

Brown Crab Working Group



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Có-mhaoinithe ag an
Aontas Eorpach
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Brown Crab Working Group

Measure	Measure	Priority
1	Increase MLS	easy
2	Ban on berried crab	easy
3	Further restrictions on clawing	moderate
4	Escape Gaps	moderate
5	Restrict landing of Soft crab	difficult
6	Seasonal staggered cessations	difficult
7	Managed Access - Entry/Exit	difficult

Brown Crab Working Group

Measure	Measure	Priority
8	Effort Control	difficult
9	Pot Limits	difficult
10	Pot Type	difficult
11	TAC	difficult
12	Regionalised stock based measures	moderate

Secondary Measures- Brown Crab Working Group

Measure	Measure	Timeframe
1	Marketing	Short term
2	Tie-up schemes	Medium-term
3	Retirement scheme	Medium-long term
4	Data collection (new CR etc.)	Medium-long term
5	Fishing Opportunity (non-crab)	Medium-long term
6	Enforcement of recreational fishing restrictions	Medium-term

Brown Crab Working Group – Measure 1

Increase MLS

Pros

- Simple technical measure
- Will initially reduce landings as 13-19% landed between 140-150
- Increase yield of crab
- Ensures better market quality of the catch
- Allow to breed for longer before exposure to fishery
- Increased egg production by larger sizes
- zero fishing mortality between 140 and 150?
- Bigger crab which may be useful for some markets

Cons

- Reduced landings for fishermen
- Short-term economic impact on fishers as landings will reduce initially
- A permanent management measure
- Does not apply to vessels from other jurisdiction except to NI 0-6nm
- French have access Carnsore to Cork <12nm so would have to consult.
- Some markets prefer smaller especially if pieces per box such as China
- If you don't know where the boats are you cannot implement this measure an area basis e.g. inside 6nm or inside 12nm

Issues to Consider

- Support on measuring – gauges etc
- Might have to be a regional measure, will all regions agree?
- Requires SI (public consultation). Should not be same as lobster max LS as it discriminates against Irish vessels
- Review if stock starts to respond to measure.
- Optimal size needs to be considered and need data to support this

Brown Crab Working Group – Measure 2

Ban on berried crab

Pros

- Easy and simple to introduce and enforce
- Small increase to recruitment
- Good for recruitment –chance to reproduce
- You can recatch the crab when it eggs hatch therefore no loss to income in long term but all the benefits
- Immediate live return so simple to implement

Cons

- Won't have a huge impact but it's a positive action
- Very short term impact on landing and earnings
- East coast end of Oct Nov December

Issues to Consider

- Definition = any trace of eggs on clutch
- Applies to all fishermen who land crab as targeted or by catch
- Unless current legislation is enforced on clawing then there will no impact from this measure
- Good communication to buyers and processors as well as the fishing industry.

Brown Crab Working Group – Measure 3 Clawing

Pros

- Background work is already done on this – there is a proposal already development on amending the regulation. It could be rolled out quickly.
- Protects undersize crab, soft and berried crab

Cons

- Controlling clawing under current legislation is hard to enforce.
- Huge demand for white crab meat.
- Parts of industry remote from processors ALREADY FISH FOR CLAW MARKET which will not change as they cannot get rid OF 30 boxes of crab.

Issues to Consider

- Change in the EU clawing regulations

Brown Crab Working Group – Measure 4

Soft crab

Pros

- Stop landings of soft crab
- Market doesn't want it
- In a few weeks it will be marketable once it hardens with higher value
- Significantly reduce landings
- Ban on landings soft crab would improve the fishery reputation
- No value as whelk bait
- Improves fishery yield as reduced amounts of crab landed at a lower value price
- Maintain crab quality and value

Cons

- Alternative bait will be needed for other fisheries such as whelk
- Significant economic impact when there is a high abundance of soft-shelled crabs during certain periods
- Difficult to define/identify soft crab
- Could be difficult to enforce

Issues to Consider

- Impact on loss of bait for other fisheries
- Is this as big an issue as we might think
- Is there regional variation?
- Quality of live return being protected
- Need definition

