

BIM EMFAF Work Programme Project Report 2023

BENEFICIARY:	Bord Iascaigh Mhara
PROJECT REFERENCE NUMBER:	23/SFS/STS-BG011-BR113
NAME OF PROJECT:	Clean Oceans Initiative
IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD:	1 st January to 31 st December 2023

Project Scope

The Clean Oceans Initiative was launched in 2019 and built upon BIMs ongoing work in marine litter, (Fishing for Litter). To improve the management of onboard and onshore industry generated waste streams, BIM has carried several initiatives in recent years. As part of the Clean Oceans Initiative, 12 ports take part in the programme, accepting marine litter from vessels landing into these ports. 97% of vessels landing in these ports have signed up to the Clean Oceans Initiative. The Fishing for Litter (FFL) programme has collected over 750 tonnes of marine litter, trialed onboard technologies to reduce fishing generated waste and carried out waste characterisation surveys. During 2022 significant progress has been made to ready both the fishing industry and the gear suppliers for the implementation of the new Single Use Plastics Directive.

Objectives

There are key points in the development, sale, use, repair, and retirement of fishing gear that need support to minimise the impact on the marine environment and be in line with the European Green Deal and the circular economy in particular. Supporting the ports, gear suppliers and vessels to adapt to a more sustainable recovery-based model, against a baseline that can be comparable with other member states is key to the smooth and cost-effective implementation of the single use plastics directive. The outputs from the trial gear return project in 2022 will be assessed and integrated into a system that can be rolled out to all the Clean Oceans ports.

The Fishing for Litter programme will continue to collect passively fished waste and provide facilities for collection in the 12 Clean Oceans ports. This part of the Clean Oceans Initiative is key to buy-in from stakeholders and generates a lot of interest from media, NGOs, and the EU Commission. The success of the scheme has been down to the take-up and commitment from the fishers and harbour authorities.

For the 2023 programme BIM has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Munster Technical University (MTU) Clean Technology Centre with the common objective of developing technical solutions towards reduced environmental impacts and improved sustainability. MTU will support the Clean Oceans Initiative project by providing technical and practical support to deliver on the project objectives of maintaining Fishing for Litter, development of a Gear Retirement Scheme, and designing a reporting structure.

Outcomes

The project in 2023 focused on preparing the industry and the gear manufacturers for the upcoming legal requirement at the end of 2024 for an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Scheme for fishery and aquaculture gear.



The concept of a fishing gear EPR was introduced at two in-person workshops at Ballybofey and Donegal. The engagement was designed to raise awareness with stakeholders that these regulatory requirements are imminent, and action is required to better ensure implementation of those regulations is as appropriate as possible and to investigate the concerns and ideas that these stakeholders have with the development of an EPR.

With the support of Munster Technological University, three trials were undertaken to recycle newly stripped fishing gear, old and discarded gear, and oyster and mussel farming gear. The results showed that the most suitable feedstock for recycling is oyster bags. The least suitable material came from the old fishing nets which produced no usable outputs. These trials have shown that the gear needs to be exceptionally clean, properly dismantled and separated, and that the older gear is not suitable for the types of recycling trialled due to the degradation of the polymers. This work demonstrates the complexity of the task in developing a circular process for all gear types. Research into providing solutions will continue in 2024.

The potential costs of dismantling and recycling to feed into the future EPR have also been looked at as part of the project. Given the necessity of properly dismantling nets in order to render them suitable for recycling, this is key data to inform the group setting up the EPR scheme.

Data is being collected via the Clean Oceans Initiative for the retirement of gears in the 12 main ports along with fishing for litter. This continues to be extremely well supported by the fishers involved and demonstrates their commitment to the marine environment.

The project has identified the main gear producers supplying the Irish market. It has also provided a better understanding of how the Irish fishing and aquaculture gear operates, including the existing relationships between gear component manufacturers, gear assemblers and sellers. But gaps in this knowledge remain. Continued engagement with gear producers, with a particular focus on chandlers and non-Irish companies placing gear on the Irish market is required to fully understand the complex market for fishing gear in Ireland. It is also evident that the broad definition of producers means that chandlers and other importers of fishing and aquaculture gear (including the operators themselves) must be made aware of the SUP and PRF requirements and implications for their operations. Without communicating the upcoming responsibilities for producers and assurance that all producers are included, operators are likely to avoid engagement and ignore survey requests for data.

Good progress has been made in identifying and engaging with the main Irish gear manufacturers. A working group has been proposed as a pre-cursor to the required industry involvement under the EPR scheme. Stakeholders recognise that their involvement in EPR scheme design is preferable to having an 'off-the-shelf' EPR scheme imposed upon them. But in the absence of an industry association, this will require third-party facilitation and continued support and engagement from DECC and the EPA.



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Summary of Project Spend

Summary of Spend	
Total Approved Costs	€200,000
Total Eligible Expenditure	€184,704
EMFAF Eligible Expenditure	€92,352
Exchequer	€92,352

Project Partners: Munster Technological University

Report by: Catherine Morrison

Date: February 2024



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