

# EMFF Operational Programme 2014-2020 Seafood Processing Development Measure

## BIM Seafood Technical Services

### Inshore Fisheries Conservation Scheme Work Programme Projects

#### Final Report 2021

**BENEFICIARY:** Bord Iascaigh Mhara  
**PROJECT REFERENCE NUMBER:** 21/IFCS/STS-BG042-BR081  
**NAME OF PROJECT:** **Supporting Networking in the Inshore Fisheries Sector**  
**IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD:** 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021

## Project Scope

The inshore fisheries sector has historically been poorly organised and fragmented. The Inshore Fisheries Forum Initiative provides a platform for the sector to engage with state and other actors that have an interest in the inshore space and seeks to develop the capacity of the sector to not only sustain but enhance its contribution to coastal communities.

The intent has always been to use the establishment and initial facilitation of the Inshore Forums to build capacity in the sector such that it is ultimately able to take its place at the table with the representatives of the larger vessels in the fleet in establishing robust self-sustaining representative structures for the sector. This has been a slow process, however, the development and publication of the Inshore Fisheries Strategy 2019-2023 in 2019 marked a major milestone in charting that path which is expected to require BIM facilitation for at least the duration of the strategy. The RIFFs completed a renewal process in Q1 2020 which was complemented with the provision of externally provided governance training to facilitate members to better participate in the Inshore Forums process and engage with those they represent in the sector. A project on developing a digital literacy syllabus for the sector made progress in 2020 and will deliver a 'ready to use' lesson plan suitable for incorporation into the national digital literacy syllabus in 2022. A further project on conducting a census of the inshore sector did not progress due to essential personnel being involved in the Seafood Task Force and it has now been pushed out to 2022.

Through its network of six regionally based Development Officers and head office based personnel, BIM is uniquely placed to engage with the inshore sector and support the operation of the Inshore Fisheries Forums. Ongoing day to day contact between these officers and the sector enables the delivery of appropriate support to ensure effective operation of the Forums.

## Objectives

The Inshore Fisheries Forums will:

- Participate in the implementation of the Inshore Fisheries Strategy.
- Develop and facilitate implementation of policies and initiatives relating to the sustainable management of inshore fisheries within six nautical miles, consistent with national and EU policies concerning fisheries management, sustainable development and protection of the marine environment.
- Provide formal engagement opportunities between inshore fishermen and other marine stakeholders and to bring issues of importance to the sector to the National Inshore Fisheries Forum (NIFF).
- Provide input to the development of national policies or positions which concern or affect inshore fisheries management, particularly the ongoing introduction of a Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Framework and the development of Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE).
- Facilitate the development of measures designed to enable local fishermen, other fishermen who rely on local waters for their livelihood, and other persons with an interest to contribute to inshore fisheries management policies.
- Facilitate the development of management measures for wild bivalve fisheries.
- Facilitate the classification of wild bivalve fisheries.

The Inshore Fisheries Forums provide a platform for the sector through which to engage with state and other actors with an interest in the inshore space. Through industry participation with the forums, it is intended to build capacity for the sector to represent itself more effectively through direct training of forum members but also through availing of upskilling opportunities afforded by participation in the forums process thus facilitating the sector to develop champions. It is hoped that this increase in capacity will see the establishment of an Inshore Producer Organisation and eventually obviate the need for State support.

The Inshore Fisheries Strategy identified the poor profile of the inshore sector despite its significant economic contribution to the coastal communities. The increasing pressures in terms of potential spatial squeeze from MPA designation, marine renewables and other resources users makes it critical to continue to engage in both a supportive and challenging way to improve and increase the sectors capacity to represent itself and take advantage of opportunities to increase the value from the inshore seafood production.

Budget	€80,000
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### Achievements/Spend

The issues raised by the Inshore Fisheries Forums in 2021 were dominated by the impacts of the TCA on Irish seafood due to Brexit and the continued devastating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic which caused further lockdowns throughout 2021. A combination of both Brexit and the pandemic continued to cause an unprecedented reduction in fishing and income for all inshore vessels due to the collapse in traditional markets due to the widespread closure of food service across Europe and at home. Although the inshore sector was not directly impacted by the quota transfer under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement under Brexit, many have been impacted by route to market issues and increased operating costs.