Brown Crab Working Group – Measure 5

Escape Gaps

Pros

- Makes fishing operations easier for vessels in the NW for example
- Would allow small lobster/crab escape. Reduces bycatch of undersized crabs
- 30% effective for small sized Brown crab release. Also effective for undersized lobster
- More effective live return
- Less claw loss
- Less work on deck
- Relatively low cost measure

Cons

- Increased cost and work to adapt pots
- Need to consider velvet crabs – may be fishery specific
- Difficult to enforce?
- Have to bring all the pots in to install
- Not completely effective for crab 30-40%
- Need participation by everyone for it to be effective

Issues to Consider

- How will this work with pot limits if they are introduced?
- Need to carefully consider the type of escape panel SO THAT IS OPTIMAL FOR THE FISHERY
- Potential to have them made in Ireland from recycled plastic
- Would need careful legislation and enforcement
- Potentially would be most suitable for new gear – introduce on phased basis

Brown Crab Working Group – Measure 6

Seasonal staggered cessations

Pros

- Rotating seasonal closures may improve market supply and price
- If seasonal closures during low effort seasons will they be effective
- Gives an opportunity for processors to reduce any frozen stock in storage
- Definite defined effort reduction and reduced fishing mortality
- Can be done in such a way to maintain access to market
- Useful in conjunction with other management measures to achieve specific goals

Cons

- Is there any benefit if vessels aren't fishing anyway due to weather?
- Enforcement would be difficult
- May need agreement from different countries – could be challenging
- Economic impact on fishers need to be addressed
- If done incorrectly could lose access market and impact fleet and processors in value chain
- Would need to be used in combination with other management measures
- Needs to be done when it has impact which will have a significant economic impact

Issues to Consider

- Do these need to be regional? There needs to be staggered regional closures to maintain the market
- Combine with other area based measures
- The closure would need to be a complete closed, no other activity would have to happen – does this include all fishing including bycatch of crab from lobster fishermen.
- Should only be used judiciously
- Needs diversification or support form the state to make it successful
- Would need to be evaluated and monitored

Brown Crab Working Group – Measure 7

Managed Access - Entry/Exit

Pros

- More product for the vessels that are fishing the stock
- Controls over capacity
- Long-term security for those already fishing
- Responsible, invested fishing practices
- Quantifies the amount of boats that are fishing crab
- Managing the access is a conservation measure in that it can be used to reduce the amount of effort on crab in conjunction with other measures
- Manages the latent effort issue

Cons

- Latent capacity holders without track record will consider that their capacity /asset value has been devalued
- There will be a race to get crab fishing to establish a track record especially if phased in
- Risk of ringfencing which is not welcomed among some parts of the industry
- Needs robust entry/exit rules
- Needs to have very tight rules and regulations
- You don't want latent permits
- Needs to be tied in with pot limits which may increase control enforcement effort
- May be a legal challenge

Issues to Consider

- Need historical records of fishing (track record) to access permits (at least three year) – what is the entry limit in terms of amount landed (e.g., 2 Tonne)
- Entry and exit rules really important - new entrants should only be allowed in if the stock status can accommodate them
- Permit numbers would need to be addressed at regular intervals in line with stock status
- Need a retirement scheme for exit and allowing entry (new entrants will need specific requirements like experience on crab)
- Can't become an ITQ! Can't be transferable.
- Need a use it or lose it clause
- Must make provisions for young people coming in the future.
- EU can introduce a quota if the crab stock on a European basis is in trouble.
- Consider Decommissioning scheme for latent capacity holder who are not able to prove track record.

Brown Crab Working Group – Measure 8

Effort Control

Pros

- Effort control and reduced effort
- Prevents overfishing by limiting the time or resources fishermen can use.
- Protects stocks from excessive pressure, contributing to long-term sustainability.
- Responds to falling stocks to increase biomass and protect recruitment
- Capping the fishery so effort cannot increase
- Equality of application

Cons

- There are already effort regimes in place on kW days
- Can be perceived as overly restrictive and a threat to livelihoods. Requires detailed monitoring to be effective and fair.
- We don't know the amount of effort to control
- How do you divide it at the start to have economic stability?
- Needs managed access to work best

