

Fisheries

August 2022



Contents

1	Summary and Key Points	3
2	Policy	3
2.1	Introduction	3
2.2	Principles.....	5
2.3	References.....	7

1 Summary and Key Points

The Green Party supports an all-Ireland based fishing industry that is ecologically, socially and economically sustainable. We believe that small-scale fishing operations will be less impactful on our marine habitats and provide viable jobs into the future for coastal and island communities. Key to these objectives are:

- ecosystem-based management of our fishing resources
- adequately resourced monitoring and enforcement of fishing effort
- more equitable distribution of fishing opportunities, including fishing quotas.
- the strategic establishment of Marine Protected Areas (covering a minimum of 30% of Irish waters)
- support of the rights of workers within the fishing industry to a fair wage and safe working conditions

2 Policy

2.1 Introduction

Marine ecosystems found in Irish waters experience the same pressures and disturbances that have impacted ecosystems worldwide. Globally, overfishing has tripled since monitoring began in the 1960s, with an estimated 34% of all fish stocks currently listed as overfished [1]. Industrial-scale fishing methods have reduced many fish stocks below biologically safe limits and damaged ecosystems through habitat destruction and by-catch of non-target species [2]–[4]. Overfishing reduces fish biomass, impacts biodiversity, alters the marine food web and degrades marine habitats [5].

Under the reformed Common Fisheries Policy of the EU (CFP) a legally binding deadline was set to end overfishing by “2015 where possible and, on a progressive, incremental basis at the latest by 2020 for all stocks.” According to the most recent advice for fisheries in the Celtic Seas ecoregion [6] – which includes Irish seas – only 31% of the 107 assessed stocks that are fished in this region are caught at sustainable levels; ~9% are fished above sustainable levels; while the status of the remainder (60%) is unknown (including almost all shark and ray species, as well as many pelagic species). Clearly, the target of ensuring all stocks were fished at or below maximum sustainable yield (i.e., the number of fish that can safely be caught without affecting the population’s ability to replenish itself) by 2020 has not been met. This potentially impacts both the health/functioning of ecosystems and the economic/social sectors that depend on healthy fish stocks for a way of life.

The largest fisheries by both value and landings in Ireland are the pelagic (blue whiting, mackerel, horse mackerel, herring, boarfish) and nephrops fisheries, while the inshore shellfish fisheries are also significant contributors [7]. However, whilst the Irish fleet comprises ~2000 vessels, the vast majority of quota is assigned to a smaller number of larger vessels, with vessels <18m (~1700) thus having fewer fishing opportunities [8]. This is compounded by low membership rates of inshore fishers in Producer Organisations and the lack of official recognition of inshore producer organisations. Only one such inshore Producer Organisation, the Irish Islands Marine Resource Organisation, has been granted such recognition as of 2021.

The CFP already includes a number of measures to improve the fairness and sustainability of Irish fisheries that have been under-implemented. The full implementation of Article 17 for the transparent allocation of fishing opportunities has been a priority of Greens at a European level and could massively benefit Irish small-scale fishers, particularly in the pelagic sector.

Lack of political leadership has led to scientific advice going unheeded, resulting in the unsustainable exploitation of fish stocks in Irish waters. A 2020 report listed Ireland as second in a league of countries responsible for overfishing in EU waters from 2001 – 2019, pushing for and benefiting from both higher percentage TACs (Total Allowable Catches are catch limits based on scientific advice but negotiated by the EU Council of Fisheries Ministers annually) and gross tonnage of TACs than what was recommended by scientific advice during this period [9]. Achieving a fairer distribution of quotas whilst strictly adhering to scientific advice will be an important factor in achieving sustainable fisheries [10], [11] – Ireland can play a vital role through opposing any TACs that exceed scientific advice during annual negotiations at the Council of Ministers.

The reformed CFP promised to end overfishing by 2020 [12]. UN Sustainable Development Goal 14 [13] also sought to end overfishing by 2020. While some success has been seen, these goals have not yet been met and this is reflected in the [COFI 2021 Declaration](#) which calls nations to take action to ensure that our aquatic food systems are resilient and meet growing demand for nutritious, safe and affordable food while maintaining sustainable ecosystems, economies and societies that leave no one behind [14].

