

IFPO INFORMATION NOTE RE ALLOCATION OF MARCH 2009 WHITEFISH QUOTAS

The allocation of 8 tonne / 4 tonne Area VIIa Cod over a two monthly period March–April is causing concern and has been heavily criticised.

The IFPO strongly and successfully opposed the creation of a dedicated gillnet fishery scheme in recent months, as a result of widespread consultation and a board discussion. This view was taken because of the wish not to create additional schemes for separate fisheries, in order not to incentivise a dedicated fishery, low prices and quota levels. This was the view of the majority although a number of vessels had a strongly opposing view in the organisation.

The organisation and the CEO have to operate on a basis of consensus but also on the basis of fairness within and outside the IFPO. While the arguments for a special scheme and restricted quota stand, a number of other factors had to be taken into consideration:

The Kilowatt Days scheme (which is currently under review, but which has made allocations for the first quarter) severely limits the fishing days available to all vessels in the Irish Sea. This is a major additional control on effort which will impact on Cod quotas and will greatly reduce the takeup on Cod in VIIa in itself.

Trawl fishing in Area VIIa already produces extremely low Cod catches and this will become even lower in 2009, in all likelihood, as vessels avoid Cod to secure days.

There remains a legal Cod quota to catch in VIIa and while a repeat of the disaster in 2008 (caused by an open quota) cannot be allowed, neither can or should there be uncaught quota at year end.

The SFPA is mounting a special control exercise regarding Cod in Area VIIa and the Celtic Sea including VMS surveillance during the current months to avoid trans–area logging.

There is a traditional Gillnet fishery for Cod in the southern VIIa and Celtic Sea in the early months of the year. Yes there are depressed prices and yes, it would be better if we did not have a directed fishery. But we cannot simply ignore the situation of gillnetters who have targeted this species. The current regime for February and the two monthly allocation of 8 tonnes / 4 tonnes for March April is far, far more restrictive than 2008 and represents a 15 tonne total possible allocation per vessel over three months. There will be adequate quota available in subsequent periods to meet the needs of vessels in the view of the Committee.

There was a detailed discussion by all the organisations including IFPO, the SFPA, DAFF regarding this issue. Taking all the factors into account, the decision to allocate was taken. The IFPO CEO accepts full responsibility for his part in making that decision.

As regards two monthly quotas for KW/days areas, it is believed that this is a sensible and logical interim measure to align quotas to the management period.