



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

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# Potential opportunities for and threats to the local sea fishing industry

## 1 Potential opportunities and threats

This paper provides a brief overview of some of the potential threats and opportunities facing the sea fishing industry within Northern Ireland over the coming years.

The list of issues identified and analysis provided in table 1 is by no means exhaustive, as many of the issues covered are still emerging and as such in many of the instances there is a lack of evidence to accurately determine the full effects, either negative or positive.

| Issue                                 | Potential Opportunities   | Potential Threats  |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>CFP reform</b><br><br>Discards ban | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Potential for increases in Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and removal of effort control as more fish are landed – increased income for fishermen.</li><li>• Confirmation of potentially healthy state of fish as a result of levels of catch landed – opportunity for better science</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Potential cuts in Total Allowable Catch (TAC) to take account of increased catch due to previous discards being landed</li><li>• How to store fish that were previously discarded on</li></ul> |

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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential increase in capacity and product for fish processing businesses – increased catch will need to be utilised- development of new products</li> <li>• Build support and attract financial assistance for the use of selective gears to reduce or eliminate by catch</li> </ul> | <p>vessel – need for bigger vessels or increased storage and associated costs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What to do with an increase in landed fish – is there a market – will this reduce the price fishermen receive ie supply exceeding demand?</li> <li>• Will there be a workable system to enable landing of all fish caught – if not will some fishermen consider continuing to discard and run risk of sanction?</li> <li>• Confirmation of potential fish stock degradation through use of unselective gear</li> <li>• Costs of adopting selective gear to reduce or eliminate discards</li> </ul> |
| <p>Regionalisation</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater involvement for the local industry in shaping fisheries policy at a more localised level</li> <li>• Fisheries management policy being more responsive to challenges and opportunities within a particular fishery</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential involvement of more stakeholders may lead to micro management of fisheries – Functional Unit rather than ICES area level</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Maximum sustainable Yield (MSY) approach to stock management</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable fishing to be sustainable in the long term and secure the future of the industry</li> <li>• Opportunity for more fisheries science partnership work to address concerns around state of stocks – more resources to achieve this</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of scientific data for many stocks makes the establishment of baseline difficult and as a result MSY will be precautionary – negative impacts on TACs</li> <li>• Mixed fishery issues – MSY issues with one stock could see it ‘blocking’ the fishing of other stocks within MSY – selective gear will not solve all these problems</li> </ul>   |
| <p>European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF)</p>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New funding streams to develop the industry</li> <li>• Particular chance to expand the aquaculture industry</li> <li>• Funding for more fisheries science</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential moratorium on funding for decommissioning of fishing vessels – set against potentially reduced TACs</li> </ul>  |

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|                                     | <p>partnership work – improve and increase the knowledge of state of stocks of interest to the local industry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential funding for selective gear and other technical measures to reduce or eliminate discards</li> </ul>   | <p>means fewer fish to catch for the same number of boats – a deterrent for people wishing to leave the industry which could reduce any overcapacity</p>   |
| <b>NI Marine Bill</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chance to bring a co-ordinated approach to the management of the seas with fishermen as key stakeholders</li> <li>• Chance to secure a future for the industry as a core and historic player in the management and usage of the marine resource</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential to increase the pressures on our marine resources by increasing the potential uses/users</li> <li>• Increasing the number of marine stakeholders and interests – some of which will be hostile to the fishing industry</li> <li>• The creation of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) – potential to reduce the available fishing area, displace fishermen with potentially negative impact of increased effort in non MCZ areas.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Off shore energy development</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of and development of port infrastructure to support this new industry</li> <li>• New employment within ports</li> <li>• Support, management and maintenance of off shore turbines – new role for fishermen and fishing vessels – new income stream</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk of fishermen displacement or reduction of catch due to siting of off shore wind – can sites with off shore turbines be fished?</li> <li>• Potentially negative impacts from sea bed/under sea bed cabling (electromagnetic fields) on fish behaviour in some species – still an emerging picture and more work needed</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Climate change</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warming waters could see an increase in the numbers of certain species or may see the colonisation of new species</li> <li>• Increase in existing species numbers or new species introduction to local fisheries could open up new commercial opportunities</li> <li>• How will climate change affect nephrop stocks? – local industry is heavily reliant on this species</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warming waters could see the migration northwards or decline of traditional species such as cod – reduced potential to catch valuable species for local industry</li> <li>• Reduced catches of certain species could be assessed as indication of poor state of stock rather than impact of fish migration to cooler waters – potentially negative impact on TAC setting for certain species</li> <li>• Increased costs – having to travel further afield to catch what the local consumer wants – may not even be</li> </ul> |

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|                                |  | <p>able to without TAC/quota for other areas – increased reliance on imports.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will climate change affect nephrop stocks? – local industry is heavily reliant on this species</li> </ul> |
| <b>Rising world population</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased demand for food and seafood in particular</li> <li>• Development of new markets for local seafood – export potential</li> <li>• Potential increased income for fishermen as demand for seafood pushes up price</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased pressure on stocks – locally and further afield</li> <li>• Increased value of product may see increase in illegal fishing – need for better enforcement</li> </ul>                    |