

Consultation Paper on a Review of Mackerel allocation policy between the Fleet Segments

Introduction

The Minister received a request from the Irish South and West Fish Producer Organisation to allocate the increase over 2016 of Ireland's mackerel quota for 2017 entirely to the Polyvalent Segment on a 1 year pilot basis in exchange for the recipient vessels forgoing demersal fishing in order to gauge the impact on the demersal vessels.

This matter has generated a lot of discussion in the industry and the Minister has received many representations on the matter. The Minister, after having carefully considered the matter, decided that, without prejudice, there is a case for a review of the policy on allocations between the RSW Pelagic segment and the polyvalent segment of the fleet, taking account of request by the IS&WFO. In that regard, he decided that he is restricting consideration to the increased quota for Ireland in 2017 over that in 2016.

It is important to note that the Minister has not made any decision at this time to change the allocations between the segments in respect of this part of the quota. All relevant issues will be carefully evaluated and subject to a full consultation with stakeholders before the Minister decides if any amendment to the policy is justified for the proper and effective management of the mackerel fishery.

This document sets out the background to and development of the current mackerel sharing arrangements to inform consultation on the review that the Minister is now undertaking.

Summary - the policy for mackerel sharing

In 2008 the Minister undertook a review of the sharing arrangements and following a consultation with the Industry, amended the policy and the new policy has applied since 2009. This policy, which remains in place, provides that the Polyvalent Segment vessels are allocated 13% of the quota and the RSW Pelagic Segment is allocated 87% of the quota, calculated after 400 tonnes are set aside each year for fishing by means of hook and line. This policy replaced the flat rate of 7,000 tonnes to the polyvalent segment which applied since 2001.

Background to the Irish mackerel Fishery and sharing arrangements

The mackerel fishery was prosecuted by Refrigerated Sea Water (RSW) pelagic vessels in the RSW Pelagic segment of the fishing fleet which were subject to vessel catch limits since the mid 1980's.

The 23 dedicated RSW Pelagic segment boats historically fished about 98% of Ireland's total mackerel catch. Dry hold vessels in the polyvalent segment of the fleet caught only small quantities of mackerel. Up to 1,500 tonnes of the national quota was set aside for the polyvalent segment.

This situation changed materially from 2000 onwards as a number of vessels in the polyvalent segment with tanks on board were introduced into the fleet. These vessels had much higher catching and storage capacity and the national polyvalent catch trebled to over 3,500 tonnes in the year 2000. Following extensive consultation and discussion with industry throughout 2001, revised arrangements were put in place in October of that year. In summary, that capped the total mackerel catch of polyvalent vessels at 7,000 tonnes, of which 1,500 tonnes was set aside to cover catches by vessels less than 65 feet in length. The balance of the available mackerel quota was divided between the 23 RSW pelagic segment vessels according to set formulae.

In 2006, following more extensive consultation with industry, particular management arrangements were introduced on a pilot basis for the under and over 65 foot polyvalent vessels. The arrangements involved the “booking in” of vessels to the fishery and the granting of catch limits to the vessels for a set period. Allocations of Mackerel to polyvalent boats prior to 2010 were based on the size of the boat and there were two categories: Over 65ft length overall and Under 65ft length overall. There were generally 2 or more such periods for the fishery each year. These arrangements continued with occasional tweaking until 2010.

In January 2009, the Minister decided after consultation and careful consideration of all of the available information that for 2009 and future years, the polyvalent segment would be allocated 13% of the total mackerel quota.

In 2009, the Minister carried out a review of the internal sharing arrangements for mackerel within the polyvalent fleet. Following wide ranging and intensive consultations, the Minister introduced a new policy in October 2010 after nearly 18 months of discussion and consultations. This policy, which remains in place, provides that the Polyvalent segment vessels are allocated 13% of the quota and the RSW Pelagic Segment is allocated 87% of the quota, calculated after 400 tonnes are set aside each year for fishing by means of hook and line. Under this policy, mackerel allocations are made available to qualified polyvalent vessel owners based on track record from the two best years 2007, 2008, 2009. The policy sets out that 13% of the national Mackerel quota is available to the polyvalent segment as follows: 76.5% of the polyvalent mackerel quota is allocated to Tier 1 and 21% for Tier 2, the remaining 2.5% is available to cover the artisanal gill net fishermen and under 18m vessels with periodic boat catch limits set usually on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. Vessels qualified for either of the Tiers on the basis of having caught more than 35% of the mackerel allocated to them in an average of 2 of the reference years. In order to qualify for Tier 1 allocations, a vessel had to have landed more than an average of 275 tonnes of mackerel per year. To qualify for a Tier 2 allocation, a vessel had to have landed more than 25 tonnes of mackerel per year.

The historical division of mackerel between the fleet segments for earlier years up to 2006 (on the basis of the adjusted quota – after carryover/ swaps etc) is shown in Table 1 below.

