

BIM EMFAF Work Programme Project Report 2023

BENEFICIARY:	Bord Iascaigh Mhara
PROJECT REFERENCE NUMBER:	23/SFS/STS-BG011-BR114
NAME OF PROJECT:	Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPS)
IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD:	1 st January to 31 st December 2023

Project Scope

FIPs are a science-based approach to making continual improvements in the sustainability of specific fisheries. FIPs are a globally recognised means of assessing fisheries and identifying actions to improve the management and sustainability of these fisheries. The Irish FIPs, within BIM's Sustainability Strategy, have continued to act as platform to demonstrate the sustainability credentials of Irish fisheries.

FIPs offer a mechanism to bring together an alliance of fishermen, seafood buyers and suppliers, to talk through the challenges from the landing obligation faced in a specific fishery or fisheries, identify data needs, agree on a set of priority actions that should be undertaken to improve the fishery, and then oversee an action plan. These stakeholders work together to improve a specific fishery by pressing for better policies and management, while voluntarily changing purchasing and fishing practices to reduce problems such as illegal fishing, bycatch, and habitat impacts.

The FIP framework allows the collation of scientific data digestible to the supply chain to underpin sustainable fisheries management. This project gives collective added value of the protection of biodiversity, sustainable fishing, innovation and contributes to the collective organisation of the fisheries.

Additionally, as part of BIM's Sustainability Strategy, BIM is developing one single seafood standard covering both wild caught and farmed seafood. While the standard is being developed, FIPs provide a mechanism for industry to take an evidence-based approach to sustainability in the marketplace.

Objectives

The FIPs will continue to be supported with funding to cover administration, research and development work required to support the implementation of the individual FIP workplans to improve the competitiveness of the fisheries. The FIPs will be supported by an external contractor who will provide advisory services which will support further deepening of the cooperation between scientists and fishers, the promotion of social dialogue and knowledge sharing of fisheries science, social sustainability, and supply chain sustainability demands. BIM will provide technical support to the process.

A steering group for the overall management of the FIPs process will also be set up. This will provide more strategic focus to the development of existing FIPs and provided guidance and support for the initiation of new FIPs. As part of the project, terms of reference for the steering group will be developed and consideration of the makeup of the group to reflect views from BIM, scientists, fishers, and other stakeholders. The terms of reference will define the purpose of the group, the roles and responsibilities and the decision-making process.



The need to conduct social risk assessments and develop social workplans for all FIPs is a recent development which is likely to assume equal significance to the environmental work strand in the coming years.

Outcomes

The Strategic Steering Group (SSG) to oversee the performance and development of this process has been set up and members of interested bodies invited to join. The group is comprised of representatives from fisheries producer organisations, fishery co-ops, processors, retailers, BIM and Bord Bia. The SSG is primarily responsible for the overall strategic direction of the existing Irish Fisheries Improvement Projects to drive improvements in sustainability. The SSG will also consider any other available and relevant fisheries sustainability options, such as other forms of certification or standards, to meet current and future market sustainability requirements.

The work of the individual FIP groups in 2023 included a preliminary social risk assessment, data, and literature review. This work forms the foundation for the full social risk assessment in 2024. The desktop review looked at the existing legislative framework around employment of crew on fishing vessels, particularly focusing on non-EEA crew. A preliminary assessment of the 13 essential Fishery Progress social performance indicators using the social responsibility assessment tool was completed using existing available data. This highlighted some data gaps and indicated areas of focus and potential issues for full risk assessment in 2024.

In the crab FIP, further work was undertaken to look at bait alternatives along with the completion of an MSC pre-assessment, which is a prerequisite of FIP registration with Fishery Progress. This pre-assessment was also completed for the Whiting FIP. These pre-assessments involved providing a provisional evaluation against MSC Performance Indicators (PIs) and Scoring Guideposts (SGs), to inform how the fishery fares against the MSC standard and which PIs are likely to be scored at assessment within the following categories: fail (i.e. score <60), pass with conditions (60-79) or pass without conditions (≥ 80). A pre-assessment does not attempt to duplicate a full assessment against the MSC standard, which requires precise scoring and stakeholder consultation phases.

The overall aim of the pre-assessments were to inform an action plan for the fishery that will be implemented via the Fishery Improvement Project, intending to raise the scores over a defined period to a point where the fishery could enter MSC assessment if desired.

Summary of Project Spend

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Total Approved Costs	€307,808
Total Eligible Expenditure	€307,808
EMFAF Eligible Expenditure	€153,904
Exchequer	€153,904

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an Aontas Eorpach

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