



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine



Citizens Summary 2020

A collage of images related to maritime and fishing: a fishing boat on the sea, a large pile of mussels, and a salmon on ice.

EMFF Operational Programme 2014-20 Annual Implementation Report

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1. - Introduction

The aim of the Citizens Summary is to provide a summary of the sixth Annual Implementation Report (AIR) for the EMFF OP 2014-2020, which reports on the progress achieved under the EMFF OP for the year 2020.

2. - Background

Following approval by the Government of Ireland's of its EMFF Operational Programme and its adoption by the European Commission on 4 December 2015, the Programme was formally launched on 14 January 2016. The Programme is implemented under Regulation 508/2014 (European Maritime and Fisheries Fund). This is the principal source of development funding for the seafood sector until approximately 2021 and provides a range of support measures for fisheries, aquaculture and seafood processing.

The Programme is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and European Union as follows

Financial Allocations by Union Priority

Union Priority	EU	National	Total
1 - Promoting environmentally sustainable, resource efficient, innovative, competitive and knowledge based fisheries	€ 29,076,587	€28,222,196	€57,298,783
2 - Fostering environmentally sustainable, resource efficient, innovative, competitive and knowledge based aquaculture	€14,900,000	€14,900,000	€29,800,000
3 - Fostering the implementation of the CFP	€69,790,720	€15,133,482	€84,924,202
4 - Increasing employment and territorial cohesion	€6,000,000	€6,000,000	€12,000,000
5 - Fostering marketing and processing	€18,500,000	€18,500,000	€37,000,000
6 - Fostering the implementation of the Integrated Maritime Policy	€5,334,672	€5,334,672	€10,669,344
7 - Technical assistance	€4,000,000	€4,000,000	€8,000,000
Total	€147,601,979	€92,090,350	€239,692,329

3. – Overview

In 2020 Ireland's EMFF Programme invested a total of €32.47 million in Ireland's seafood sector through 19 schemes. The investment level was very positive and while lower than the 2019 peak of €59 million, this was to be expected as the majority of funds are already invested in previous years and the Programme is tapering towards its end.

Cumulatively, in the seven years of EMFF Programme implementation up to 31 December 2020, Ireland's EMFF Programme approved grants of €211.7 million to 2,738 projects across all Priorities, which equates to 88.4% of the overall budget available under the Programme. The total expenditure declared by beneficiaries in the same period was €179.7 million, which equates to 75% of the Programme budget. Some of the approved projects will continue to spend and to draw down grant aid in 2021/22.

In 2020, approximately 40% of public aid was directed towards capital investment in fisheries, aquaculture and seafood processing, while 60% was directed towards knowledge related measures (innovation, studies, services etc).

Fisheries was the largest area of investment in 2020 at €8.7 million, with aquaculture €6.7 million, control and enforcement €5.2 million, marketing and processing €4.3 million, FLAGs €3.7 million and Integrated Maritime Policy €2.7 million.

There was continued strong interest in 2020 in funding of innovation, research and professional advice projects across fisheries, aquaculture, and processing (€6.5 million).

The 7 Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) received applications in 2020 worth €10 million approximately, greatly in excess of the funds available. Aid of €3.7 million was paid out to 235 projects.

Two new schemes were implemented in 2020 to mitigate the impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic. A Covid-19 Aquaculture Support Scheme aided 114 oyster and rope mussel producers with approximately €1 million aid for their Covid related losses in the first half of 2020, while a Covid-19 Temporary Fleet Tie-up Scheme aided 91 fishing enterprises with €193,000 to cease fishing during periods of market weakness.

The Managing Authority commissioned consultants RSM to conduct an Evaluation of the EMFF Programme and the report was published in 2020. The report made 14 recommendations, three of these relating to the present Programme and 11 relating to design of the next programme for 2021-27.