Year	RSW Percentage	RSW tonnage(t)	Polyvalent Percentage	Polyvalent tonnage(t)
2000 and earlier years	Flat rate		Flat rate	Up to 1,500
2001	Flat rate	64,057	Flat rate	7,000
2002	Flat rate	66,047	Flat rate	7,000
2003	Flat rate	60,307	Flat rate	7,000
2004	Flat rate	56,593	Flat rate	7,000
2005	Flat rate	24,931	Flat rate	7,000

2006	Flat rate	34,253	Flat rate	7,000
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Table 1: **MACKEREL ALLOCATIONS BETWEEN THE RSW PELAGIC SEGMENT AND POLYVALENT SEGMENT UP TO 2006**

The historical division of mackerel between the fleet segments for 2007 to date including details of swops, carry-over, contingency is shown in Table 2 below

Year	Initial Quota	Carry over	Swaps	Contingency	RSW	Polyvalent	Hand liners	Final Adjusted Quota	Unallocated
2007	54,369		-798	200	47169	7,000		53,571	
2008	49,643			200	42443	7,000		49,643	
2009	66,070			200	57305	8,563		66,070	2
2010	62,641		-215	200	53976	8,065	400	62,426	
2011	68,978		-305	200	59228	8,850	400	68,673	-5
2012	68,089	1,061	-1,054	200	58715	8,773	400	68,094	8
2013	57,753	691	-1,001	200	49,585	7,409	400	57,443	-150
2014	104,967	839	-806	200	90,103	13,463	400	105,000	834
2015	89,220	1,817	+616	400	76,925	11,495	400	91,653	2,434
2016	75,837	2,813	-1,070	400	65,282	9,754	400	77,579	1,743

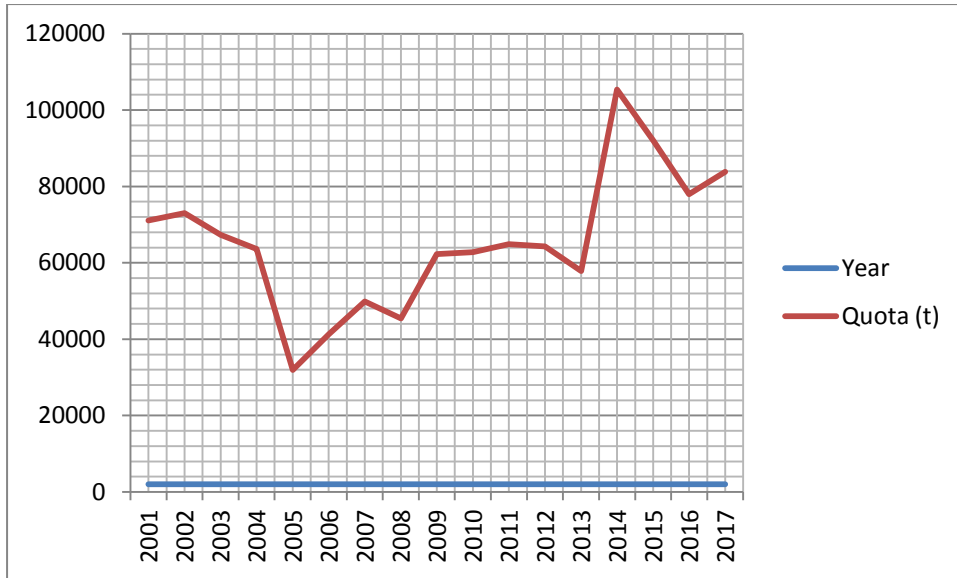
TABLE 2 – MACKEREL ALLOCATIONS BETWEEN THE RSW PELAGIC SEGMENT AND POLYVALENT SEGMENT 2007 - TODATE

Changes in the Mackerel Quota

Mackerel is concentrated in the waters of the North Eastern Atlantic and is a highly migratory stock which necessitates negotiations between relevant 'Coastal States' parties (EU, Norway, Iceland, Faroe Islands) on the management of the shared resource in a sustainable manner. The current sharing arrangement for mackerel was agreed in 2014 between three parties only – EU, Faroes and Norway. An amount is held in reserve to accommodate the other parties (Iceland, Greenland and Russia). Ireland opposed the agreement on the grounds that the reduction in the EU share was too high. This agreement is due to expire in 2018 and it is expected that negotiations on a new agreement will commence in 2017.

This year, the 2017 Mackerel quota for Ireland has been set at 86,426 tonnes. This is a 14% increase on the 2016 initial quota of 75,837.

The graph below sets out the changes in Ireland's mackerel quota (post swops, carryover etc) in recent years.



GRAPH OF THE NATIONAL MACKEREL QUOTA

The Irish Fleet

The Irish fishing fleet is currently divided into five segments in accordance with Ministerial Policy Directive 2 of 2003, as amended by Policy Directive 1 of 2006, Policy Directive 1 of 2011 and Policy Directive 2 of 2011 (see Fig. 1).

