

History and Evolution of Mackerel Sharing Arrangement

This document represents the Department's understanding of the development of the arrangements for the sharing of mackerel within the RSW Pelagic segment based on historic records

The sharing arrangements between the 23 vessel owners in the RSW Pelagic Fleet segment appear to have evolved through a broad consensus process involving the industry. It has not been possible to find original documentation but the Department's understanding is that a sharing arrangement for mackerel was in place by the early 1980's. The history of mackerel management arrangements is as follows:

- The 23 dedicated RSW boats historically fished about 98% of Ireland's total mackerel catch and Ireland's original mackerel quota was based on their track record. Catch limits were based on ratios which in turn were based on the lengths of the vessels in question. Pressure stock licensing and consequently ratios were introduced in 1980 as the level of catches was increasing. It is understood that the ratios were designed to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of fishing opportunities in proportion with the size of the vessels. The Department's understanding is that the ratios were agreed between the vessel owners in the first instance and the catch limits may have been applied in the early years by industry itself.

- From 1980 the ratios were:

55-75 ft. :	1.5
75ft. + :	2
<100 ft. :	3
100-140 ft. :	5

- In 1986-88 temporary measures were put in place and by the autumn of 1988 the ratios were set at 3.5 for vessels under 100 ft. and 5.1 for those over 100 ft. This regime was maintained until 1990 or 1991 when the ratios were set as follows:

<100 ft. :	3.5
100-140 ft. :	7
>140 ft. :	10

- These ratios were maintained until 2001.
- Dry hold vessels in the polyvalent segment of the fleet typically caught the remainder of the quota and there were no restrictions, at individual vessel level, applied to catches by these vessels. However, about 1,500 tonnes was set aside for these vessels.
- In 1999/2000 it was recognised that the catching capacity of vessels in the polyvalent segment of the fleet had increased. Following extensive consultation with the industry, in October 2001 the Minister made changes to the mackerel regime, which included setting a cap of 7,000t for the total catch

for the polyvalent segment vessels. The changes also included an increase in the ratio of the smallest RSW vessels from 3.5 to 5. On this basis the ratios provided for the distribution of the mackerel quota for the 23 RSW Pelagic segment vessels is as follows:

8 vessels at a ratio of 10;
9 vessels at a ratio of 7.0 and
6 vessels at a ratio of 5.

- The system for allocating catch limits for RSW Pelagic segment vessels has not changed since 2001.

The sharing arrangement is not set down in a formal policy document.

This document is to inform the consultation process only and is not a legally binding document. The Minister and/or the Department are not bound by any of the contents thereof in the context of any change(s) to quota management policy that may arise, either from this review or elsewhere.