

Ifpo information for members 29.09.08

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COMMON FISHERIES POLICY REVIEW

The dreaded Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is due for its next 10 year review to finish by 2012. This is obviously the most important long-term item for all of you and us over the coming few years. The debate has already kicked off with the European Commission and the French EU Presidency submitting papers which look at a whole range of areas. The Commission are blaming “irresponsible fishermen” and “irresponsible politicians” for the dreadful state of things and seem to be leaning toward an ITQ and regional as opposed to national management.

This is going to be a vital process which will set the scene for a whole decade. IFPO has already engaged with the Minister and DAFF on the matter and will continue to do so. The papers are available on “LATEST NEWS” in the IFPO website www.ifpo.ie.

MSO CODE OF PRACTISE 15–24 METRES

IFPO has been concerned about the renewal of licenses for the first batch of 15–24 metre vessels (the newer ones) and had extensive discussions with DAFF and the Minister to get things moving. IFPO has not got a meeting with MSO yet and we have had to get the Minister to intervene on this. Anyone who has problems with this, please advise us immediately.

FIRST SHOTS LEADING TO CHRISTMAS TAC AND QUOTA TALKS

The ICES advice has come out as you know, with cuts in various quotas – Prawns, Cod, NW Herring, Celtic Sea Herring. The list of advice is on the IFPO website www.ifpo.ie. We have already engaged strongly on the Prawns issue at EU Commission, with the Marine Institute, Minister and DAFF. Any cut is completely unacceptable. Separately, we are looking at a major cut in Blue Whiting and possible cut in Tuna due to it not having been fished in recent years. This again is not acceptable, particularly in light of the fact that this year’s fishery is currently going pretty well.

The next phase is the actual EU Commission proposals. They represent the EU’s opening position leading up to Christmas. DAFF and ourselves with the Minister are actually trying to work together on this process.

EFFORT CONTROLS CELTIC SEA

Due to the alleged state of Cod, we have been threatened with a days-at-sea regime for the Celtic Sea every year for the past few. Indications are that despite closed areas, and fishermen’s knowledge of stocks, that it still is being assessed as dire. The French, who have been our allies in this all along, seem to have caved in and as they are in the presidency, they have a lot of influence at present. Therefore all the signals we are getting is that this is likely to be a reality in 2009 although we are of course not accepting this as a fact. The system if brought in is likely to be based on an overall kilowatt/days bucket of effort, and the worst of it would only be seen in later years.

ADMIN SANCTIONS, SHORT TERM AID, DECOMMISSIONING

The Government has since August put an application in to the EU for a €37 million package which includes under and over 18 metre decommissioning, short term aid, aid for fuel efficiency etc. Your CEO has been talking to the EU Commission and got a briefing on the timescale and realistic possibility of this money being available in the short term. The short answer is “Don’t hold your breath”. Even if it comes, it will be next year.

We, through FIF, have continued to press for administrative sanctions for minor offences. The Minister has advised us – again – that this is not Constitutionally possible. We disagree although DAFF is adamant and made strong efforts for us to drop it, saying this has been looked at by three Attorneys General and four Ministers in succession. They tell us that the only way is for the EU to make such sanctions mandatory in EU law. We will have to just keep at it!

By the way, just for clarity: there *are* criminal sanctions in operation in other EU countries – but they have administrative systems which kick in *first* for minor offences.

BRIEFING FOR IRISH MEPs IN BRUSSELS

The IFPO, on behalf of FIF, gave a comprehensive briefing last week to Irish MEPS on fishing industry issues. We stressed the need for them to work with us, and indeed the Minister and DAFF, to pursue an Irish agenda, in order to maximise the Irish voice in Europe on these issues. Brian Crowley, Sean O Neachtain, Liam Alyward, Kathy Synott, Mairead McGuinness and Marian Harkin were at the meeting with representatives from Avril Doyle, Pronsias deRossa and Jim Higgins also present. It was a constructive and useful event which MEPs said that they had learned from. We will follow up with them and organise a similar event for TDs in the near future.

BIM

There is a lot of talk about BIM at present, as they are under review as part of the Government's strategy. We have issued a statement which includes the following "We consider that the role of state organisations *should* be reviewed and if necessary re-organised from time to time to maximise their effectiveness in meeting the particular challenges of the day. Other agencies or DAFF itself should be looked at too.

BIM has played an important role for many years in the development of many aspects of the fishing industry. We would be very concerned if the focus on fisheries development were lost..... If there are to be any proposed changes, the fishing industry as the key group which BIM exists to serve MUST be fully consulted on all aspects prior to any decisions being taken. IFPO is more than willing to participate in such a process if required."

QUOTA UPTAKE AND AWAPS

We have been doing our best to get swaps to see if we could re-open Via Cod and to bolster some other key areas, including Prawns. We have a real difficulty insofar as we have damn-all that we can exchange out, so progress is very limited. The latest quotas for October have been advised to you. Remember, they are also available on www.ifpo.ie

PELAGIC RAC MEETING

The Pelagic RAC meeting in Holland on Sept. 24 dealt with Mackerel (which should be increased for 2009), Blue Whiting (which will be drastically cut) and with NW Herring. Further details will be circulated to members in the pelagic fisheries after the upcoming the Working Group meeting on the 14th Oct..

UPCOMING MEETINGS AT WHICH IFPO WILL BE REPRESENTED

29 Sep	Council of Fisheries Ministers, Brussels
1 Oct	BIM 3d Economic Workshop, Dublin
6 Oct	Cawley Group (Seafood Strategy Implementation) Dublin
8 Oct	NWWRAC Executive Committee, Paris
9 Oct	NWWRAC Focus Group on Technical Conservation Measures, Paris
10 Oct	Marine Institute / Industry Partnership, Galway
14 Oct	Pelagic RAC Working Group Meeting, Holland