

SINN FÉIN COMMITMENTS ON FISHERIES AND THE MARINE



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Sinn Féin commitments on Fisheries and the Marine

This document arises from extensive consultation with the Irish fishing industry, fisheries NGOs, academics and coastal communities by Sinn Féin Spokesperson on Fisheries and the Marine, Pádraig Mac Lochlainn T.D.

We will continually review these commitments as part of an ongoing and meaningful dialogue with our fishing and coastal communities.

For decades our coastal communities have been ignored by consecutive governments. The outcome of the EU- UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement merely serves to further illustrate that point.

Sinn Féin repeats our call on the Irish government to secure a fair burden sharing of the impact of this agreement, across the fishing fleets of the EU Member States. As we approach the renegotiation of the Common Fisheries Policy, there is an opportunity for positive, progressive change. We in Sinn Féin are determined to work for that change at both national and European level, alongside the representatives of our fishing communities.

We will fight to reclaim a fair share of the fish in our waters (the richest in the EU) to enable us to allocate sustainable fishing opportunities to our fishermen to sustain and grow the rural, coastal communities closest to those waters.

Our vision, as you will see outlined in this document will promote an all-island cooperative approach for our fishing industry that seeks a fair allocation of the national fishery resource to all our coastal communities. This includes full fishing rights to the waters around this island and equal access to piers, harbours and ports for fishermen that are resident on this island and to work towards the harmonisation of fishery licensing and regulation on the island.





Our commitments:

European relationship;

The relationship between the Irish fishing industry and Europe is well and truly broken. A Sinn Féin Government will seek a clean slate and new approach to European fisheries co-operation

Sinn Féin will;

- Seek the renegotiation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) with a complete review of current quotas and total allowable catches (TACs). We reject the 'relative stability' model as outdated and we seek a model based on 'zonal attachment' with reference to the spawning grounds and migration grounds of each species under quota. We will insist that a fair and reasonable share of the fish in Irish waters is allocated to Irish fishermen. We will also work towards the extension of our exclusive coastal zone to reflect the stated objectives of the CFP in delegating more authority over fisheries to member states.
- Ensure that direct consultations with the representatives of the Irish fishing industry will take place on any future EU trade deals and on any components that would impact Irish fishermen.
- Engage with the European Commission, European Council of Fisheries Ministers and other stakeholders to attain a reasonable share of the lucrative bluefin tuna quota from the ICCAT, to reflect the abundance of the species in Irish waters and we will seek to develop new fishing and marketing opportunities for Irish fishermen with species such as albacore tuna, swordfish, anchovies and sardines that are emerging in Irish waters.
- Lead Ireland to spearhead a campaign, with our European counterparts, to secure a complete ban on Supertrawlers in EU waters, including strict monitoring of factory trawlers to eliminate destructive overfishing practices and extremely damaging discards of small and juvenile fishing species.
- In the absence of an agreed ban, implement the strictest possible controls on super-trawlers, including the compulsory installation of CCTV in supertrawlers, a requirement to have independent observers on board to ensure compliance and monitor bycatch and processing facilities.
- Work for the introduction of a competent EU wide inspection process for all fishermen in domestic and EU governed waters that ensures regulated, reported and sustainable catches and allows for proportionate measures including a balanced and fair penalty points scheme for non-compliant vessels.
- Work to ensure that the multi-annual support scheme jointly funded by Ireland and the EU through the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF), is primarily utilised to support the entire Irish fishing industry and to maximise the potential wealth from Irish waters for our coastal communities.



Re-organisation and structural changes

Sinn Féin is mindful of the strained relationship between the fishing community across Ireland and the Department of the Marine and its related authorities. We know a restart and new relationship is required.

Sinn Féin will;

- Commit to an urgent and time-limited full review of the Department's operation with the aim of introducing a fresh and reformed approach to the relationship with those communities. This review will also include an independent assessment of the historical performance of senior civil servants in the Department with regards to the implementation of the recommendations in reports such as *Steering A New Course* (2006)¹, *Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth* (2012)² and *Focusing The Future, Maximizing The Value of the Irish Seafood Industry* (2014)³. The purpose of which is to ensure that steps are taken to ensure that the State does not repeat any failings that are discovered and that the recommendations from these reports are revisited, revised where necessary and implemented.
- In government, establish a Department of Fisheries and the Marine and ensure that there is at the very least, a dedicated Minister of State with responsibility for this department. We regard the absence of a dedicated Minister in this role for a decade as deeply detrimental to the fishing industry and to Ireland's marine resources.
- Ensure that the recommendations of the PWC Review of the Organisational Capability of the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA)⁴ are implemented and that ongoing and meaningful dialogue between the SFPA, the Naval Service, and An Garda Síochána with our fishing communities is paramount.
- Instruct the Department of the Marine to conduct an immediate and exhaustive audit of all piers, harbours and ports across the State, in cooperation with local authorities and local fishermen, to establish the investment required to maximise the full fishing, tourism and marine based activities and training potential for our coastal communities.
- Undertake that a comprehensive audit will be carried out on all Department of the Marine owned property at harbours around Ireland and a strategy published to bring all vacant buildings back into use through FLAG funding, community and social schemes and private investment to generate employment and coastal area renewal and economic development.
- Work in partnership with all sectors of the fishing industry in Ireland to identify the levels of investment required to modernise our fishing fleet to prepare the industry to avail of new opportunities in the years ahead.