Despite all the difficult challenges and the fact the RIFFs and NIFF were unable to meet face to face for a second year running they continued to meet remotely despite the technical challenges via Microsoft Teams. The heavy workload generated by the Seafood Task Force proved very beneficial in 2021 as the rapid ‘issue-feedback-response’ cycle allowed members to gain experience that would have otherwise taken a number of years. The improved ability of the inshore sector to effectively engage on issues that has resulted from the support and training provided to the RIFFs and NIFF was evidenced in the participation of the NIFF with the work of the Seafood Task Force in 2021. The application by the National Inshore Fishermen’s Association for recognition as an Inshore Producer Organisation provides further evidence of this.

In addition to input into the Seafood Task Force, other issues discussed included supports for the inshore sector, the management of crab claw landings, a proposal on the mackerel hook and line fishery, discussions on the BSA crab fishery, iVMS (inshore VMS), the effects of Brexit, the consultation on Marine Protected Areas and the drafting of a policy for dealing with ORE companies.

The work of the Forums in 2021 is set out in more detail below.

### Brexit/Covid 19

- First meeting of the NIFF in February 2021 was dominated by Brexit and the continued impacts of COVID-19 with presentations by Dominic Rihan, BIM on “Update of Brexit and impacts the TCA on Irish Seafood” and Conor Anderson, PerformanceSC on Brexit Customs Overview and implications.
- Taking account of the sudden and massive disruption as a result of Brexit, Minister McConalogue decided in late January to set up the broadly based Task Force to examine the implications of the EU/UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) for the fishing industry and Coastal Communities. The NIFF was

represented on the Seafood Task Force by Eamon Dixon, NIFF Chair who has attended all 14 meetings from its inception in March 2021.

- NIFF put in their first submission (opening statement) into the Taskforce on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021 which outlined who they are, why they are concerned, what their expectations from the Task force are and in conclusion outlining how the inshore sector will be impacted directly and indirectly by the effects of Brexit quota reduction and the need to develop mechanisms to address this.
- NIFF chair updated the NIFF members at the NIFF meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> April on the Seafood Task Force meetings to date and that the next meeting scheduled for 10<sup>th</sup> May would address a new tie-up scheme. NIFF sent in a submission on a proposed inshore tie-up scheme on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021 for consideration by the Seafood Taskforce.
- NIFF chair updated the NIFF at their meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> May on the recent Task Force meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> May where the main items discussed were the tie-up scheme followed by a decommissioning scheme. NIFF chair noted that he was finding it difficult to put the inshore perspective forward at the Task Force meetings.
- NIFF and RIFF members attended virtual Town Hall meetings with Minister McConalogue which took place in various coastal locations during May 2021.
- The first meeting of the Inshore Sub-group of the Seafood Taskforce met on 24<sup>th</sup> June. NIFF and NIFA members met with the DAFM and BIM to discuss some type of support measure through BAR funding for vessels fishing non-quota species. Meetings of this subgroup continued throughout the second half of 2021 with Bord Bia and IIMRO also partaking. This subgroup developed the inshore support scheme and started to draft up a decommissioning scheme for the inshore sector which will continue to be further developed into 2022.
- NIFF chair called an emergency meeting of the NIFF on 27<sup>th</sup> July to discuss three issues arising from the Seafood Task Force meetings
  - The proposal for the RSW pelagic sector tie-up scheme
  - Support Scheme for the Inshore Sector
  - Decommissioning
- The NIFF response to KFO IFPO Cessation of Fishing Scheme was submitted to the Seafood Task Force on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021.
- A NIFF meeting was called at short notice on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021 to discuss the support scheme for Inshore Fisheries developed by the subgroup on inshore fisheries before submitting to the Seafood Task Force. A number of changes were proposed and discussed, and the NIFF secretary and NIFF chair undertook to make the changes before submission to the Seafood Taskforce.
- NIFF submitted the proposed support scheme for the Inshore Sector to the Seafood Taskforce for consideration on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021 following the NIFF meeting.
- Although the proposed inshore support scheme submitted on 16<sup>th</sup> September was positively received at the Task Force meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021 there were elements of the scheme that DAFM questioned, in particular the eligibility criteria and the amount of support to be paid to particular sizes of vessels. After consulting with BIM on 28<sup>th</sup> September and following a NIFF meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> September the NIFF revised the proposal and Version 2 of the Support Scheme for Inshore Fisheries was submitted to the Seafood Task force on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 for further consideration.
- NIFF also submitted a draft proposed decommissioning scheme into the Task Force for consideration on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 following agreement at the NIFF meeting of 29<sup>th</sup> September.
- The final Seafood Task Force meeting took place on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 with the final report published shortly afterwards. This report included recommendations to Minister McConalogue included the inshore support scheme and the draft decommissioning scheme for the inshore sector.
- The NIFF held their final meeting of the year with Minister McConalogue on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021 where he spoke about the implementation of the recommendations from the Seafood Task Force and thanked the NIFF for their participation. Karen Devereux from Bord Bia presented the proposed marketing

