**Minutes of the Whiting FIP meeting**

**17th December 2024**

FIP coordinators welcomed participants to the meeting and ran through the agenda

**General FIP update and presentation on FIP social responsibility developments**

* FIP coordinators gave updates on the FIP Strategy Steering Group and its overarching role in developing a strategic approach to sustainability
* FIP communication efforts through the development of a FIP newsletter.
* FIP presented the latest on the Fishery Progress Human Rights and Social Responsibility (HRSR) policy requirements, how the FIP is working to meet these requirements and progress made to date.
* Updates provided on the steps to conduct the Social Risk Assessment (SRA) including the meeting of the social subgroup to inform them about the upcoming interviews that will be conducted in fishing ports by the independent social assessor.
* Agreement from the meeting on the importance of the social element and developing it further into 2025.
* Support for annual social review and continued engagement with industry stakeholders to ensure the FIP is on top of the latest social developments in Irish fisheries and from a legislative perspective
* A FIP member expressed interest in participating in the SSG and social subgroup.

**Presentation by BIM Conservation Team (Matthew McHugh and Daragh Browne)**

* Fisheries conservation technologists presented a summary of their work including legislative drivers for gear innovation, recent Irish technical measures, and projects undertaken in 2024 for Nephrops and whitefish gears. (presentation and information booklet on gear trials circulated with minutes).
* Within the 2025 outline the technologists described works for testing a modified configuration off bottom trawl in the semi pelagic demersal fishery with the aim to remove ground contact. The benefits of the modification include reduced benthic impacts and reduction in drag improving efficiency. This work builds on preliminary trials completed in 2024.
* The technologists also outlined further trials due to take place in the Irish Sea in 2025
* It was noted in the meeting that the trials being done by the conservation technologists are vital for both the Irish Sea and Celtic Sea and the importance of gear selectivity for the viability of fisheries
* There was a request for further data on increased value in landing larger fish, the technologists said more in-depth detail can be provided on request.
* A point was raised to analyse results of gear trials for economic viability.
* A point was raised on the difficulty to conduct gear trials across mixed demersal fisheries and the need to have a wider discussion on gears across the fleet.
* A call for more fishermen to be present at this discussion and general agreement on the benefits of having fishermen present at FIP meetings.
* The suggestion was raised to develop a whitefish and mixed fisheries workshop to cut across all these issues.

**Whitefish Update**

* The FIP presented the visions for the Irish Whitefish FIPs and the actions and priorities for Whiting, Haddock and Saithe for Q4 2024 and early 2025
* Further discussions on sampling at sea with a focus on whitefish sampling. Marine Institute representative noted that sampling at sea numbers in the Irish Sea are low across all species and could be improved in the Celtic Sea across all species.
* MI representative noted that samplers’ data can incorporate a number of factors, run across various species and can also include environmental data to provide further context within the fishery sampled.
* MI also noted outdated selectivity data
* Query on the mechanics of the MI inshore survey. It was clarified that the inshore survey is conducted by the MI using set gear in order to observe change in stock on the ground and all other factors in the survey must be kept constant i.e. no change in gear type.
* Meeting members advised the most effective approach would be to bring this topic to industry partnership meetings in order to maximise on fishers’ time and to avoid duplication of effort. (Discussion around stakeholder day in MI)
* FIP coordinators committed to a meeting with marine institute scientists and BIM in early 2025 to discuss the technical aspects of this proposal further.

**Meeting Actions**

* Upon completion by the independent social assessor, the FIP to provide results of the SRA and social workplan to the FIP group.
* FIP to meet with MI on scientific issues relevant to the Whitefish FIPs as discussed in this meeting
* Continue discussions with the MI on efforts to improve data collection in Irish Sea and Celtic Sea
* Liaise with the BIM conservation team on the 2025 work programme.

No AOB- FIP Coordinators closed the meeting and thanked participants for their attendance.

Meeting ended at 16:07