As all funds available for Data Collection were exhausted in 2019, there were no funds available for 2020 and the approximately €8 million costs was borne by Ireland. In June 2020, the Sustainable Fisheries Part B scheme, which supports investment on board fishing vessels, was closed to new applications as its funds were exhausted. Despite this, there was significant investment spend of €2,811,602 paid to 92 vessel owners. These two areas are early markers of the depletion of funds as the Programme nears its end and this issue will be much more significant in 2021.

EU funds for control and enforcement investment continued to be suspended throughout 2020 by the European Commission as Ireland is not yet fully compliant with the points system requirements of the Control Regulation. While regulations were enacted in 2020 to implement the points system for vessel owners, primary legislation is required to implement the system for masters of vessels and this legislation will be presented to the Oireachtas in 2021. Suspended funds reached €24.5 million by end 2020 and will continue to increase in 2021 as further claims are submitted to the Commission.

In 2020, the European Commission raised concerns with the Managing Authority about the quality of data for certain result indicators and invited the Managing Authority to carry out a review of certain Priorities with a view to identifying reliable data and incorporating these revised result indicators into this Annual Implementation Report and the Infosys Report. A similar issue was identified in the Programme Evaluation published in 2020. Significant work was undertaken by the Managing Authority and Intermediate Bodies on Priorities 1, 2, 4 and 5 and the revised result indicator data is reflected in this report. Further work remains to be done and will be undertaken in 2021.

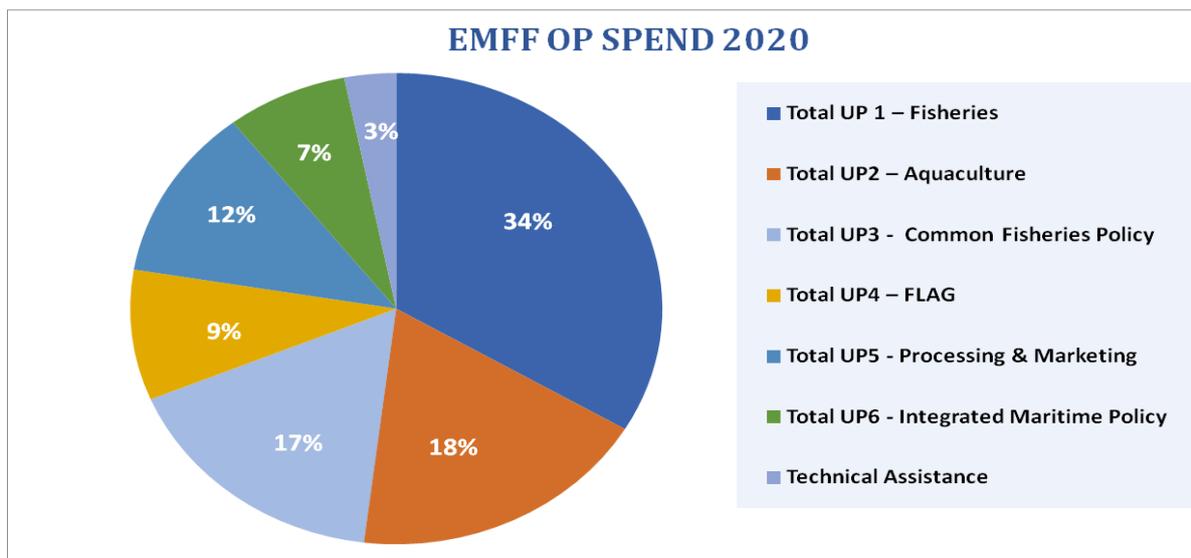
4. - EMFF Implementation 2020

In 2020, 20 schemes were funded under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme for Ireland. The table below lists the expenditure for 2019 on each of the schemes.