campaign for the inshore sector and Dominic Rihan, BIM, presented on a potential inshore decommissioning scheme both which were recommendations from the Seafood Task Force. Work on both of these recommendations will continue into 2022.

Other issues discussed by NIFF during 2021 included:

- SW RIFF proposal on v-notching and lobster maximum size – after consideration and support by the majority of the RIFFs the proposal was sent to the IMG for further consideration/comment. IMG felt that this proposal in its present form would be impossible to implement due to logistics and costs involved. The IMG wished to leave the existing legislation on the current maximum size in place or the time being and review the measure in two years' time. The proposal was sent back to the SW RIFF to see if they wished to revise and resubmit to the NIFF for consideration.
- SW RIFF introduced a short proposal to the NIFF on changing monthly white fish quota allocations for white Pollock for boats under 55 feet in Area VII. NIFF supported the proposal and it was sent into the QMAC for consideration for their meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021.
- Following on from a successful Hook and Line Mackerel fishery in 2020 and with the support of the NIFF and RIFFs the NW RIFF submitted a new proposal on Mackerel Jigging for consideration at the QMAC meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021. This new proposal looked for an increase in the current 400 tonnes set aside for the <15m Hook and Line Fishery and an increase in the landing limit. After no success at the QMAC the NIFF wrote directly to Minister McConalogue on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021 in regard to the proposal. Due to the overshoot of the allocation of 400 tonnes in 2020 and the closure of the Hook and line fishery in June 2021 the majority of the QMAC members wished to impose further management measures on the hook and line fishery. Management of the 400 tonne allocation to the hook and line mackerel fishery continued to be discussed at majority of the QMAC meetings throughout 2021 with no conclusion reached on how to manage the 400-tonne allocation.
- At the start of 2021 SW RIFF provided industrial feedback on the Prior Information Notice for proposed management plan for Crayfish Fishery off the SW Coast to the MI. Based on this feedback the MI developed a tender for the work on this management plan on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2021 and went through the three lots of work outlined in the tender document with the NIFF at their meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2021.
- BIM provided an update on the on National Seafood Survey at the NIFF meetings held on 11<sup>th</sup> February and 14<sup>th</sup> April.
- Offshore renewables – The issue of offshore renewables, the number of consultations for site investigations and introductory meetings in recent times led the RIFFs for a need of a clear policy to be drawn up on how the RIFFs deal with offshore renewable companies, highlighting that the RIFFs can provide and disseminate information but cannot act in an advisory capacity. This policy was drawn up and approved by the RIFFs and the NIFF in May 2021.
- NIFF and RIFF members attended a Seafood Sector information session with the DHLGH, DECC and DAFM on the proposed Seafood Sector-Offshore Renewable Energy Liaison Working group on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2021.
- NIFF worked with NIFA to draw up a draft scoping document to secure professional expertise on supports for the inshore sector. NIFA applied to the IFCS for grant aid support and was approved for funding, unfortunately, it proved impossible to secure a professional to undertake the work so the offer of funding was declined.
- Digital Literacy – due to the pandemic and not be able to run workshops on a face-to-face basis the roll out of the digital literacy project did not get started till the end of 2021 where a successful trial workshop was undertaken. It is hoped to continue and expand on this project in 2022.
- NIFF and RIFF members attended the discussion with Fisheries and Agriculture Representatives on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) Public Consultation hosted by Minister Noonan T.D. on 8<sup>th</sup> July and a further outdoor meeting in Killybegs on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