Key to achieving these aims will be the effective implementation of the Fisheries Control regulation, which is currently being negotiated between the EU institutions. The most significant outcomes of this will be the introduction of an electronic logbook to replace the outdated paper system, as well as the introduction of remote electronic monitoring to record the catch of certain vessels and reduce discards.

A Marine Protected Areas (MPA), as defined within the Marine Protected Area Advisory Group report (2020), is a geographically defined area of marine character

or influence which is protected through legal means for the purpose of conservation of specified species, habitats or ecosystems and their associated ecosystem services and cultural values, and managed with the intention of achieving stated objectives over the long term. In essence, they are a conservation tool which may be used to effectively manage marine habitats in diverse ways. Many studies have shown benefits of MPAs in replenishing fish stocks, with spill over effects increases the marketable share of catches in waters adjacent to designated MPAs [16]–[19]. Studies have demonstrated substantially greater increases in habitat restoration, biomass, and biodiversity by prohibiting all destructive forms of fishing within an MPA [20]–[23]. However, it is essential that meaningful consultation occurs with all stakeholders, including the different elements of the fishing industry, community groups, NGOs, government agencies etc., from the outset of the MPA designation process [24]–[28].

Fishing is a vocation for most who work the seas and is rewarding in many ways. Hard work and graft during junior roles as deck hands and able seamen can allow fishers to rise through the ranks to become skippers and masters of their own vessels; fishing has a reputation of being tough but fair. Unfortunately, in recent years this reputation has become tarnished across the globe due to abuses in working conditions, particularly among undocumented migrants. Long hours worked in unsafe conditions – even whilst acknowledging that fishing is inherently an unsafe workplace – have been reported widely. A 2015 article in *The Guardian* revealed sleep deprivation, inhumane hours and low pay were experienced widely by undocumented workers on Irish boats. Despite actions taken by governments to address these issues, extremely long working hours with few breaks, very low wages (often below minimum wage given hours worked), and racist insults and verbal abuse were still the common workplace experiences of the majority of non-European Economic Area migrants interviewed for a report in 2021 [30].

The Green Party seeks to end overfishing and destructive fishing practices by supporting an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management. Further, we believe more equitable fishing opportunities will benefit sustainable fishing through supporting local, smaller scale operators. The following policies will allow Ireland to manage our fishing resources in a sustainable and fair manner resulting in healthy, thriving, marine ecosystems.

2.2 Principles

1. The Green Party supports the complete implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy, as reformed in 2014.
2. Apply ecosystem-based management to ensure marine populations are maintained at ecologically healthy and resilient levels, recognising the dependencies between different species, and the urgent need for intervention for some species. Where maximum sustainable yield (MSY) is used as a measure of

population maintenance, ensure it is treated as a ceiling threshold and not a target level. It is vital that scientific advice is adhered to when setting annual Total Allowable Catch limits for fisheries.

3. The Green Party will end the practice of pair trawling in Irish coastal waters.¹
4. Develop local fisheries management plans based on sound science and providing for fair participation in the process by all stakeholders, including the input of the accumulated knowledge of local fishers.
5. Remove subsidies that support harmful or inequitable fishing practices. Ensure supports are in place to assist the fishing industry in the transition to sustainable fisheries.
6. Protect the viability of small commercial fishers and fishing communities as essential components of the fishing industry by grant-aiding agreed sustainable practices.
7. Ensure the required resources are available to enable the effective enforcement of all fisheries regulations and so deter illegal and unsustainable catches.
8. Ensure that scientific observers, or other means of assessing catches, are on every significant fisheries vessel operating in Irish waters.
9. Support fisheries in the full implementation of the revised Fisheries Control regulation, including the introduction of electronic logbooks and other modernising measures.
10. Stakeholder engagement during the MPA designation process must be all-inclusive, ensuring all stakeholders are afforded equal opportunities to represent their views.
11. At least 50% of all designated MPAs must be strict 'no-take zones.'
12. Destructive fishing methods, including bottom trawling and dredging, must not be permitted in any MPA.
13. The Green Party supports a target of near-zero fishing-related mortality of marine mammals, turtles, endangered seabirds, and other threatened marine species, for all fisheries, and relevant fisheries should be closed as soon as a limit is reached.
14. Protect deep sea ecosystems by effectively implementing Council Regulation (EU) 2016/2336 (EU Deep Sea Fisheries Regulation).