Scheme Name	Public Expenditure
Sustainable Fisheries Scheme	€4,940,623
New Fishermen Scheme	€244,077
Marine Biodiversity Scheme (partial – See UP6)	€1,005,664
Inshore Fisheries Conservation Scheme	€317,524
Seafood Innovation & Business Planning Scheme	€1,333,573
Seafood Capacity Building Scheme	€0
Seafood Training Scheme	€62,918
Control & Enforcement Scheme – Quota Balancing & Sea Fisheries Management systems (partial see UP3)	€600,000
Covid-19 Tie-up Scheme	€187,750
Total UP 1 – Fisheries	€8,692,129
Sustainable Aquaculture Scheme	€1,975,934
Knowledge Gateway Scheme	€3,513,367
Covid-19 Aquaculture Scheme	€1,002,299
EMFF Aquaculture System	€219,042
Total UP2 – Aquaculture	€6,710,642
Control & Enforcement Scheme (partial – See UP1)	€5,161,663
Data Collection Scheme	€0
Total UP3 - Common Fisheries Policy	€5,161,663
Fisheries Local Area Development Scheme (FLAGs)	€3,711,707
Total UP4 – FLAG	€3,711,707
Producer Organisation Scheme	€431,978
Seafood Promotion Scheme	€2,000,000
Seafood Processing Capital Investment Scheme	€1,589,385
Seafood Scaling and New Market Development Scheme	€336,399
Total UP5 - Processing & Marketing	€4,357,762
Blue Growth and Marine Spatial Planning Scheme	€1,833,247
Marine Biodiversity (partial see – UP1)	€857,125
Total UP6 - Integrated Maritime Policy	€2,690,372
Technical Assistance	€1,145,275
GRAND TOTAL	€32,469,550

2020 Expenditure Claims submitted to EU

Scheme	Total Investment	Grant Aid	EU	National
Sustainable Fisheries	€22,323,151	€10,082,897	€5,041,449	€5,041,449
Inshore Conservation	€626,210	€530,733	€265,367	€265,367
Marine Biodiversity	€1,963,505	€1,963,505	€981,752	€981,752
Fishery Harbour	€719,109	€719,109	€359,554	€359,554
Seafood Capacity Building	€488,662	€488,662	€244,331	€244,331
Seafood Skills & Training	€103,241	€53,994	€26,997	€26,997
Sustainable Aquaculture	€4,714,182	€1,759,509	€879,755	€879,755
Knowledge Gateway	€3,377,648	€3,247,174	€1,400,319	€1,846,855
Data Collection	€5,693,298	€5,693,298	€4,777,906	€915,392
Control & Enforcement	€20,955,212	€20,955,212	€15,635,086	€5,320,126
FLAG	€4,401,930	€2,727,168	€1,363,584	€1,363,584
Producer Organisations	€641,093	€380,420	€190,210	€190,210
Seafood Promotion	€2,209,998	€2,209,998	€1,104,999	€1,104,999
Seafood Innovation and Business Planning	€1,404,037	€1,336,399	€668,200	€668,200
Seafood Processing	€10,903,802	€2,565,637	€1,282,818	€1,282,818
Seafood Scaling & New Market Development	€783,155	€504,030	€252,015	€252,015
Blue Growth & Marine Spatial Planning	€1,453,000	€1,453,000	€726,500	€726,500
Technical Assistance	€3,488,714	€3,488,078	€1,744,039	€1,744,039
TOTAL	€86,249,947	€60,158,825	€36,944,882	€23,213,943



5.1 - Union Priority 1- Sustainable Development of Fisheries

Overall experience of the implementation of the EMFF in the fisheries sector under UP1 has been increasingly positive over the duration of the programme. although some schemes were not fully implemented until 2018 all the schemes have seen increased demand from the sector with the following schemes showing most promise.

- New Fishermen Scheme - There was a welcome improved interest in the Scheme during 2019 and this continued into 2020 especially in the Small-Scale Coastal Fisheries fleet (SSCF)
- Sustainable Fisheries Part B - Demand under this scheme was exceptionally strong in 2020.
- Seafood Training Scheme - Increased demand for supports under this scheme with further demand indicated in 2021.

