



EMFF OP 2014-2020

Implementation Plan

Fisheries Local Area Development Scheme

Operational Programme	EMFF Operational Programme 2014-2020
Priority	Union Priority 4 Sustainable Development of Fisheries and Aquaculture Areas
Thematic Objective	TO 8 Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility
Specific Objective	SO1 - Increasing Employment and Territorial Cohesion
Scheme	Fisheries Local Area Development Scheme
EMFF Certifying Body	Finance Division, Dept. Of Agriculture, Food & the Marine.
Managing Authority	Marine Agencies & Programmes Division, Dept Of Agriculture, Food and Marine
Intermediate Body	Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM)
Grant Rate	100% (FLAG costs) 40% to 100% (projects selected by FLAGs)
EU Co-Financing Rate	50%
Legal Basis	Articles 60-64 EMFF

1. Objective of Intervention

The objective of the Fisheries Local Development Scheme is to implement the Strategy for investment in the sustainable development of fisheries / aquaculture areas set out in section 3.1 of the EMFF OP. That is:

“Ireland’s strategy for implementation of UP4 will be focussed on promoting innovative approaches in fisheries and aquaculture areas to create growth and jobs in those areas, in particular by adding value to fishery and aquaculture products and diversifying the local economy towards new economic activities, in particular those offered by ‘blue growth’ and the broader maritime sectors.

The objectives of Ireland’s strategy will be to promote the economic, environmental and social sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture areas, and to maintain and improve employment prospects in fisheries and aquaculture areas.

Ireland will seek to implement this strategy by encouraging communities involved in the fishery and aquaculture sectors to become drivers of the sustainable development of their areas through development and implementation of a Local Development Strategy. These Strategies will identify the best approach to the development of their respective areas, having regard to the ‘Needs’ identified in section 2.1 (EMFF OP). Strategies will prioritise actions within the seafood sector and the broader maritime economy.

Actions supported through Local Development Strategies will be required to ensure complementarity with and avoid duplication of measures provided under the other Union Priorities of this Programme (EMFF OP)."

2. Definitions

For the purposes of this document:

'SSCF' or Small Scale Coastal Fisheries means fishing carried out by fishing vessels of an overall length of less than 12 metres and not using towed fishing gear as listed in Table 3 of Annex I to Commission Regulation (EC) No 26/2004.

'Collective' means:

- (a) A Registered Seafood Cooperative¹, a Producer Organisation², or an organisation³ representing fishermen or aquaculture operators; or
- (b) Two or more bodies working together under the framework of a formal written signed agreement, and which in the opinion of the FLAG are unrelated bodies;

pursuing a project for the collective benefit of the members of the collective. In accordance with article 95(3)(b) EMFF, a support rate to collectives in excess of 50% of eligible costs is permitted only where public access is provided to the results of the project.

'Enterprise' means a person(s) carrying on a business, including but not limited to sole traders, partnerships, limited companies and cooperatives, and having less than 25 employees (FTE) and turnover of less than €5 million per annum.

3. Description of the Intervention

This Scheme will provide supports to selected groups in coastal communities to develop and implement Local Development Strategies (LDS) to create growth and jobs in those areas, in particular by adding value to fishery and aquaculture products and diversifying the local economy towards new economic activities, in particular those offered by 'blue growth' and the broader maritime sectors. Strategies will prioritise actions within the seafood sector and the broader maritime economy.

The Scheme will follow a multi-stage approach as follows.

- * Calls for expressions of interest in developing a LDS
- * Selection of FLAG areas for preparatory support
- * Evaluation and Approval of LDS

¹ Registered as a co-operative under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts s 1893 -1978

² A body officially recognised as a Producer Organisation in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013 on the Common Organisation of the Markets in Fishery and Aquaculture Products (CMO Regulation).

³ Recognised by the FLAG as having a significant representative role at a regional or national level.

- * Implementation of approved LDS by designated Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs)

Support will be provided under the Scheme for preparation of the LDS, administrative capacity building of the group and implementation of the LDS.

The Scheme will be administered by BIM and implemented through FLAGs. FLAGs will select projects for funding, consistent with their LDS.

