



Welcome to the April 2026 Edition of the Irish Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs) Newsletter

The newsletter provides an update on Irish FIPs and their activities. Despite the current challenges facing the industry a key element of FIPs is building on sustainability initiatives that are happening in the industry and communicating these to buyers of your fish. The newsletters include examples of how FIP involvement helps the sale of your fish in domestic and international markets. You can become involved in these actions by engaging with the FIP.

Market Access and FIPs



Sustainability remains a key driver of market access. In advance of Seafood Expo Global 2026, the FIP is working with seafood companies to assist with market access and communications about Irish FIP initiatives. Large seafood buyers maintain policies that require demonstration of sustainable fishing or, at the very least, a plan for the long-term sustainability of stocks. Some supermarkets delist products that cannot demonstrate such credentials. It is important for the sale of Irish seafood that the FIP Strategy Steering Group takes account of the international sustainability landscape. Examples of such developments include the growth in volumes of MSC certified Tuna, the recertification of Shetland Brown Crab to the MSC Standard and the establishment of the South West Seafood Sustainability Hub in the UK, which is in the process of setting up new FIPs.

Despite the challenging situation for many fisheries the FIPs continue to maintain progress on their environmental and social work plans. This is crucial for retaining market access.

FIP	Current Rating
Prawn	B – Good progress
Haddock	B – Good progress
Whiting	B – Good progress
Coley	B – Good progress
Brown Crab	C – Recent progress
Albacore Tuna	>8 FishSource
Hake	>8 FishSource

The first 5 FIPs above are registered with Fishery Progress and a B rating is the highest rating that FIPs like ours can achieve. We expect the rating for the Crab FIP to improve to a B following our annual update report at the end of March. This report focused on the significant development of the first meeting of the Brown Crab Management Consultative Committee.

The Hake and Albacore Tuna FIPs have a score of above 8 on FishSource which is enough to satisfy the procurement policies of most retailers.

Tuna MSC Application



The FIP Strategy Steering Group met in early March 2026, and a decision was made to proceed with making an application for Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification for the Irish Albacore Tuna fishery. This is a significant development given the increasingly strategic importance of the tuna fishery. MSC certification could help to secure market access for Irish caught albacore tuna as every year sees a sharp rise in the proportion of MSC certified tuna. BIM have undertaken to fund the initial certification and co-ordinate the application process.

programme. This observer work has been funded by the Marine Institute and BIM.

During 2025 the Albacore Tuna FIP continued its work on co-ordinating observer and self-sampling participation which is vitally important in demonstrating the low environmental impact of the fishery. It is vital that participating vessels continue to take out observers in this fishery during the 2026 season to ensure continued access to the fishery.

To inform a discussion about whether the Tuna fishery would enter the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) assessment process a new pre-assessment was carried out for the fishery. The pre-assessment concluded that the fishery was in a good position to proceed with MSC assessment.

FIP coordinators also worked on clarifying the costs and potential market benefits involved in MSC certification for the Tuna fishery. The timeline for the application process will be approximately 18 months.

Ghost Gear



Ghost gear is discarded or lost fishing gear which continues to catch fish. A new requirement for FIPs was introduced in 2025 which requires them to report on the extent of ghost gear fishing in each of the fisheries. To date reports on the extent of ghost gear fishing were completed for the Crab, Nephrops and whitefish FIPs. These reports involved interviewing fishermen about frequency of gear losses and measures fishermen use to recover lost gear. In the case of the fisheries assessed to date it was apparent ghost gear was not a significant issue for FIP members. During 2026 further work will be carried out on this.

The image below shows holes in the mesh caused by crabs that had been in the pots during a short period of bad weather illustrating that there is limited potential for ghost fishing even when gear is lost.