In 2020, total public expenditure of €8,692,129 was spent on 379 projects under 9 separate schemes. Many projects approved in 2020 for EMFF funding are of a multi-annual nature and will contribute to spend in 2021.

Up to the end of 2020 total public expenditure of €56,833,259 has been committed to projects of which €51,375,791 has been paid which amounts to a 99.2% commitment rate and a 89.7% payment rate when compared to financial targets set out in OP.

Positive progress has been made as regards some output indicators set out in Performance framework, other output indicators will be reviewed and amended as part of the next OP modification. Result indicator data review was carried out in 2020 for UP1. Progress has been made on identifying and validating data with further work to be carried out in 2021. Projects implemented included the following:

- Marine science and data.
- On-board investment in health and safety, hygiene, quality, selective gear, energy efficiency and value adding.

- Adaptation to the Landing Obligation.
- Advisory services to the fishing fleet.
- Fostering adaptation to the CFP.
- Networking and dissemination of knowledge.
- Recovery of marine litter and management of waste.
- Stock conservation.
- Acquisition of first vessel by new entrants.

Marine Biodiversity Scheme

In 2020, public expenditure of €1,005,664 was invested under the Marine Biodiversity Scheme. One project commenced in 2018 and seven projects commenced in 2019 were continued in 2020. Six new projects were approved and started in 2020. Projects cover the following areas:

- Species and habitat restorations,
- Impact of fisheries on biodiversity and support for MSFD
- Support for NATURA fisheries and aquaculture interactions
- Outreach
- Spatial fisheries management measures.

New Fishermen Scheme

In 2020, there were 7 projects completed under the New Fishermen Scheme with public expenditure of €244,077. At the close of 2020 there were a number of applications that are expected to be approved and drawn down in 2021.

Sustainable Fisheries Scheme

Part A - Public Interest Projects

In 2020, 9 BIM led projects for the benefit of the seafood sector and public good were supported with public expenditure of €1.54 million. The projects focused on the following.

- Development and testing of selective fishing gears and methods.
- Provision of Partnerships & Advisory Services to the seafood sector
- Sustainability projects
- Completion of a strategic analysis of the operational & technical efficiency of the Irish Fishing Fleet.
- Development of a predictive Fisheries Bio-economic Model.
- Development of a Seafood Data Centre to aid storage, analysis and dissemination of fisheries information to industry.

Two projects for the benefit of the seafood sector and for public good were completed by the Marine Institute with public expenditure of €106,718.28. These were a Bluefin Tuna tracking programme and development of an information sharing network.

Part B - On Board Investments

In 2020, 92 Part B projects were supported with public expenditure of €2,811,602.00.

Projects supported in 2020 included:

- Selective gears
- Equipment to improve hygiene, health and working conditions on board
- Equipment to improve quality on board and add value
- Equipment to improve fuel efficiency
- Engine replacement for vessels under 12 metres
- Gear monitoring equipment and fuel-efficient fishing gears

Part C - Promoting Quality and Added Value Onshore

In 2020, 6 industry projects received public aid totalling €482,303.69. These projects were multi-annual infrastructure improvement projects which aim to assist fishermen to meet the challenges of the landing obligation. The main elements of the projects are provision of cold storage facilities and associated handling equipment for the storage of unwanted catches.

Inshore Fisheries Conservation Scheme

- In 2020, 6 private projects were supported with public expenditure totalling €47,164.00. These projects related to onshore refrigeration facilities for individual fishermen.
- A total of 75 projects concerning v-notching of lobsters received public aid totalling €161,456.35.
- In 2020, the six Regional Inshore Fisheries Forums (RIFFs) were supported with public expenditure of €108,904.27 to improve capacity within the forums.