4. State Aid

As this Scheme may provide aid to beneficiaries outside the fisheries and aquaculture sector, some measures under this Scheme may not be covered by the exemption provided in article 8 of the EMFF Regulation from State Aid notification requirements for measures implemented through the EMFF OP. The State Aid position of proposed aid will be examined by the Managing Authority and BIM. In respect of LDSs, this can only be done when the LDS is submitted for approval.

5. Selection Process

Projects will be selected for funding under a multi-stage approach as described in section 5 of the EMFF OP. This will involve the use of mandatory selection criteria, as also specified in section 5 of the EMFF OP.

Stage 1 – Call for Expressions of Interest

Community groups will be invited to express an interest in developing a local development strategy for a fisheries and aquaculture area as proposed by them. Prospective FLAG areas will be required to meet a number of mandatory criteria to be considered eligible to submit expressions of interest, as follows:

- The area proposed must have at least one boundary comprising the coastline.
- The area must have a significant level of employment in fisheries or aquaculture.
- The population of Coastal Electoral Districts for proposed area must be over 70,000
- The area must have a minimum of 150 vessels between all fleet segments on the Fleet Register and preferably not more than 400.
- The area proposed must have no more than one National Fishery Harbour Centre.

The territory for each FLAG area will be required to be unique, so where more than one proposal is received concerning any particular area, the Irish authorities will liaise with the groups concerned to ensure the integrity of each FLAG area proposed.

Stage 2 – Selection of FLAG areas for preparatory support

A Selection Committee will recommend a maximum of 7 expressions of interest for approval of preparatory support under this OP to develop a Local Development Strategy for their area. The Selection Committee will comprise the Managing Authority for the Programme, BIM, a representative of the Rural Development Programme (LEADER), and other relevant external experts. Its role will be to:

- Evaluate expressions of interest and make recommendations for approval of groups for preparatory support.
- Evaluate draft Local Development Strategies and make recommendations on strategies to be approved.

Areas will be selected for support on the basis of the Selection Criteria set out as follows:

- Size and importance of the fishing and aquaculture sector in the area (employment, numbers and size of boats, nature and type of fishing, landings/production size, value).
- Character of the area: contiguity, coastal, estuary, protected areas, maximum and minimum population sizes, population density, population decline, remote areas.
- Extent of representation of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in the group.
- Group's proposals for local engagement in strategy development.

Preparatory support will assist approved groups to prepare a Local Development Strategy through supports for the costs of developing the LDS, training and capacity building and engagement with the communities in their area. It is expected that the preparation of Local Development Strategies will take approximately six months from date of approval.

Stage 3 – Evaluation and Approval of Local Development Strategies

In considering draft local development strategies prepared for approved areas, the following criteria will be used by the Selection Committee to evaluate the strategy to ensure it meets set minimum standards before groups are allocated funding to implement the strategy.

- Is the LDS consistent with the overarching strategy set out in this Programme, in particular for CLLD as set out in section 5.1.1?
- Clear objectives and vision, based on a SWOT analysis and clear needs definition.
- Demonstrated value added of forming a FLAG with EMFF support.
- Extent to which the local development strategy addresses its objectives and vision.
- To what extent is the strategy focused on issues of greatest relevance for the area?
- To what extent does the strategy respond to the needs and challenges of the area?
- Is the analysis of the area based on reliable data and indicators?
- Does the strategy demonstrate clearly the links between SWOT, needs, objectives, activities and outcomes? (Intervention logic)
- Are the objectives measurable and realistically achievable within the available budget and time frame?

- Is there evidence of the involvement of key local actors, including the fisheries sector?
- Does the strategy provide for strengthening links between different sectors and different types of actors, in particular fisheries? Does it create synergies?
- Is there evidence of the applicant's capacity to deliver the outcomes? Is the action plan clear and robust?
- Is the use of resources (human, financial) justified in relation to the proposed action?
- What mobilisation of other resources (including private funding) is envisaged?
- How have horizontal issues (environment, gender equality) been addressed?
- Extent of representation of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in the group.
- Experience and track record of the group in the fisheries and wider seafood area and demonstrated understanding in the strategy of the issues that have affected the communities in the area.
- Strategy's proposals concerning support to coherent sub-areas.
- Strategy for local engagement in strategy implementation.

