

Examine the impact of one European Union Policy on Ireland

(30m)

The Common Fisheries Policy was introduced 1983 and was necessary because of problems of over-fishing in EU waters. Ireland, despite her relative small land size, has huge territorial waters, approximately 12% of total EU waters. Despite this, Ireland catches only 5% of the total fish catch in E.U. waters. Under the CFP each state is given a Total Annual Catch (TAC) in order to conserve the fish stock. It is this quota that restricts the growth of the Irish Fishing industry. Irish Seafood exports in 2014 reached an estimated €540 million, that's a 70% rise on 2009 when the figure was €315 million. Ireland currently exports seafood to 80 markets worldwide. The ocean economy, which includes marine tourism, seafood and shipping, provided full-time employment for an estimated 18,000 in 2014.

The CFP was established specifically to conserve and manage fish stocks so depletion does not occur (eg. Cod), as well as reduce the size of the fishery fleet and modernise the remainder. Also improving markets (to be achieved by quality control/ support of efficient producer (fishermen/processors) organisations, as well as negotiating access to international fishing grounds) was a priority. Alongside this a series of international agreements with non European countries, e.g., Norway and with many West African states about fishing practices and quota's, was established.

The Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union (January to June 2013) secured agreement on reform of the Common Fisheries Policy in May 2013. It was the first major reform since 2002. The reforms include measures to put an end to the controversial practice of discarding fish. The new CFP came into effect on January 1st 2014 and it's being delivered with the help of a €6.4 billion European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) covering the period 2014-2020. Some of the main elements of the latest CFP for Ireland relate to Yields (Catches). Fishing will progressively be managed at maximum sustainable yield (MSY) levels, and it is hoped that setting of quotas will respect scientific advice. In relation to discards, regulation was formalised whereby, for example, a minimum net mesh size was introduced (100mm) allowing juvenile fish to escape, and a minimum size of fish could be caught. Discarding (the practice of throwing unwanted fish overboard) was estimated at 23% of total catches in 2013. This practice, where fish are thrown back to the sea because they're either too small or the fisherman has no quota, will be phased out progressively between 2015 and 2019 through a new landing obligation. Under the obligation all catches have to be kept on board, landed and counted against quotas. Undersized fish cannot be marketed for human consumption purposes.

For Ireland, the recent modernisation of the industry concentrated fishing in a small number of ports, with Killybegs (Co. Donegal), Rossaveal (Co. Galway), Castletownbere (Co. Cork) and Dunmore East (Co. Waterford) being the key ones. The money received by the Irish fishing industry is being used to develop infrastructure and aquaculture through building new ice houses and harbour walls and paying for developing markets abroad, eg. Irish shellfish in Japan. Finally, the reformed CFP extends to 2022 the right for Member States to restrict fishing in a zone within 22km of coastline to help protect the aqua eco-system. and a 370km exclusion zone for non-European fleets. All the above factors show the importance and the impact the CFP has had on Ireland.