Control & Enforcement Scheme

The Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine was supported under article 36 by public expenditure of €600,000 in 2020 for development of a Quota Balancing System and a Sea Fisheries Management System:

- Quota Balancing System to facilitate the adjustment of future quota allocations to address where a vessel has exceeded its allocated quota
- Implementation of a Demersal quota balancing system
- Commencement of an online communication system to enable online delivery of important fishery documents to Fishers

Seafood Innovation and Business Planning Scheme

In 2020, 8 BIM led projects for the benefit of the seafood sector were undertaken and supported with public expenditure totalling €1,238,491. the projects included:

- R&D Programme
- Innovation Process and Framework
- Innovation Centre of Excellence (I-COE):

In addition, a further 7 projects from seafood enterprises related to new product development and process efficiency were supported under the Scheme with public expenditure totalling €95,082.23..

Seafood Capacity Building Scheme

Due to Covid 19 no project implemented in 2020.

Seafood Training Scheme

In 2020, 73 applications were approved/paid to support individuals in their training needs and public expenditure amounting to €48,638.11 was allocated. One BIM led project undertook a mid-management programme project for the benefit of the seafood sector at a cost of €14,280.

COVID-19 Temporary Tie-up Scheme

The Covid 19 pandemic resulted in a downturn in seafood markets particularly in the area of food service. A support Scheme was implemented by DAFM/BIM allowing qualifying fishing vessels to be grant aided for temporary cessation of fishing activities, 'Tie-up'. The Scheme allowed a maximum tie-up period of two months during the summer period.

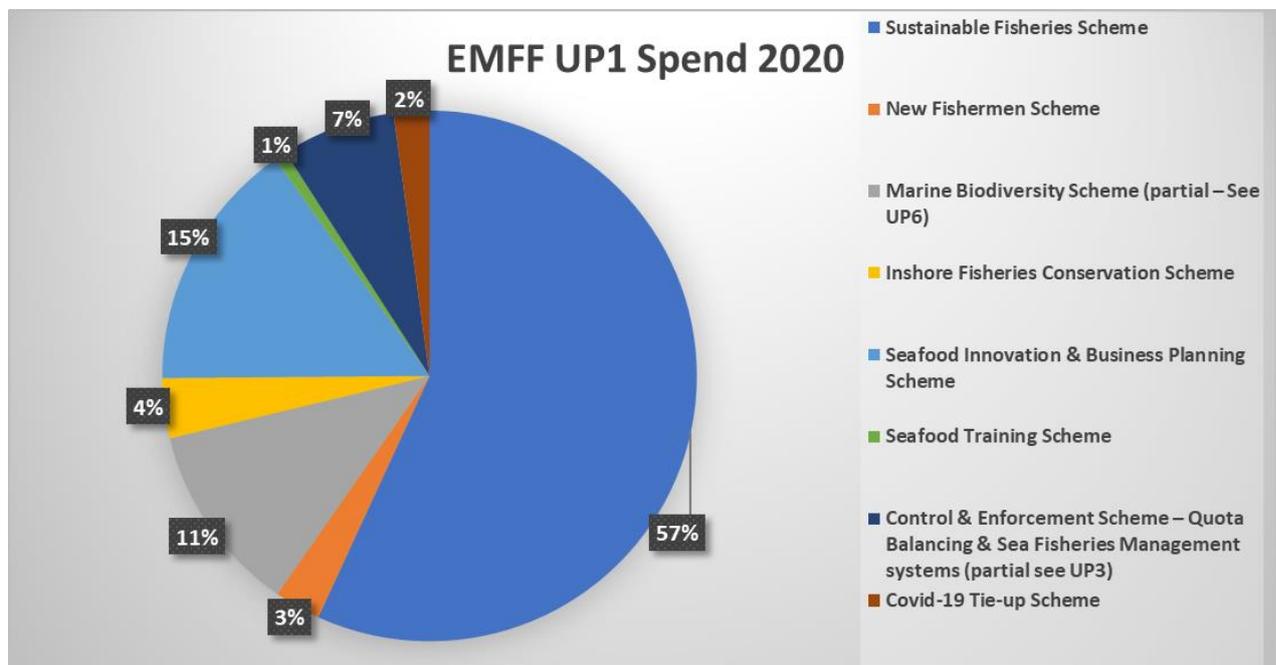
Support was provided for the fixed costs including vessel insurance, loan interest, harbour charges, legal fees and accounting fees, incurred by owners of fishing vessels while tied-up.

