

BENEFICIARY: **BORD IASCAIGH MHARA**
PROJECT REFERENCE NUMBER: **19/SPIS/DI012**
NAME OF PROJECT: **Developing Opportunities for Blue Whiting**
IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD: **1st January to 31st December 2019**

Project Scope

Raw material constraints are a significant growth impediment for Ireland's seafood sector. Accessing and extracting maximum value from available resources is also a strategic priority for the seafood sector (Food Wise 2025). Although Ireland has only 3.5% of the overall blue whiting 1.3 million MT TAC; this resource represents Ireland's largest accessible fish species, with over 400,000MT caught annually within Ireland's EEZ, largely by non-Irish vessels.

As a member of the cod family, blue whiting family shares many of its traits including texture and wide taste appeal and has also achieved MSC certification. In addition, the global demand for sustainable whitefish product alternatives is growing rapidly. Despite these high-volume opportunities, blue whiting has been largely relegated to lower-value commodity and fishmeal categories due to both a lack of alternative market insights and processing innovation. Confounding factors to date in the development of this resource is the small size of the fish (c. 120g), it's delicate flesh and the pelagic sector's focus on volume, which impacts on both the quality and processability.

This project sought to identify supply chain quality issues, trial bespoke blue whiting processing equipment, engage potential customers with a variety of product formats and assess the commercial viability of various processing business models.

Objectives

- To select third party experts to facilitate commercial scale processing trials.
- Identify and mitigate quality issues in the supply chain.
- Source and process a minimum of 140MT of raw material into relevant product formats.
- Engage potential customers to gain insights into volume and value opportunities.
- Use data collected to determine the commercial viability of investing in new processes.
- Communicate outputs to the pelagic sector.
- Produce a final project report detailing the outputs of the project.

Budget: €369,340

Achievements / Spend

BIM selected Col Fisher, a French third party expert, to review supply chain quality issues at the vessel and processor level, manage the specific processing trials and engage customers with product formats produced. Eddie Carr & Co. was selected as the third-party processing equipment supplier. Eddie Carr & Co. set up, adjusted, and provided technical support to operatives at participating processing plants during trials. Premier Fish Products Ltd. and Island Seafoods Ltd. provided premises and personnel to facilitate the commercial processing trials and liaised with participating fishers to source raw material. BIM project managed the various participants to ensure project outputs were met. The following are the main achievements of the project:

- A total of four participating vessels landed fish on twelve separate occasions for trials.
- Fish processing trials were conducted between both processing plants on 29 separate days between 2nd March and 12th April. Quality was sufficient to process on all except two occasions.
- Trials revealed that blue whiting can be processed at appropriate commercial capacity and yield levels using Baader equipment.
- 140MT of blue whiting was processed into 40.5 MT of fillets, headed and gutted, mince, and surimi products.
- 106 customers in 18 different countries were contacted.
- 16 customers expressed interest and indicated volume and value opportunities following review of products.
- Analysis of processing data and customer price/volume indications demonstrated viable investment opportunities for specific product formats.
- Outputs were presented to processors and feedback on the project was positive.
- A final project report was produced detailing the outputs of the project.

SUMMARY OF SPEND:

| Total Approved | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| Total Eligible Expenditure | €369,339.35 |
| Total Drawdown | €369,339.35 |
| EU – 50% | €184,669.67 |
| Exchequer – 50% | €184,669.67 |

Report by: Michael Gallagher

Date: May 2020