Local Development Strategies meeting a required standard in this evaluation will be recommended by the Committee for approval as FLAG groups and for supports under the EMFF OP for implementation of their Strategy.

Stage 4 – Implementation of approved Local Development Strategies

Approved FLAGs will implement their Local Development Strategies by issuing calls for projects that meet the objectives set out in the Strategy. FLAGs will select projects for funding consistent with their approved LDS. BIM will then issue funding offers to successful projects and process claims to payment.

6. Eligible Costs

A. Eligible Costs

1. Operational, administrative and animation costs of FLAGs
2. Projects consistent with LDSs, Article 63 EMFF and this Scheme
3. Cooperation activities involving FLAGs
4. Travel and subsistence costs for FLAGs, for cooperation activities involving FLAGs, for FLAG networking projects, and for capacity building projects.

B. Ineligible Costs

1. Rental of machinery from another establishment.
2. Activities considered business operational costs.
3. The cost of existing product, stock or raw material used as part of the project.
4. Energy, maintenance and operational costs.
5. Industry standard costs such e.g. BRC.
6. Travel and subsistence costs except for the categories of projects identified at (A4).

7. Support Rates

The following maximum support rates will apply to projects selected for funding by FLAGs.

	Beneficiary	Project Type	Maximum support rate %	Maximum Aid per project
1.	Public bodies e.g. State agencies or Local Authorities,	Public good projects	100%	€200,000
2.	Community Groups and Charities	Public good projects ⁴	80%	€200,000
		Other projects	50%	
3.	SSCF vessels owners	Value adding investment ashore directly related to SSCF fisheries	80%	€80,000
4.	Collectives ⁵	Related to seafood	60%	€100,000
5.	Seafood & Marine Enterprises*	Related to seafood or marine sector and diversification	50%	€100,000
6.	Enterprises* outside seafood sector	All	40%	€50,000
7.	FLAG	Projects implemented directly by FLAGs	100%	€200,000
		Operational, administrative and animation costs		As per approved Strategy
		Cooperation projects		€50,000 over Programme

* See definition of 'enterprise' in section 2

⁴ Must be of collective benefit and must provide public access to its results (art 95(3)(b) EMFF).

⁵ Project must be of collective interest or have a collective beneficiary and must provide public access to its results (see art 95(3)(b) EMFF).

8. Selection Process

Projects will be selected for funding as follows

Step	Description	Carried Out By
Call for proposals	FLAGs will periodically invite applications.	FLAGs
Eligibility Check	To advise FLAGs on eligibility of applications.	BIM
Assessment / Appraisal	To appraise and score applications.	FLAG
Project Selection	To select eligible projects for funding and decide grant amounts and grant rates, subject to section 7.	FLAG
Grant Offer	BIM will issue letters of offer awarding EMFF funding.	BIM

9. Selection Criteria

FLAGs shall draw up selection procedures and objective criteria for the selection of projects for funding which:

- Are non-discriminatory;
- Ensure transparency;
- Specify procedures for the avoidance of conflicts of interest;
- Specify that at least 50% of the votes in selection decisions are cast by FLAG members not representing public authorities;
- Provide for selection of projects by written procedure;
- Ensure coherence with the FLAG's approved Local Development Strategy by prioritising projects for funding according to their contribution to meeting the Strategy's objectives and targets.

10. Role of FLAGs

The FLAGs will be responsible for the following activities under this Scheme.

- Build capacity of local actors to develop and implement the Local Development Strategy for their fisheries and aquaculture area.
- Draft a Local Development Strategy consistent with the objectives of the EMFF OP, CFP and EU2020.
- As part of the of the LDS development process, develop a finance plan and an evaluation and monitoring plan for the LDS.
- Develop non-discriminatory and transparent selection procedures and objective criteria for selection of operations under the LDS.