During 2020, 94 vessels were approved with public expenditure of €201,700 of which EMFF contributed €151,275(75% co-financing rate). in 2020, 91 were paid under the Scheme with public expenditure of €187,750 of which EMFF contributed €140,812.50.

UP1 – Total Public Expenditure in 2020

Scheme Name	Public Expenditure
Sustainable Fisheries Scheme	€4,940,623
New Fishermen Scheme	€244,077
Marine Biodiversity Scheme (partial – See UP6)	€1,005,664
Inshore Fisheries Conservation Scheme	€317,524

Seafood Innovation & Business Planning Scheme	€1,333,573
Seafood Capacity Building Scheme	€0
Seafood Training Scheme	€62,918
Control & Enforcement Scheme – Quota Balancing & Sea Fisheries Management systems (partial see UP3)	€600,000
Covid-19 Tie-up Scheme	€187,750
Total UP 1 – Fisheries	€8,692,129



5.2 - Union Priority 2 - Sustainable Development of Aquaculture

Overall experience of the implementation of the EMFF in aquaculture has been increasingly positive over the duration of the programme. Improvements in the national aquaculture licencing system has meant that more businesses are eligible to apply for funding to develop their farms. The licencing backlog for shellfish is close to completion and the licencing backlog for finfish still to be resolved

The Sustainable Aquaculture Scheme is the main funding mechanism for the aquaculture sector for the purchase of capital equipment to develop, modernise and enhance the environmental sustainability of their businesses. Since 2016 (launch of EMFF OP in Ireland) 137 projects under SAS have been completed with a total public expenditure of approx. €8.5m

The Knowledge Gateway Scheme is concerned with the promotion of knowledge, innovation and technology in the aquaculture sector. Uptake at the start of the programme was slow as the connections between the aquaculture sector and research bodies were not established. Over the last 2 years the research institutions have formed connections with the aquaculture sector through BIM which has increased the uptake for projects under the scheme.

Since 2016 (launch of EMFF OP in Ireland) 81 projects under KGS have been completed with a total public expenditure of approx. €9.1m. The BIM work programme projects are designed to assist in the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development.

In 2020, the EMFF Programme invested €6,710,642 in support of 182 aquaculture projects and through four support schemes under Union Priority Two. This investment was split between supports for capital investment and for innovation/research/advice and Covid 19 support.

Up to the end of 2020 total public expenditure of €24,057,278 has been committed to projects of which €18,331,379 has been paid which amounts to an 80.7% commitment rate and a 61.5% payment rate when compared to financial targets set out in OP.

Positive progress has been made as regards one output indicator (productive investments) but due to lack of investment by private bodies in innovation this output indicator will be reviewed and amended as part of the next OP modification. Result indicator data review was carried out in 2020 for UP2. Progress has been made on identifying and validating data with further work to be carried out in 2021.

Knowledge Gateway Scheme

The objective of the Knowledge Gateway Scheme is to promote knowledge, innovation and technology with focus on research, new species development, managing diseases, business planning advisory, training, networking and knowledge transfer.

In 2020, thirteen external industry research projects from the aquaculture sector and research institutions were supported under the Knowledge Gateway Scheme with public expenditure of €1,042,882.86. These projects included research into the following:

- Utilize the potential benefits of Recirculation Aquaculture Systems (RAS) to increase the overall size of smolt produced in Ireland to mitigate challenges associated with disease and sea lice.
- Development of autonomous finfish vaccine
- The feasibility of upscaling Irish mussel production through development of offshore sites using innovative culture systems
- The development of an oyster farm management system and associated data warehousing solutions.