- iVMS roll out- The discussion on the RIFF policy for engaging with the ORE raised the issue of data or lack of it to show where inshore activity was taking place with FLOs looking for iVMS data as proof of fishing activity in a particular area. Although iVMS is not compulsory for vessels under 12m at the present time the SFPA is going to keep NIFF updated on the roll out of iVMS.
- An update on the management of the landing of crab claws proposal with a revised version 1.3 and MI document of landings of crab and crab claws by vessels with set nets was circulated to the RIFFs for final consideration. As there was still some confusion expressed at the NIFF meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> May to the amount of crab claws that can be landed by potters and netters the IMG agreed to put a one page document together providing absolute clarity on the proposal to send out to the RIFFs for their final views. This revised proposal was also sent to NIFA for comment. NIFF/RIFF and NIFA views were forwarded to the IMG/DAFM. By year end the proposal was with DAFM/IMG for further revision before hopefully going out to public consultation in 2022.
- The proposed TACs on Razor clam fisheries in the South and Northeast Irish Sea was discussed.
- Revised Bivalve Protocol - The protocols for opening a new fishery for bivalve mollusc had to be reviewed and updated following the outcome of the Waterford Estuary High Court case which required that the Fisheries Natura legislation be revised with consequent changes for the bivalve classification protocol. The DAFM and IMG revised and updated the protocols to include an appropriate assessment step and the revised protocol was circulated to the RIFFs and bivalve sub-group for comment. The Bivalve subgroup which had not met since September 2019 was reconvened, they considered the revised bivalve protocol and made comments that the RIFFs fully supported, and these comments were forwarded to the DAFM/IMG for further review.
- A NIFA/NIFO proposal supported by the SW RIFF on a review of S.I. Non-commercial pot fishing (lobster and crab) Regulations 2016 was submitted to the NIFF at their meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2021. The proposal was circulated to the RIFFs for consideration and comment.
- NIFA proposal supported by the SW RIFF on increasing the minimum mesh size for gill netters targeting Hake in the BSA to 120mm was circulated to the RIFFs for support following the NIFF meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2021. All RIFFs supported this proposal going forward. As the proposal involved that a requirement for increased mesh sizes as those set out in the proposal would have to apply to all vessel operating in a specific area, not just Irish vessels, therefore, to have it adopted at EU level it would need to go through the regionalisation process which would involve submitting this proposal to the NWWAC. NIFA submitted the proposal to the NWWAC as they are members, and the proposal was discussed at the Working group Celtic Sea in July 2021 where the members agreed to make a submission to the Commission recommending a request to STECF for the evaluation of the use of 100mm to 120mm mesh gillnets for hake in the Irish box.
- BSA Crab- NIFF representative on QMAC hosted a meeting with the POs to discuss the annual swapping of crab KW days and swaps with France on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021. All agreed to 40,000 tonnes for 2021 and to bring this to the QMAC meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021.
- At the NIFF meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> September Guillermo Martin and Oliver Tully, Marine Institute gave a presentation on Crab – *Cancer pagurus* – Malin Stock VIA assessment and overall status to discuss the decline in biomass and landings and discards of brown crab since 2014 and to start a discussion with the RIFF and NIFF members on their views and ideas on possible management regimes for this important fishery going forward.
- At the NIFFs final meeting of 2021 held on 11<sup>th</sup> November an update on the 6mn appeal was provided by Minister McConalogue.

NIFF and RIFFs developed and made submissions on:

- Submission on the Public Consultation on the report on Ireland’s Marine Protected Area Network. RIFFs also made their own separate submission to his very important public consultation.

- NIFF wrote to Minister McConalogue on 19<sup>th</sup> February requesting inclusion on the Seafood Taskforce. The NIFF was invited onto the Taskforce on 24<sup>th</sup> February which they accepted.
- NIFF wrote to Minister McConalogue on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021 in regard to the Hook and line Mackerel Fishery.
- SW RIFF made a submission to the Consultation on the future management of crayfish fisheries to protect critically endangered species.
- Various submissions made by the NIFF to the Seafood Taskforce as already outlined.

On the administrative side:

- Eamon Dixon whose role as Chair was due to expire at the end of 2020 agreed to stay on as NIFF chair for 2021 to see out his position as NIFF representative on the Seafood Taskforce.
- John Menarry took over as NIFF vice chair from Bernard Whelan as of 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021.
- Despite the continuation of the pandemic in 2021 the number of RIFF and NIFF meetings, 43 in total taking place in 2021 exceeded that of 2020.
- John Menarry took over the role of the NIFF representative on the QMAC in September 2021 following Kieran Healy's departure from the SW RIFF following the completion of their renewal process.
- Barry Faulkner resigned as NE RIFF chair in May 2021. By the end of 2021 still awaiting appointment of new NE RIFF chair.

