

BIM EMFAF Work Programme Project Report 2023

BENEFICIARY:	Bord Iascaigh Mhara
PROJECT REFERENCE NUMBER:	23/SPIS/DIS-BG011-BR058
NAME OF PROJECT:	Benchmarking quality, market requirements and costs to serve for key demersal species
IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD:	1 st January to 31 st December 2023

Project Scope

BIM has been working extensively on maximising the value of seafood products along the supply chain. A study conducted by BIM in 2022 identified the quality of the whitefish (demersal) catch as an opportunity for improvement. This project sets out to explore these findings in terms of benchmarking Irish whitefish catch on a pilot project at the Foyle Fishermen's Co-Op. In addition to the scientific study on quality this pilot project also examined identifying market requirements and costs associated along the supply chain for key demersal species (predominately hake and haddock) landed at this location.

Objectives

BIM identified and coordinated with project partners and sector experts throughout the supply chain to benchmark from the first point of catch to first point of landing with a remit to extrapolate clear, and explicit measures for quality, market requirements and costs. The project identified haddock and hake as the key species, and these were examined under the following themes:

- on board handling practices
- market expectations
- quality standards
- best practice in handling practices internationally

The project sought to define and deliver a shared understanding of the key metrics, market expectations, and market insights along the supply chain.

Project findings will support the future development of pilot projects in the demersal sector. This research was presented to key stakeholders and partners in the supply chain. The future development will focus on setting implementing a set of standard operating procedures which can then be rolled out to other operators in the fleet.

Outcomes

The project focused on the development and implementation of three product trials and a review of international best practice.

BIM developed a working group incorporating the catching sector, first point of sale and link to the market to test and validate the findings. The product trials involved participating in the full sea trials with appointed whitefish vessels for up to 20 days at sea, solutions were developed on land prior to the trials and then tested and refined over the three trials at sea.



In trial one, an audit was conducted of the time and temperatures of haddock from cod end (catch) to placement in boxes, identifying areas where handling can be improved to increase haddock quality. Trials two/three refined the approach with recommendations of separating the catch to identify premium quality. BIM also uncovered previously unknown issues affecting quality from vessel to processor. A grading tool was also developed to assist with the tighter grading of haddock. This resulted in a significant improvement in quality grading, reducing the level of variation from 30% to 10%.

Onboard the vessels a new SOP (standard operating procedure) of handling was developed. This resulted in a significant improvement in the grading and consistency of one of the key species, haddock.

BIM also conducted a global knowledge trawl to identify international developments and practices in relation to whitefish handling and care of the catch. The study examined international best-practice for whitefish gutting, chilling, slushing and storage during fishing trips. A shortlist of potential viable technologies which might be tailored to Irish 23-28 metre whitefish vessels were identified. Nordic countries such as Iceland and Norway are industry leaders in terms of innovative onboard technologies however, given their significantly high price points and requirements for space onboard, some may be impractical for existing Irish vessels. However, a series of tailored solutions applicable to current Irish vessel design and space were identified.

Summary of Project Spend

Summary of Spend	
Total Approved Costs	€120,000
Total Eligible Expenditure	€120,000
EMFAF Eligible Expenditure	€60,000
Exchequer	€60,000

Report by: Pat O'Leary

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an Aontas Eorpach

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