A further 21 internal BIM Work Programme projects with a total spend of €2,470,483.81 were undertaken by BIM in providing advisory services to foster environmentally sustainable, resource efficient, innovative, competitive and knowledge-based aquaculture. Of these projects,

- 10 were directly concerned with environmental sustainability and resource efficiency,
- 5 focussed on innovation,
- 6 focussed on competitiveness, knowledge acquisition and dissemination.

Project objectives included:

- Development of closed loop systems in freshwater aquaculture
- examination of anti-methanogenic properties of seaweed species in Ireland with the potential for inclusion in ruminant diets
- enhanced freshwater treatments and closed containment technology to mitigate disease and sea lice in salmon aquaculture
- application of natural capital accounting systems in marine systems.

Sustainable Aquaculture Scheme

During 2020, 34 external industry projects were supported under the Sustainable Aquaculture Scheme on which grant aid of €1,975,933.93 was paid. The majority of projects were for building capacity in the aquaculture sector and a small number of projects were related to organic aquaculture certification.

The oyster sector continues to show high levels of investment in capital equipment projects but there is increasing demand from other sectors, including novel species such as seaweed and lumpfish.

EMFF Aquaculture System

In 2020, a project was approved to develop a data management and information system with online aquaculture licence application and tracking functionality and spatial mapping of aquaculture sites and exclusion areas called the Aquaculture System Project, AQUAMIS.

The Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine invested public expenditure of €219,042 in 2020 for AQUAMIS Phase 1. Work involved the commencement of Aquaculture Licence internal application and exchange of detail with the Marine Institute. Further development work under these activities will be advanced in 2021.

COVID-19 Aquaculture Support Scheme

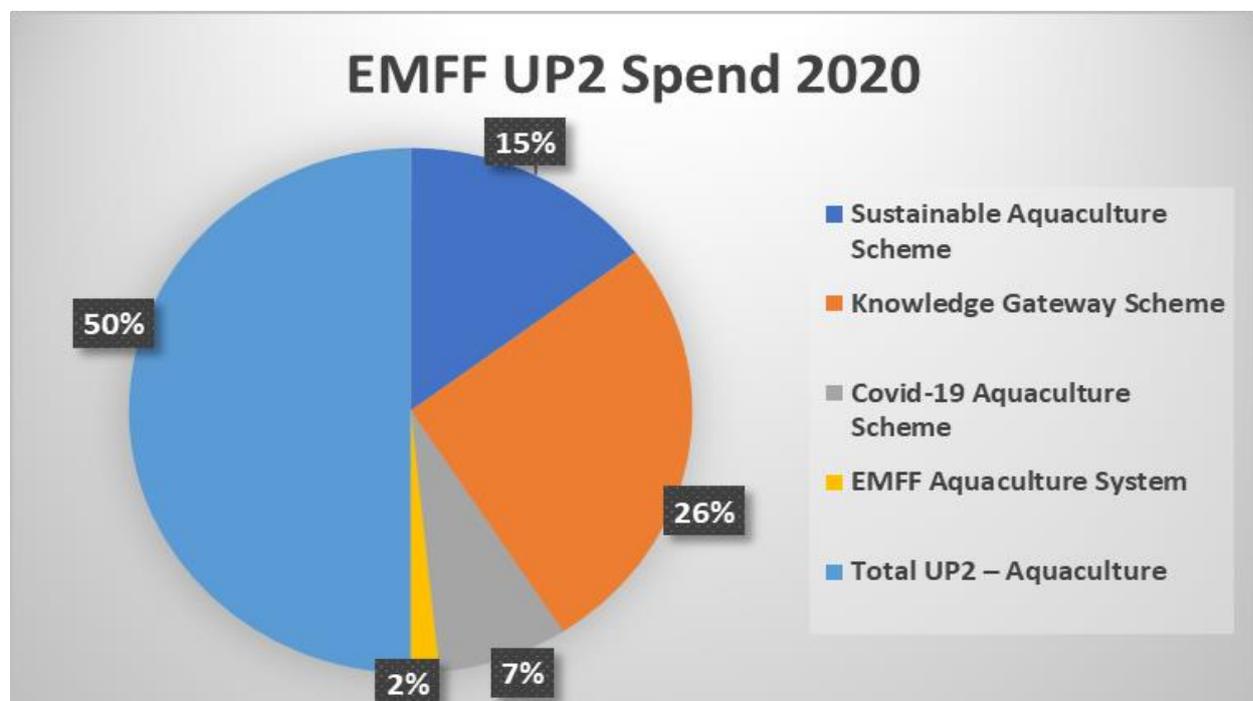
A new external industry grant aid Scheme titled the Covid-19 Aquaculture Support Scheme was made available to rope mussel and bag and trestle culture 'gigas' oyster farmers only. Eligibility was confined to those enterprises that had stock on site February to June 2020.

