

Brown Crab Working Group Measures



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Có-mhainithe ag an
Aontas Eorpach
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Brown Crab Technical Measures

Increase MCRS

- All respondents support increase
- 150mm? Scotland (except Shetland) and NI already there. England also 150mm in Celtic Sea
- National measure, Irish vessels in Irish waters (ICES VI & VII), parity with UK – equality. Could engage with France on south coast 6-12nm
- Issue for vessels close inshore, don't get much over 150mm
- Limited duration, review ? Sunset clause dependent on stock recovery – part of overall recommendation wrt future of BCWG & monitoring role
- Support for fishers? Note in any recommendation made
- Need to quantify loss of catch by weight

Brown Crab Technical Measures

Ban on landing berried crab

- All respondents in support, one suggested support using 'v-notching' scheme
- Definition – berried crab – enforceable?
- Crab can extrude eggs in storage due to stress
- Minimal effect, low numbers, less catchable
- Overall, not really an issue
- Difficult to enforce
- Not worth the effort - drop

Brown Crab Technical Measures

Restrict clawing

- EU Regulation – 1% of total catch of crab aboard and/or 75kg total for vessels using gears other than pots
- Crab clawed alongside pier instead of being landed when not saleable for processing
- Can cover undersize, berried, bait and soft crab
- 5:1 crab:claw
- High mortality if clawed, assume 100%
- Can regulate for claw size

Brown Crab Technical Measures

Restrict clawing

- Consider in 2025?
- 2022 NIFF proposal
- Claw at factory/approved establishment – Ok, above MCRS
- Why claw on boat? No sale for whole crab – small quantities
- Need provision for small operators
- Regulate by detached claw size - use claw length for males, higher protection for females
- Netter limit of 75kg problematic

Brown Crab Technical Measures

Restrict clawing

- Regulate by size of detached claw – male size as can't differentiate – male claw bigger – 150mm male gives c80mm claw length – equal to female of c165mm MCRS – guidance
- Be careful to exclude processed claws – detached post intake
- Netter limit of 75kg too high, v. few landing this
- Potters – 1% of claws by total weight of crab aboard may be landed to max of 30kg per trip
- All other vessels using gear other than pots – 30kg absolute limit per trip

Brown Crab Technical Measures

Restrict landing of soft crab

- Broad support, issue with definition
- Edible crab which has recently cast its shell – NI – no proper definition in UK legislation
- 1500 tonnes going for whelk bait
- Reduces return from stock
- Market needs to incentivise high grading at sea so soft crab returned
- Whelk bait – good quality crab? Not suitable for whole crab product (no roe) so clawed and bodies used for bait

Brown Crab Technical Measures

Restrict landing of soft crab

- Live return levels can be very high – 60%
- Significant amount just not suitable for processed product – not soft
- Male crabs not wanted by processors for some products – only claws and meat extraction if they have a line
- Soft crab being landed to develop track record by some operators in anticipation of TAC
- Not optimal use of the resource
- Carr's charged for disposal of soft crab – stopped issue
- Some processors not paying for soft crab

Brown Crab Technical Measures

Restrict landing of soft crab

- Further discussion with wider group of processors?
- Market, training?
- Some crab being effectively landed for whelk bait, even exported
- Alternatives? Spider crab – seasonal – freeze it?
- How to incentivise alternative bait sources and remove market for brown crab use?
- Should be <10% 'soft', lots vessels 20-30% soft if crew not experienced
- ? Use of durometer - UK

Brown Crab Technical Measures

Restrict landing of soft crab

- Can't currently define and enforce
- Proportion of crab landed not suitable for processing
- Some actually poor quality – all used for whelk bait
- Losing c1000t that could be landed for better price
- Still need bait for whelk fishery
- Are there are alternatives that we can use to displace this use?
- Need more work in this area

Brown Crab Technical Measures

Escape Gaps

- Broadly in favour if can be done without losses of other target species, details important;
- Gap to retain lobster at 87mm and crab at 140mm – 30-40% reduction in juvenile crab, also reduction in juvenile lobster
- Complication when fishing velvet – will get out through crab gap, just too small. Big issue on east coast
- Need more than one gap design
- Enforceable?
- Area based?

Brown Crab Technical Measures

Escape Gaps

- Tag pots to approve gaps
- More operational than conservation measure. Makes job easier onboard
- More applicable for lobster than crab
- Limited benefit
- Encourage uptake where makes life easier onboard, don't make mandatory
- Incentivise through grant aid

Brown Crab Technical Measures

Seasonal closures

- Very varied responses, some when not fishing, some suggest tie up scheme, need to be staggered
- To be effective a seasonal closure needs to be:
 - At a time when people are actually fishing
 - Results in reduction of effort
 - Could be a time when quality/price/catch rates poor (earlier months of the year)
- Should not result in displacement of effort
- Tie up schemes very restricted in EMFAF – linked to conservation measure
- Enforceable if on national basis

