



PRESS RELEASE

20th July 2015

Report to improve safety and welfare in the fishing industry

The CEO of Irish Water Safety, John Leech is very pleased to hand over the report of the “Working Group on Safety, Training and Employment in the Irish Fishing Industry” to Minister for Agriculture Food and Marine, Simon Coveney, TD, with responsibility for the fishing industry in Castletownbere, Co Cork.

When the recommendations of this report are implemented it will reduce the number of fishermen lost to drowning and other accidents at sea as well as reducing the number of injuries. The recommendations will improve the welfare of our fishermen, make the industry more attractive for entrants and improve their careers within it.

Key recommendations are:

CHAPTER 1: SAFETY STANDARDS

1. DTTAS should develop specified, safe manning levels for all fishing vessels, relating to deck and engineering competencies and to be determined according to the size, type and operating parameters of the vessel.
2. DTTAS should develop a user-friendly crew logbook for smaller fishing vessels.
3. Ireland should ratify the STCW-F Convention and continue to develop the certification and training regime for fishermen.
4. In relation to occupational health and safety:
 - a) fishing enterprises should prepare a safety statement in accordance with the requirements of the SHWW Act 2005
 - b) to avoid confusion there should only be one, mandatory Code of Practice relating to small fishing vessels, and this should be the DTTAS Code of Practice (for the Design, Construction, Equipment and Operation of Small Fishing Vessels)
 - c) there should be a single, safety-inspection regime for these vessels, or at least a co-ordinated one which recognises the remit of both inspectorates ; DTTAS already carries out such inspections for maritime safety and the appointment of DTTAS surveyors under SHWW Act section 62 should be considered for the purposes of the SHWW Act requirements
 - d) DTTAS and the HSA should continue to work to complete an MOU to facilitate the co-ordination referred to above.
5. DTTAS should explore the scope for new stability standards for smaller fishing vessels less than 15m.
6. DTTAS should consider including a requirement in its Code of Practice for Small Fishing Vessels that existing fishing vessels between 12 and 15m long should have a stability book
7. Ireland should consider ratification of the Cape Town Agreement on the Safety of Fishing vessels and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Work in Fishing Convention in due course.
8. DTTAS should explore additional enforcement approaches such as Fixed Payment Notices (FPNs) for appropriate offences, in relation to the wearing of Personal Flotation Devices.

CHAPTER 2: SAFETY TRAINING

9. Mandatory Certificates of Competency (Deck and Engine) should be introduced by DTTAS for the operators of all vessels with appropriate safety-training in stability and work-related safety.
10. Certificates of Proficiency (Deck and Engine) should be introduced by DTTAS for deckhands with appropriate safety training in stability and work-related safety.

11. DTTAS should introduce requirements and certification in relation to crew qualifications for fishing vessels less than 17m in length and with power of less than 750kW
12. BIM should provide stability awareness and training for operators and crew of vessels less than 24 metres, with an immediate focus on vessels < 15 metres within 12-36 months.
13. The development of appropriate induction training for new entrants to the industry.

CHAPTER 3: TECHNICAL INNOVATION IN SAFETY PROCEDURES AND EQUIPMENT

14. BIM will continue to work both with research, development and innovation groups and industry stakeholders, to ensure that the latest developments in technical innovation, without prejudice to the regulations, are channelled for marine-type approval and included on a list of safety items, as appropriate, eligible for grant-aid targeted at small fishing vessels less than 15 metres in length.

CHAPTER 4: MAKING THE FISHING INDUSTRY MORE ATTRACTIVE FOR NEW ENTRANTS

15. Training Incentives/Career Structure: appropriate Training Incentives and Career Structures should be put in place for those working in the fishing industry.
16. Seafarers' Allowance: that the requirements to allow individuals qualify for Seafarers' Allowance be amended to remove the current exclusion of "fishing vessels" from the definition of seagoing ships.
17. Social Protection: the group recommends the introduction of a more tailored, and appropriate, social protection system that would include share fishermen. This new system would take account of the specific needs of the fishing industry, along the lines of the Family Income Supplement (FIS) and Farm Assist Schemes.
18. Economic Viability: that in order to enhance economic viability for current workers and boost attractiveness to new entrants, the group recommends the introduction of a targeted decommissioning scheme. The Group also recommends that revised quota and fleet management arrangements should be considered in parallel. A targeted decommissioning scheme should take account of the interests of vessel owners and non-vessel owners (fishermen working on decommissioned vessels).
19. VAT: that the current restriction of the VAT rebate system, that excludes vessels under 15GT, be removed.
20. Inshore Management: The group recommends that industry and state partners work together, to bring forward the necessary structures and measures, to facilitate the sustainable management of high-value inshore stocks, consistent with conservation requirements and give those involved in the sector, and considering entering it, confidence in its future.

CHAPTER 5: CAREERS STRUCTURE AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

21. That BIM develop a career-development programme for aspiring deck and engineer officers in the fishing industry.
22. That BIM, in conjunction with the MSO provide courses leading to certificates of proficiency for deck hands in the fishing industry (for example *Efficient Deck Hand* or *Able Bodied Seaman*).
23. That BIM, on a phased basis, and in conjunction with the MSO, provide further conversion courses for fishermen, who wish also to operate part-time in the commercial shipping sector.

Full report can be downloaded at: <http://www.iws.ie/fileupload/media/press-releases/Press%20Releases%202015/WG%20%20STE%20in%20FI%20Report%20200715.pdf>

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