BIM are currently introducing new elements to the Fishing for Litter programme and are trialling these in selected ports over the coming months before rolling them out on a national basis. The Fishing for Litter programme recognises the

Social Risk Assessment



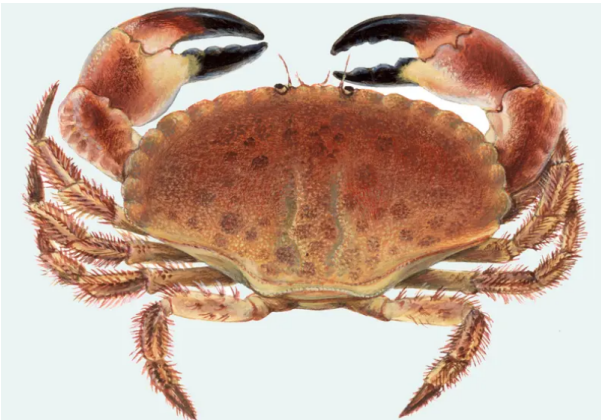
Demonstrating good labour practices is now as important as environmental sustainability for maintaining market access. Irish fishing vessels operate under a high level of legislation particularly with the replacement of the Atypical Workers Scheme with the employment permit scheme. The Social Risk Assessment (SRA) which was initially conducted across Irish FIPs in 2024 found there were high levels of compliance within the industry and this is useful information for purchasers of Irish seafood.

An updated SRA is in the process of being carried out. As part of the 2026 SRA vessels have the option to complete the survey online at the links below:

Crew Members: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FHYCLDX>

Vessel owners: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TJPMKYY>

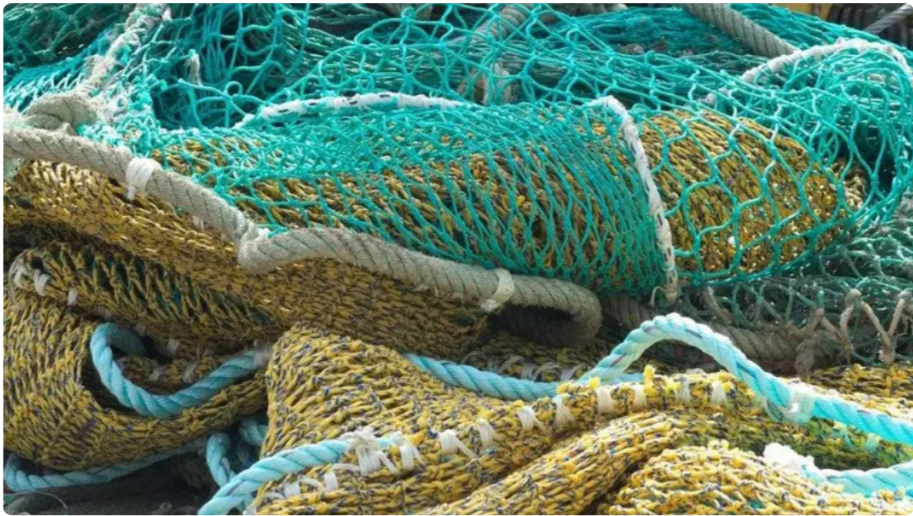
Brown Crab Update



In February 2026 the first meeting of the Brown Crab Management Consultative Committee (BCMCC) took place. The establishment of the BCMCC represents a step towards improved management of the Brown Crab fishery. The Committee was established by the Minister and includes representatives from fishermen’s groups, processors, scientists and managers. The Group is tasked with proposing, discussing and advising the Minister on management measures for the fishery. Following its first meeting the Group has undertaken to develop a draft management plan for the fishery.

years. In Shetland Brown Crab has recently been recertified under the MSC Standard and, in the SW of the UK, the Sustainability Hub has been established. The Hub intends to get a Brown Crab FIP underway with the aim of getting MSC in the coming years.