### **RIFF Meetings held in 2021**

**South-East RIFF:** 21.01.21, 04.05.21 & 19.11.2021

**West RIFF:** 27.01.2021, 08.04.2021, 06.05.2021 & 02.11.2021

**North-West RIFF:** 23.02.2021, 26.03.2021, 06.05.2021, 31.05.2021, 15.07.2021, 27.07.2021, 25.08.2021, 04.11.2021 & 16.11.2021

**North-East RIFF:** 24.02.2021, 04.03.2021, 19.04.2021, 29.04.2021, 11.05.2021 & 03.11.2021

**South-West RIFF:** 04.01.2021, 06.01.2021, 08.02.2021, 06.04.2021, 30.04.2021, 16.06.2021, 20.07.2021, 27.07.2021 & 01.11.2021

**North RIFF:** 02.02.2021, 07.04.2021, 10.05.2021, 29.07.2021 & 19.10.2021

**National Inshore Fisheries Forums Meetings:** 11.02.2021, 14.04.2021, 12.05.2021, 27.07.2021, 16.09.2021, 29.09.2021 & 10.11.2021

**Seafood Taskforce meetings** attended by NIFF Chair Eamon Dixon: 10.03.2021, 24.03.2021, 07.04.2021, 24.04.2021, 06.05.2021, 12.05.2021, 19.05.2021, 02.06.2021, 16.06.2021, 30.06.2021, 14.07.2021, 28.07.2021, 08.09.2021, 17.09.2021 & 01.10.2021

**Seafood Taskforce subgroup on inshore supports** attended by various NIFF members: 24.06.2021, 09.07.2021, 22.07.2021, 09.09.2021, 13.09.2021, 28.09.2021, 08.12.2021

**Quota Management Advisory Committee** meetings attended by Kieran Healy and John Menarry: 19.01.2021, 16.02.2021, 16.03.2021, 19.04.2021, 04.05.2021, 19.05.2021, 24.05.2021, 17.06.2021, 21.07.2021, 19.08.2021, 22.09.2021, 20.10.2021, 17.11.2021 & 16.12.2021.

**Consultative Committee of Stakeholders on Brexit meetings** attended by Kieran Healy and Eamon Dixon: 20.01.2021, 26.03.2021, 14.05.2021, 02.09.2021, 06.10.2021, 25.11.2021. Brexit update meeting 16.12.2021.

### **Other meeting attended by members on behalf of NIFF**

EU/UK discussion on 2021 TAC settings 28.01.2021 and EU-UK fisheries talks 12.20.2021, 11.30.2021, 23.02.2021

EU-UK update meeting with DAFM 18.02.2021

SFPA Consultative Committee Meetings 19.02.2021, 21.07.2021 and 19.12.2021

Irish Fisheries Science Research Partnership (IFSRP) meetings 01.07.2021 and 04.10.2021

SFPA meetings on weighing and landing 28.04.2021, 23.04.2021, 06.05.2021, 14.06.2021 (Industry Webinar by NSAI – Legal metrology on weighing systems)

Mission Atlantic Stakeholders Meeting: 25.06.2021

Meeting with the Taoiseach and Minister McConalogue on Brexit and TCA: 27.06.2021

Meeting with EU Commissioner and Minister McConalogue in Killybegs: 27.09.2021

Virtual Meeting on MPAs with DHLGH on 08.07.2021 and outdoor meeting with Minister Noonan on MPAs in Killybegs on the 20.07.2021

Meeting with Minister McConalogue in Dingle: 16.09.2021

Pre-council Stakeholders meeting with Minister McConalogue 10.12.2021 and Council update meeting 13.12.2021

Introduction meeting on alternative bait for whelk project with GMIT: 01.12.2021

MSP Advisory Group Meeting: 08.12.2021

NW Herring Stakeholders Meeting 28.07.2021 and NW Herring Meeting on Spring 2022 Fishery 03.12.2021.

Summary of Spend	
Total Approved	€80,000
Total Eligible Expenditure	€80,000
Total Drawdown	€80,000
EU – 50%	€40,000
Exchequer – 50%	€40,000

Report by: Denise Maloney and Ian Lawler

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> March 2022