Issues to Consider

- Used in combination with other measures
- Need to consider the sequencing of effort control. This is key, needs to be linked to caps on vessels, permits, etc. These permit vessels (by area) can then decide the effort limitations.
- How does this work along with all other possible measures with Lobster fishing.
- Learn from any mistakes made from the past.
- This measure also ties in to pot limits, area management measures, managed access.
- Need to Know where to start? What the stock level and what reduction is required to get to F, MSY or other suitable indicator ?
- Malin stock needs 25% reduction in fishing mortality to return to MSY

Brown Crab Working Group – Measure 9

Pot Limits

Pros

- Needs managed access to work effectively
- Reduces effort, gear and operating costs (fuel, bait), carbon footprint
- Fairness across the industry
- CPUE should increase
- Pots would be looked after more!
- prove profitability
- Beneficial to entrants in terms of physical labour.

Cons

- It may encourage vessels to buy more pots to reach the limit if flagged in advance
- Limit profitability for vessels
- Difficult to enforce and monitor
- There would be 1000s of euros of pots not fishing – need to address the capital tied up in this –pot decommissioning as capital investment on pots will be lost
- You would need to tag all pots
- It could be ever reducing if not used in conjunction with other measures

Issues to Consider

- There will need to consider if there is a pot limit per vessel size (may be a division at <>12m).
- Will need VMS on board to monitor fishing and effort.
- Unworkable without a pot decommissioning scheme?
- Could be linked to managed access and pot tags could be issued.
- Data required.
- Must not discriminate against Irish vessels and should be area specific
- Would need to be off shore and inshore pot limits
- It would have to be a phased process to replace and tag all pots

Brown Crab Working Group – Measure 10

Pot Type Restrictions

Pros

- Reduces pots numbers
- There is less soak time

Cons

- Will be difficult to enforce
- There is less soak time (more work to collect pots)
- May reduce catch efficiency if certain types of pots are restricted.

Issues to Consider

- Ban which pot types?

Brown Crab Working Group – Measure 11 TAC

Pros

- Limits the total amount of crabs that can be caught, preventing overfishing and allowing for better control of fishing pressure.
- Fishermen can decide how they want to use their effort to reach their catch
- Encourages sustainable management, aligning with stock assessments and scientific recommendations.
- Can be adjusted annually based on stock health, allowing for flexible management.
- Reduces fishing mortality
- Encourages high quality/high grading
- Can increase price

Cons

- No appetite in the industry for TACs
- Data may not be there to effectively allocate TACs.
- Subject to ministerial policy
- Difficult to manage as allocation between vessels will be difficult
- Viability of vessels if there isn't enough TAC
- TAC can reduce
- Market sustainability
- Requires managed access to work effectively

Issues to Consider

- The new control regulation may allow for a discussion on TAC in the future when data is available.
- Cockle fishery has TAC and it is working.
- Vessel allocations could be considered. This is different to TAC because an allocation dictates how the crab will be distributed between vessels
- No ITQs as policy, however ringfenced fisheries existed Tier 1 Tier 2 Scallops
- Capping the fleet has negative connotations so should be referred to as managed access.
- Decommissioning latent capacity could be considered as a measure to manage latent capacity

Brown Crab Working Group – Measure 12

Area based measures

Pros

- There could be national measures (such as berried crab, MLS).
- Tailored management for specific regions can increase effectiveness.
- Allows local populations to recover or be protected.
- Allows any measures to be applied in an appropriate and practical way
- Encourages fishers taking ownership of the management measures and could mean higher level of compliance because of better buy in
- Can allow areas to go further in their ambition because it is practical - no trans boundary issues in certain cases
- Reduces cost

Cons

- Could be difficult to enforce
- Potential displacement of effort to other areas.
- Administrative complexity in enforcing varying measures across different zones.
- Displacement of activity might become an issue particularly if the measures are not popular
- Defining the areas could be challenging
- Needs iVMS to be effective
- If closures would need to have a certain amount of flexibility to accommodate for weather issues

Issues to Consider

- Closure has negative connotation.
- If fishery entry regimes are in place how is this controlled along with area-based management or closures. Can a vessel move between areas?
- Linked to seasonal closures – how would these work together?