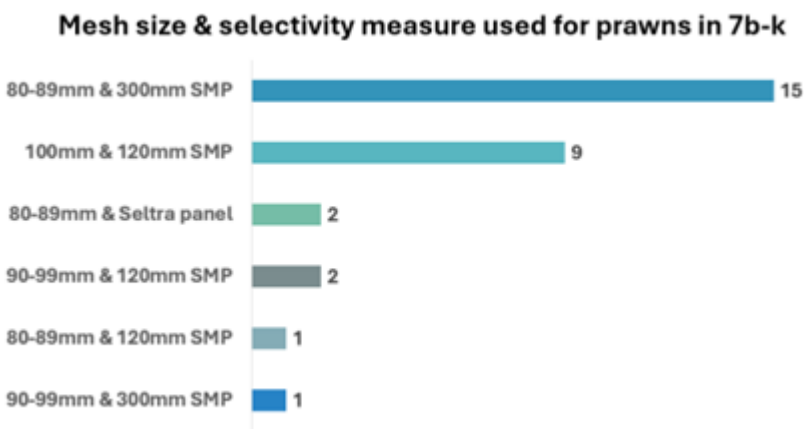
FIP Fishing Gear Survey



As part of the work on the Whitefish and Prawn FIPs it was identified that there was a deficit in data in terms of the specific gear and selectivity measures in use by both the Irish Whitefish and Prawn fisheries.

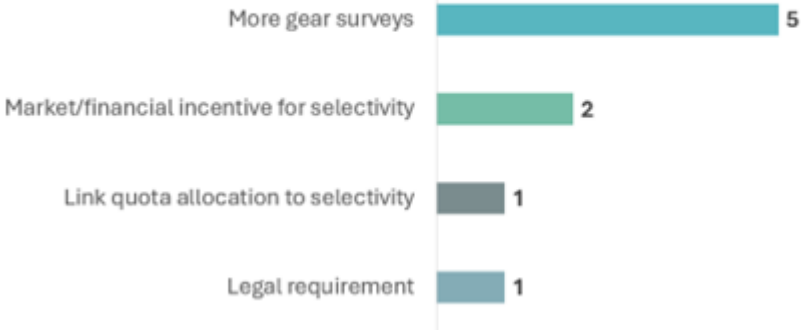
FIP co-ordinators designed a survey to identify and document the various gear configurations in use while also giving fishermen the opportunity to put forward their views on past, present and future measures.

The survey was sent to all whitefish and prawn FIP members and we received 41 valid responses. This was a good response rate to an email survey and this figure represents 60% of all relevant FIP vessels. 90% of respondents were happy to give their name and name of their vessel which added to the value of the data. The image below summarises responses to questions about mesh size and selectivity measures used by FIP members when targeting prawns in area 7b-k.



In addition to specific questions about current gear used several open questions were included. These allowed respondents to express their ideas and opinions on the long-term sustainability of fish stocks with a particular focus on the role of fishing gears in this.

The figure below shows the responses to an open question on how to overcome barriers to use of more selective gear.



The survey highlighted that some fishermen are in fact using gears that go beyond legal requirements. The report will be used to feed into technical and scientific work such as the ICES Working Group on Innovative Fishing Gear.

A copy of the report was circulated to all respondents and if any FIP members wish to receive a copy please contact info@fip.ie

Food Vision Seafood Sector Group



In early 2026 the Food Vision Seafood Sector Group was established to consider the challenges facing the seafood sector and to develop a framework of supports and actions to respond to these challenges.

Michael Berkery has been appointed as Chairperson for this group and has been tasked with drafting a Chairman’s Report by June this year. The various producer organisations, the six Regional Inshore Fisheries Forums, IFA Aquaculture, Co-operative representatives, the Irish Fish Processors and Exporters Association and relevant Government Departments and State Agencies are all represented on the group.

SFPA Guidance Fisheries Control Regulation

The Irish Sea Fisheries Protection Authority have issued guidance to the Irish fishing industry on the new EU fisheries Control Regulation. This information is relevant to all Irish FIP members and can be found at <https://www.sfpa.ie/Who-We-Are/News/Details/sfpa-issues-guidance-on-new-eu-fisheries-control-rules-effective-january-2026>

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