- Animate and promote through information and publicity activities the LDS in their defined fisheries and aquaculture areas.
- Monitor, evaluate and report on the progress of the LDS over its lifetime.
- Assess projects that meet the objectives and vision of the LDSs for their defined fisheries and aquaculture area.
- Select projects for funding and fix the amount of support.
- Co-operation activities at a regional and transnational level.
- Support the activities implemented by the National FLAG Network and EU FLAG network (FARNET).

11. Role of BIM

As an Intermediate Body delegated tasks by the Managing Authority and as a lead partner in relation to financial and administrative matters for this Scheme, BIM will carry out the following roles in the implementation of the Scheme.

- Issue a call for expressions of interest for FLAG areas
- Technical evaluation of expressions of interest received.
- Act as secretariat to the Selection Committee.
- Participate in the Selection Committee.
- Approve groups for preparatory support on the basis of recommendations of the Selection Committee.
- Technical evaluation of draft Local Development Strategies.
- Approve groups as FLAGs and for support for implementation of a Local Development Strategy on the basis of the recommendations of the Selection Committee.
- Provide administrative support to all selected FLAGs.
- Approve projects for funding on the basis of the assessment and project selection carried out by the FLAGs and on the basis of their eligibility for support under the LDS, EMFF OP and EMFF Regulation.
- Issue letters of offers to project beneficiaries on behalf of the FLAGs.
- Issue payment of claims made by project beneficiaries on behalf of FLAGs
- Ensure that there is a clear audit trail for all expenditure associated with the Scheme implementation carried out by FLAGs that is made available to all auditing bodies.

12. Scheme Output Indicators

These output indicators are included in section 3.3 of the EMFF OP. The first output indicator forms part of the performance Framework of OP.

Indicator	Measurement Unit	Target Value 2023	Source of Information	Frequency of Reporting
No. of local development strategies selected	#	7	BIM	annual
No. of projects on preparatory support	#	7	BIM	annual

No. of co-operation projects	#	7	BIM	Annual
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13. Procedure for dealing with appeals

Appeals concerning initial expressions of interest or concerning approval of LDSs should be directed to BIM in the first instance for consideration by the Selection Committee.

Appeals concerning refusal of support by a Fisheries Local Action Group should be directed to BIM in the first instance for consideration by the FLAG concerned.

14. Document Retention

In accordance with Article 140 of the Common Provisions Regulation (EC) 1303/2013, BIM and final beneficiaries will ensure that all supporting documents regarding expenditure, verification checks, certification and audits on operations for which total eligible expenditure is less than €1,000,000.00 are kept available for the EU Commission and Court of Auditors for a period of three years from 31 December following the submission of the accounts in which the expenditure of the operation is included.

In the case of operations over €1,000,000.00 all supporting documentation shall be kept for a 2 year period from 31 December following the submission of accounts in which the final expenditure of the completed operation is included.

The Managing Authority will inform BIM of the start date of the period referred to above.

15. Monitoring and Reporting arrangements

BIM will provide periodic updates to the Monitoring Committee on the progress of this Scheme. These updates will form part of the agenda for meetings of the Monitoring Committee.

BIM will provide information on the implementation of this Scheme to the Managing Authority to contribute to:

- The compilation of the Annual Implementation Report under article 114 of the EMFF Regulation to be transmitted to the Commission by 31 May each year.
- A Common Monitoring and Evaluation System under article 107 of the EMFF Regulation;
- Data on operations selected for funding required to be submitted to the Commission under Article 97(1)(a) of the EMFF Regulation by 31 March each year.

The Managing Authority will annually present information on the implementation of this Scheme to the Monitoring Committee through the Annual Implementation Report, which will be presented for the Committee's approval.

The Managing Authority and/or BIM will maintain a website providing details of this Scheme and its progress.

16. Information and Publicity

The contribution of the Irish exchequer and EMFF 2014-2020, will be acknowledged in all brochures, promotional material, press releases, publicity activity, advertisements, signage, applications forms, annual reports, letters of offer, etc., by use of appropriate logo and text references.

The Managing Authority and BIM will ensure compliance with Annex V of Commission Regulation 508/2014 concerning the provision of information on the Operational Programme and the co-funding provided by the Union.