen operating within the legal framework of the CFP and eliminate the landing and import into the EU of fish caught by IUU vessels.

I am also confident that offers to vessel owners under the voluntary decommissioning scheme which was announced in February will be issued as quickly as possible. As you are aware, the scheme will permanently remove a substantial number of the larger, older and economically unviable vessels from the Irish Fishing fleet. The aim of this measure is to rebalance the current mismatch between the size of the fleet and the sustainable level of fishing possibilities, ensuring that those remaining in the industry post decommissioning can be assured of higher quotas and will increase their profitability. This is one of the key approaches to improved profitability for the fleet in the Cawley Strategy and remains a key element in finding a long term viable future for the whitefish fleet.

I am also planning to meet with you in advance of the Council meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and I have asked my office to make contact to find a suitable time.

You can be assured that I will continue to work on your behalf with the Commission to progress discussions at the forthcoming Council as well as having the opportunity to discuss your concerns bilaterally with Commissioner Borg.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Killeen". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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Tony Killeen T.D.

Minister of State.

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food