Brown Crab Technical Measures

Seasonal closures

- Moulting season – June/July – poor quality and roe crab together – high levels of discards
- Best timing varies by area and market for catch – very variable – no one size fits all
- Alternative fisheries instead of tying up
- Limited by weather already
- Issue is poor quality – manage through that rather than closure
- Profitable year round? Need to operate year round as otherwise lose crew, can't stop/start – markets need constant supply

Brown Crab Technical Measures

Managed Access

- Mixed opinions ranging from support to opposition. Those in support were mainly conditional on appropriate model, 3/9 were against
- Against ringfencing
- What is it? What models are available?
- Can it be done in an Irish context? If yes, how?
- Need to develop paper – medium term
- Enabling mechanism

Brown Crab Technical Measures

Managed Access – current situation

- Open access equilibrium – boom/bust
- Trend to zero profit
- Tragedy of the commons
- Fishers want protection from this
- Need before look at effort control or other measures
- Implications for lobster fishery
- Resource considerations

Brown Crab Technical Measures

Effort Limits

- Small majority in favour, mainly suggesting pot limits. Others opposed, one citing impossibility of implementing such controls
- kW days, days at sea
- kW days meaningless for static gear fisheries
- EU Western Waters Agreement – Area VII BSA >10m main issue at present, Area VI >15m no longer an issue
- 14.99m vessels built for Area VI
- No restrictions on <15m

Brown Crab Technical Measures

Effort Limits

- kW days, days at sea
- Ineffective at controlling actual fishing effort
- Area VI <15m, restricted by weather, not kW days
- Current model too easily circumvented
- Not going to progress further
- Need review of Western Waters regulation

Brown Crab Technical Measures

Pot Limits

- Support but concerns about practicality
- Tagging of all pots – state issued – significant administrative burden
- Difficult to work out how to implement
- Other models around the world
- Limit on total number of pots or amount of pots hauled in a given period
- Can track pots hauled in period using iVMS data, can also use event sensors linked to iVMS
- Would need to set limits for vessels, based on length?

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Pot Limits

- Lot of support for limitations in some areas
- Large numbers take up ground
- Effective models elsewhere
- Done gradually, across fleet. Should see catch rates increase to compensate over time, improved profitability
- Currently an arms race
- How do you set numbers of pots for vessels? Length, crew?
- Some 12m vessels with more pots than 26m boats

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Pot Limits

- Pot numbers have been constantly rising, chasing to get same catch
- Recreational pot numbers
- Limits become targets
- Impact on lobster fishery
- Review how implemented in other jurisdictions
- Reduces risk to lobster if crab catch rates decline
- Removes gear competition, could see catch rate rebound
- Have to start somewhere

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Pot Types

- High retention pots that don't have to be hauled often e.g. parlour pots
- Built in inefficiency of some types of pots
- Pot fishery for crayfish – top entrance pot – very inefficient for lobster & crab
- Have some data on catch retention vs soak time
- More relevant to how you implement a pot limit if you so choose

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Output Controls/TAC

- Opposition from inshore sector
- Manage on basis of overall removals from stock or performance of indicator such as catch rate
- Difficult to use where multiple jurisdictions
- Not EU just like Dundalk cockles – could be more flexible
- Encourages high grading, maximal use of resource
- Wrong time to be discussing it, would confuse the issues being discussed – distraction
- No support at this time but keep on table for longer term consideration
- Lack of hard catch data causing fear, will improve under new Control Regulation
- Need more complete picture of what any TAC system might look like before it can be properly considered

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Area based measures

- Some measures clearly national
- Others could be implemented on stock basis –pot numbers, effort etc
- Careful wrt enforcement - misreporting
- Need good data and monitoring
- Consider as move forward with other measures – keep as an option

Brown Crab Working Group

Should BCWG continue work?

- All support continuation in some form
- Monitor implementation of any management changes – won't be quick with MCRS
- Make recommendations on data collection for the Irish brown crab stocks and other impacted stocks such as lobster
- Develop FMP
- In that context explore and review other potential management measures or other relevant issues pertaining to the brown crab sector
- Make further recommendations to the Minister if required
- Reporting timelines, meeting frequency
- Market sub group? 43 reg buyers of crab

Brown Crab Working Group

Science & Data Collection

- Collect catch/landings/effort data from as many boats as possible – simplified app
- Increase SVP? Budget limited
- Develop recruitment index
- Increase port sampling – size distribution
- Industry diaries – position, CPUE, LPUE, soak time
- Incentivised data collection – possibly under EMFAF until 2028 and intro of Control Reg

Brown Crab Working Group -2y Supports

Generalised Supports

- Tie-up Scheme
- Retirement Scheme

Specific Measures

- Improved marketing of crab – consumer education, accessible formats for time poor consumers such as pre packed white meat etc. Spider crab?
- Support processors getting catch from smaller ports
- Training on landing quality product

Policy Measures

- Opening up alternative non crab fishing opportunities
- Enforcement of Recreational potting restrictions

Brown Crab Technical Measures

Other stocks

