

1 October 2009
Clonakilty, Co Cork

We the Irish inshore (pot) fishing association would like to take this opportunity to bring to light some of the issues which we feel are preventing us from making a living from our fisheries. In more recent times these difficulties have been compounded by the salmon closure and the decommissioning scheme, which have led to a huge increase of effort in this sector.

We feel that if chances are not made as a matter of urgency many of us will be forced out of fishing, leaving many small coastal communities without valuable jobs and the ancillary activities associated with them.

Brief history.

In 1990 when the fleet register was formalised many inshore fishermen were for various reasons excluded from it, again in the mid nineties many of us were overlooked in the so called 3000 tonne scheme. Finally in late 2002 after several years of meetings and negotiations the inshore licensing scheme was announced its stated purpose was to "bring into the regulatory framework currently unlicensed and unregistered inshore fishermen who have traditionally fished inshore waters". To be offered a licence we were subjected to an unprecedented audit of our affairs and a barrage of paperwork, we had to prove conclusively that we had a track record in fishing back as far as 1990 when the original licences were issued.

Unfair treatment.

The licences however came with strict conditions which we feel are unfair and put in place because of mistakes made and abuses carried out in the past. We also believe that certain vested interests within the industry insured that the scope of our licences was reduced. The restrictions on the type of gear we can use and the species we can catch are detrimental to our fishing operations, the very nature of small scale inshore fishing requires flexibility and the ability to catch different species by different methods as the seasons change. It is also felt that these restrictions are putting huge pressure on the few stocks we are allowed to exploit. Lobster, Shrimp and Crab in particular have seen a massive increase in effort over the last number of years. As it stands we are obliged to buy replacement capacity on the "open" market if we want to fish by any means other than potting for non quota species. In simple terms we are expected to pay for something we should already have. In addition this capacity did not have any monetary value when it was issued, greedy speculators from both inside and outside the industry have ensured its inflated value, we are all now feeling the effects of greed and speculation in other areas of our society. The interests of those who wish to keep the value of capacity high should not be put before the interests of genuine fishermen.

Good practices

- Traditionally our boats are small in size and power thus fishing effort is relatively low this combined with the fact that our gear is predominantly static and selective our fishing methods are sustainable, low impact and conservation friendly.
- Many of us are involved in voluntary v notching of lobsters and shrimp grading is also carried out voluntarily.
- We live in and are committed to the communities where we operate. Providing valuable jobs and spin off activity in coastal areas in these lean times

We want these restrictions removed and to achieve parity with the rest of the polyvalent sector. We are not asking for anything we are not entitled to. We simply want to be allowed to fish as we have traditionally done so that we can make a living for both ourselves and our families in a fair and sustainable manner. The removal of these ridiculous restrictions will cost nothing, it will not result in an increase in fishing effort now or in the future, it will allow inshore fishermen to follow more traditional and sustainable seasonal fishing patterns.

Signed Ken Cashman Chairman
Irish inshore fishing association