1 40154 BIM Steering cover.indd

2 untitled (ouroceanwealth.ie)

3 BIM - Corporate and Other Reports/ Focusing the Future, Maximizing the Value of the Irish Seafood Industry(2016)

4 2020-10-15_pq303-15-10-20_en.pdf (oireachtas.ie)



- Implement in full, the recommendations of the 2017 Report from the Independent Aquaculture Licensing Review Group⁵ to resolve the barriers to progress and allow the full potential of aquaculture and sustainable jobs for our coastal communities to be realised. We understand that planning decisions in Ireland, whether on land or in our waters should respect the same principles of transparency, adequate consultation, the right to object and for decisions to be made in a timely fashion and by a properly resourced decision-making authority. Similarly, the regulation and enforcement of the relevant environmental laws should be properly resourced.
- Examine the existing policy of the Department of the Marine that leads to capacity which has been off register for more than 24 months being lost. If possible, this capacity should be returned to the individuals, companies or next of kin of those who suffered the loss or at least retained as a national asset for future fishermen.
- Seek to maximise the economic benefit of fish stock landed at Irish ports and harbours for that local community and to minimise the transport of this stock past these local communities and on to other member states. Reducing the carbon output from fishing activities would be an immediate benefit from this approach.
- Ensure that the central roles of women in the Irish fishing industry are recognised and promoted within the sector

5 [ReviewoftheAquacultureLicensingProcess310517.pdf \(fishingnet.ie\)](#)



Science and data-based approach

The preservation of fishing stocks and a sustainable future for Irish fishing must be supported by latest science and data recording models. Accurate and up to date fish stock numbers and research on species and marine life will give Ireland a much stronger hand in seeking a fair share of quota and renegotiation of the European Common Fisheries Policy.

Sinn Féin will;

- Actively encourage increased science-based collaboration between academics, NGOs, Fishermen and government officials to ensure fish stocks can be sustained into the future and to ensure that detrimental damage is not carried out to spawning grounds and/or areas that require additional protections. Those measures will have to always be agile in response to swiftly changing circumstances.
- Commit to working with scientific researchers and small-scale fishermen to introduce pilot heritage and artisan licences allowing for the re-introduction of traditional fishing on a sustainable basis.
- Seek to minimise the impact on traditional fishing grounds as part of the development of Marine Protected Areas around the coast. There is a reasonable balance to be found between protecting our marine eco-system and maintaining a sustainable fishing resource.



Inshore fleet protection

The Irish inshore fishing fleet makes up almost 90% of the entire fishing fleet of registered Irish vessels. The inshore fleet also makes up the large majority of those directly employed in the sector and without doubt sustains coastal communities in a very significant way. To continue the proud history and tradition of Irish fishing, the inshore fishing fleet must have some special protections applied to it.

Sinn Féin will;

- In the interests of fairness and a sustainable fishery, protect the ⁶ nautical mile limit around the Irish coast exclusively for the small-scale fleet. However, we will facilitate an ongoing dialogue with all sectors of our fishing industry to regularly review this policy and to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose and not a focus for division and rancour amongst our fishermen.
- Support our inshore fishermen to act on the objectives and actions outlined in the Irish Inshore Fisheries Sector Strategy 2019-20236 and subsequent strategies.
- Ensure the fair representation of the inshore fleet and smaller scale fishermen on the Quota Management Advisory Committee and that the allocated quotas decided by this committee integrate objective social and environmental criteria into that quota allocation practice and that their allocations are published in a fully transparent manner by vessel, location, size and estimated value.
- Seek to make a reality, the State's critical policy objective to manage fisheries as a public resource by committing to maintain strong economic, social and cultural links between fishing vessels and fisheries-dependent island and coastal communities, in order to strengthen the recognition that fishing is more than a commercial, profit-maximising operation.
- Promote and encourage small-scale fishermen to organise under producer organisation status to avail of fair and transparent access to the fishing opportunities available. This approach should be further encouraged on a Europe wide basis and multi-country alliances of small-scale fishermen should be supported and facilitated.
- Support more targeted EU fisheries funding towards small-scale fishermen that deliver direct knock on economic opportunities to allow small rural communities to grow, based on localised fishing industries including the establishment of producer organisations for the inshore fleet allowing greater opportunities for growth.



Education and Health & Safety

The Irish fishing industry has never been under more pressure. With reductions in quota, an unfair European Common Fisheries Policy and the hazards that come with the profession, it is becoming ever harder to recruit young people into the industry. Initiatives must be taken to promote fishing as a rewarding and important career that must be sustained and with adequate health and safety resources available to cater for the associated hazards.

Sinn Féin will;

- **Ensure Bord Iascaigh Mhara or another qualified educational body make certified educational courses available to promote careers in the fishing industry and ensure that uptake in these courses will be promoted and prioritised in coastal and island communities. We would also promote the inclusion of maritime awareness at primary and second level education.**
- **Encourage recruitment from our coastal and island communities into the fishing industry, we will seek to improve the career structure to have qualifications and experience within the fishing industry recognised by the merchant navy. We will take steps to allow for an easier route from fishing to the merchant navy. Similarly, we note that fishing vessels can be employed within Britain for various non-fishing related work. This is not currently possible here and we will examine what measures will be required to amend the regulations and to allow this to happen here in the interests of diversification within the marine sector.**
- **Increase funding currently allocated to our coastguard and search and rescue organisations, statutory and voluntary, to ensure that everyone using our maritime resources can be as safe as possible.**





SINN FÉIN COMMITMENTS ON FISHERIES AND THE MARINE
STAND UP FOR IRISH FISHERMEN



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