The segments are: Aquaculture, Refrigerated Seawater (RSW) Pelagic, Beam Trawl, Specific and Polyvalent. The Specific segment is divided into two sub-segments – General and Scallop. The Polyvalent segment is divided into four sub-segments – Potting, Scallop, Vessels less than 18m in Length Overall (LOA) and Vessels greater than or equal to 18m LOA. A general description of the fleet segments and their composition is set out in Annex I.

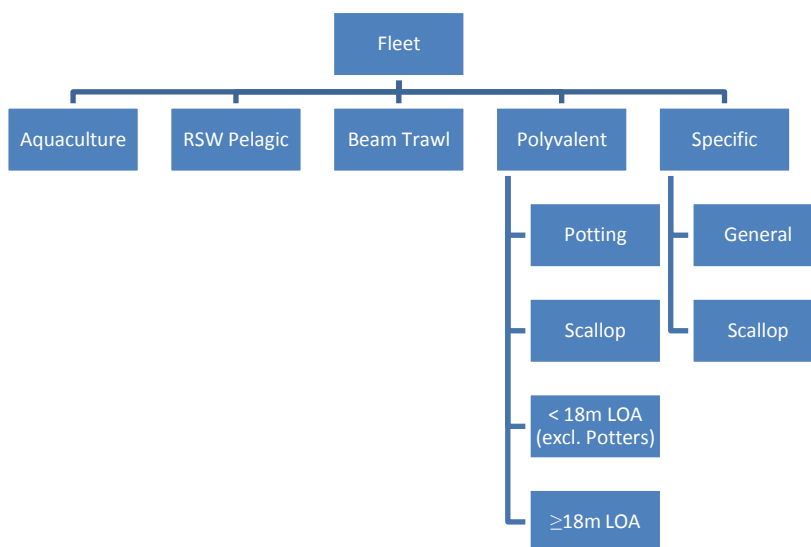


FIG. 1 STRUCTURE OF THE IRISH FLEET SEGMENTS

Access to Mackerel within the fleet

Mackerel are targeted by the RSW pelagic Segment, the Polyvalent Segment - Tier 1 & Tier.

A small fishery for vessels fishing by means of hooks and lines is provided for with 400 tonnes set aside each year specifically for vessels less than 15 metres in length overall. There is an open small boat fishery managed by way of Fishery Management Notice with modest monthly catch limits for boats of less than 18 meters in length overall. These measures support the traditional inshore mackerel fisheries.

The RSW Pelagic segment is limited to 23 vessel (units).

Within the Polyvalent segment of the fleet, there are 15 vessels in Tier 1 and 12 vessels in Tier 2. The number of vessels in each Tier is restricted to these levels under the policy and the arrangements are supported by licensing policy (2010).

There is a separate consultation on licensing policy for the fleet which closes on 28 February 2017 see the website for details:

<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/customerservice/publicconsultation/2016LicensingReviewPublicCon181016.docx>

Scope

The Minister has decided that there is a case for a review of the policy on allocations between the RSW Pelagic segment and the polyvalent segment of the fleet, taking account of request by the IS&WFO. In that regard, he decided that he is restricting consideration to the increased quota for Ireland in 2017 over that in 2016. This year, the 2017 Mackerel quota for Ireland has been set at 86,426 tonnes. This is a 14% increase on the 2016 initial quota of 75,837. Accordingly, the scope of the review relates to the allocation between the RSW Pelagic segment and the polyvalent segment of 10,617 tonnes i.e. the increase in the national initial quota in 2017 over the initial quota in 2016.

Conclusion

This consultation is taking place without prejudice. It is important to note that the Minister has not made any decision at this time to change the allocations between the segments in respect of this part of the quota. All relevant issues will be carefully evaluated and subject to a full consultation with stakeholders before the Minister decides if any amendment to the policy is justified for the proper and effective management of the mackerel fishery.

The purpose of this consultation is to invite stakeholders and interested parties to advise the Minister of views on any changes to policy within the scope of this review as set out above.

A Sea Fishing Boat license holder should not carry out any activities or make any plans on an assumption that a change in policy may happen.

The consultation process is set out in the attached paper.

Disclaimer: This document is for consultation purposes 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 nor does it necessarily set out the Minister/ Department's final or definitive position on particular matters.

10 January 2017

END

Supplemental note on other communications

Communications received prior to the Minister's decision to commence a public consultation on the Mackerel allocations for 2017.

Between October and 22 December 2016, the Minister and Department received 3 communications from the Irish South and West Fish Producers Organisation referring to its proposal on dealing with the mackerel quota in 2017. These documents are available on the Departments website on the consultation page.

During this period the Minister and Department also received a number of letters/ submissions on the matter from industry groups and individuals. In addition to this the Minister met the industry representatives in Castletownbere and the Department met the KFO where the matter was discussed. These letters, submissions and meetings informed the Ministers decision that there is a case for a review of the policy on allocations of mackerel between the RSW Pelagic segment and the Polyvalent segment of the fleet, taking account of a request by the IS&WFO. Those letters, submissions and meeting minutes are not available on the Departments website as the authors/participants permission to release the documents has not been sought. These may, however, be available under Freedom of Information legislation.

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