

BRUSSELS FISHERIES COUNCIL 15 JULY 2008 – EMERGENCY AID PACKAGE

In response to (valid) criticism of the speed with which information gets back to members from major events, we are taking this opportunity to get the information from Brussels yesterday out to you via the website and a text message to advise this to you. We hope this is useful and fair to all members. Any feedback is welcome.

The FIF Press Statement which was issued last night (Wed 16th July, 2AM) is also on the web now.

The Brussels meeting of EU Fisheries Ministers on Tuesday 15th July was attended by your CEO as usual. FIF met the Minister for a long meeting before the Council. We went through the whole EU proposal line by line and stressed the vital elements which were on the table and which needed change. We also discussed an outline proposal on discards. We met with the Minister again after the conclusion of council and did our media work as normal. IFPO CEO did interviews on RTE Morning Ireland, Newstalk 106–108, RTE TV News, RTE Nuacht, TG4, Raidio na Gaeltachta, The Minister is in no doubt as to what our members will feel about the outcome.

There was a huge battle at the EU Council about any additional EU money. Countries like Germany, Austria, Sweden, Poland, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Finland and Chezh tried to block any funding.

KEY OUTCOMES

A package of emergency measures including for tie-up aid was agreed at Council. Also agreed was clearance for countries which have European Fisheries Funds moneys of their own to move some of that to the emergency aid measures. Some countries have plenty cash and will spend it on the package in coming weeks and months.

The €600 million additional EU funding was not finally agreed. It is still on the table. It will have to be finalised over coming weeks as will each country's share of it. In any case, any additional EU aid cannot be spent in 2008 as things stand. This is totally unacceptable. We know the Minister fought very hard for the money, fair enough, but the fact is he did not succeed in getting money NOW.

Ireland also tabled an interim outline proposal for a pilot project on discards in the prawn fisheries whereby over quota marketable whitefish could be landed by boats which use selectivity gear on a trial basis, with a basic price being paid via POs to vessels. The fish would be sold on the market and the proceeds over and above the basic price paid to vessels would be donated to charity – the RNLI or some other. **This is only a basic idea which was presented to the Commission and it needs considerably more work if it is to come to anything.**

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

We still have no short term aid money on the table immediately.

Very simply, the Irish Government will have to come up with immediate short-term aid from the Government's coffers. They now have the CLEARANCE from the EU to do this after yesterday. FIF has been very consistent on this: we supported their efforts to get EU money but we have made clear all along that if this was not forthcoming in the short term, that the Irish Government would have to do so. That is the only answer for the immediate problem.

FIF and IFPO will now get about lobbying the Minister for Finance and follow up on Ger O'Flynn's meeting with the Taoiseach last week to secure money from the Irish government. We know things are very tight, but the industry has to be given a **priority NOW**. After all, the country has not gone broke overnight.

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