¹ Passed at 2017 Convention

15. Support undocumented workers in Irish fisheries, including ending abuses of the Atypical Working Scheme (AWS) and under-crewing of vessels.
16. Require foreign vessels chartered by Irish companies and Irish owned or registered vessels to abide by Irish law wherever they are operating.
17. Provide ongoing support to fisheries research, including:
 - 17.1. Multidisciplinary research to identify and fill knowledge gaps in our understanding of marine and coastal ecosystems
 - 17.2. Identifying both less environmentally impactful and more sustainable methods of fishing
 - 17.3. Support for coastal and island communities to investigate sustainable methods of managing their customary fishing resources
 - 17.4. Ensure research findings are publicly available and transparently funded.

2.3 References

- [1] FAO, “The state of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020. Sustainability in action.,” FAO, Rome, 2020. Accessed: Mar. 29, 2022. [Online]. Available: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9229en/ca9229en.pdf>.
- [2] R. H. Thurstan, S. Brockington, and C. M. Roberts, “The effects of 118 years of industrial fishing on UK bottom trawl fisheries,” *Nat. Commun.*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 15, Dec. 2010, doi: 10.1038/ncomms1013.
- [3] D. Pauly and D. Zeller, “Catch reconstructions reveal that global marine fisheries catches are higher than reported and declining,” *Nat. Commun.*, vol. 7, pp. 1–9, 2016, doi: 10.1038/ncomms10244.
- [4] D. Pauly, V. Christensen, J. Dalsgaard, R. Froese, and F. T. Jr, “Fishing Down Marine Food Webs,” *North*, vol. 860, no. 1998, 2012, doi: 10.1126/science.279.5352.860.
- [5] B. Worm *et al.*, “Impacts of biodiversity loss on ocean ecosystem services,” *Science (80-.)*, vol. 314, no. 5800, pp. 787–790, 2006, doi: 10.1126/science.1132294.
- [6] ICES, “Celtic Seas ecoregion – Fisheries overview,” Nov. 2021, doi: 10.17895/ICES.ADVISE.9098.
- [7] Marine Institute, “The Stock Book: Annual Review of Fish Stocks in 2021 with Management Advice for 2022,” 2021. Accessed: Mar. 29, 2022. [Online]. Available: <http://hdl.handle.net/10793/1726>.
- [8] G. Ní Aodha, “Quotas cut by 15%, and a €1 billion industry on the brink: The confusing figures fuelling fishers’ anger,” *The Journal*, 2021. <https://www.thejournal.ie/figures-behind-fishing-protest-5475484-Jun2021/> (accessed Apr. 03, 2022).
- [9] New Economics Foundation, “Landing the blame: overfishing in the Northeast Atlantic 2020,” 2020. <https://neweconomics.org/2020/03/landing-the-blame-overfishing-in-the-northeast-atlantic-2020> (accessed Mar. 29, 2022).
- [10] M. E. Lam and T. J. Pitcher, “The ethical dimensions of fisheries,” *Curr. Opin. Environ. Sustain.*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 364–373, 2012, doi:

- 10.1016/j.cosust.2012.06.008.
- [11] M. E. Lam, "The Ethics and Sustainability of Capture Fisheries and Aquaculture," *J. Agric. Environ. Ethics*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 35–65, 2016, doi: 10.1007/s10806-015-9587-2.
 - [12] F. Kelly, "Common Fisheries Policy 2020: A discarded opportunity," 2020. Accessed: Mar. 29, 2022. [Online]. Available: <https://bit.ly/3hKVh1y>.
 - [13] United Nations, "THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development," 2015. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> (accessed May 10, 2022).
 - [14] FAO, *2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture*. 2021.
 - [15] Marine Protected Area Advisory Group, "Expanding Ireland's Marine Protected Area Network: A report by the Marine Protected Area Advisory Group," 2020.
 - [16] R. Goñi *et al.*, "Spillover from six western Mediterranean marine protected areas: evidence from artisanal fisheries," *Mar. Ecol. Prog. Ser.*, vol. 366, pp. 159–174, Aug. 2008, doi: 10.3354/MEPS07532.
 - [17] F. Vandeperre *et al.*, "Effects of no-take area size and age of marine protected areas on fisheries yields: a meta-analytical approach," *Fish Fish.*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 412–426, Dec. 2011, doi: 10.1111/J.1467-2979.2010.00401.X.
 - [18] C. Guenther, D. López-Carr, and H. S. Lenihan, "Differences in lobster fishing effort before and after MPA establishment," *Appl. Geogr.*, vol. 59, pp. 78–87, May 2015, doi: 10.1016/J.APGEOG.2014.12.016.
 - [19] M. Di Lorenzo, J. Claudet, and P. Guidetti, "Spillover from marine protected areas to adjacent fisheries has an ecological and a fishery component," *J. Nat. Conserv.*, vol. 32, pp. 62–66, Jul. 2016, doi: 10.1016/J.JNC.2016.04.004.
 - [20] B. D. Beukers-Stewart, B. J. Vause, M. W. J. Mosley, H. L. Rossetti, and A. R. Brand, "Benefits of closed area protection for a population of scallops," *Mar. Ecol. Prog. Ser.*, vol. 298, pp. 189–204, Aug. 2005, doi: 10.3354/MEPS298189.
 - [21] T. A. Dinmore, D. E. Duplisea, B. D. Rackham, D. L. Maxwell, and S. Jennings, "Impact of a large-scale area closure on patterns of fishing disturbance and the consequences for benthic communities," *ICES J. Mar. Sci.*, vol. 60, no. 2, pp. 371–380, 2003, doi: 10.1016/S1054-3139(03)00010-9.
 - [22] B. F. R. Davies, L. Holmes, A. Rees, M. J. Attrill, A. Y. Cartwright, and E. V. Sheehan, "Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management works—How switching from mobile to static fishing gear improves populations of fished and non-fished species inside a marine-protected area," *J. Appl. Ecol.*, vol. 58, no. 11, pp. 2463–2478, Nov. 2021, doi: 10.1111/1365-2664.13986.
 - [23] P. J. N. Kleiven, S. H. Espeland, E. M. Olsen, R. A. Abesamis, E. Moland, and A. R. Kleiven, "Fishing pressure impacts the abundance gradient of European lobsters across the borders of a newly established marine protected area," *Proc. R. Soc. B*, vol. 286, no. 1894, Jan. 2019, doi: 10.1098/RSPB.2018.2455.
 - [24] M. B. Mascia, C. A. Claus, and R. Naidoo, "Impacts of Marine Protected Areas on Fishing Communities," *Conserv. Biol.*, vol. 24, no. 5, pp. 1424–1429, Oct. 2010, doi: 10.1111/J.1523-1739.2010.01523.X.
 - [25] M. J. Kaiser, "Are marine protected areas a red herring or fisheries panacea?," *Can. J. Fish. Aquat. Sci.*, vol. 62, no. 5, pp. 1194–1199, May 2005, doi: 10.1139/F05-056.
 - [26] P. J. S. Jones, "Equity, justice and power issues raised by no-take marine protected area proposals," *Mar. Policy*, vol. 33, no. 5, pp. 759–765, Sep. 2009, doi: 10.1016/J.MARPOL.2009.02.009.
 - [27] I. M. Da Silva, N. Hill, H. Shimadzu, A. M. V. M. Soares, and M. Dornelas,

- “Spillover effects of a community-managed marine reserve,” *PLoS One*, vol. 10, no. 4, Apr. 2015, doi: 10.1371/JOURNAL.PONE.0111774.
- [28] S. E. Rees, L. D. Rodwell, S. Searle, and A. Bell, “Identifying the issues and options for managing the social impacts of Marine Protected Areas on a small fishing community,” *Fish. Res.*, vol. 146, pp. 51–58, Sep. 2013, doi: 10.1016/J.FISHRES.2013.04.003.
- [29] “Revealed: trafficked migrant workers abused in Irish fishing industry | Migration and development | The Guardian,” *The Guardian*, 2015.
- [30] C. Murphy, D. M. Doyle, and S. Thompson, “Experiences of Non-EEA Workers in the Irish Fishing Industry,” Maynooth, 2021.
- [31] European Council, “Council Regulation (EU) 2016/2336,” *Off. J. Eur. Union*, vol. L, no. 354, Dec. 2016, Accessed: May 10, 2022. [Online]. Available: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016R2336>.