For the purposes of the Scheme, producers were classified, and grant payments capped, according to previous production levels contained in their returns over the period 2017-19, based on three categories, as per the table below.

During 2020, 138 aquaculture enterprises were approved with public expenditure support of €1,169,175.72 of which EMFF contributed 50% amounting to €584,587.86. In 2020 113 projects were completed and paid public expenditure of €1,002,299 of which EMFF contributed €501,149.50.

UP 2 – Total Public Expenditure in 2020

Scheme Name	Public Expenditure
Sustainable Aquaculture Scheme	€1,975,934
Knowledge Gateway Scheme	€3,513,367
Covid-19 Aquaculture Scheme	€1,002,299
EMFF Aquaculture System	€219,042
Total UP2 – Aquaculture	€6,710,642



5.3 - Union Priority 3 – Implementing the CFP - (Data Collection and Control & Enforcement)

In 2020, the EMFF Programme provided public expenditure totalling €5,161,663.28 in support of 13 projects through one support scheme under Union Priority 3.

Up to the end of 2020 total public expenditure of €78,346,799 has been committed to projects of which €74,484,120 has been paid which amounts to a 92.3% commitment rate and an 87.7% payment rate when compared to financial targets set out in OP.

As regards out and result indicators positive progress has been made and it is envisaged that output indicator targets will be achieved by the closure of the programme.

Control and Enforcement Scheme

The Sea Fisheries Protection Authority invested €1,218,091.92 of public expenditure in 2020 across a range of qualifying projects, many of which are multi-annual projects that were progressed or initiated during the year as described below.

The global outbreak of the corona virus introduced unexpected changes to planned EMFF work in 2020 and required the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority to adapt projects to support a remote working model. The result of this was a greater emphasis on IT implementations/redevelopment projects with some training and in-person seminars delayed and/or cancelled.

The projects currently underway by the SFPA include:

- **VALID:** The VALID project sets out the guidelines for a validation system as defined in the Control Regulation (EC) N° 1224/2009 Art.109 and Control Implementing Regulation (EU) N° 404/2011 Art.144-145. This includes development of automated systems and supporting databases for the purpose of validation of data in accordance with the regulation.
- **Compliance Promotion:** Compliance Promotion projects and initiatives continued in 2020. The SFPA internal portal project completed in February 2020 and provides a resource to all internal staff to support and inform on key regulatory requirements. The Confidential Line Campaign commenced in 2020 with the objective to improve compliance with sea-fisheries and seafood safety regulations through increased reporting of non-compliances to the SFPA's Confidential Line. This campaign will continue in 2021.
- **ieInspect:** Enhancements to the existing ieInspect application to remove the need for paper-based inspections. This includes an upgrade to support new standard message format, UNCEFACT which supports inspections for vessels from all Member States.
- **Training and Exchange:** Due to COVID 19 a number of planned training initiatives in 2020 such as risk based training and gear technology training were postponed, however EMFF funding provided continued support in the facilitation of regulator training to provide an understanding of the legal system, legislation and its integration within the Irish system.
- **National Infringements Register:** Establishment of an electronic National Infringements Register in support of EU 1224/2009 Art 93 to capture infringements from the inspection reports, including vessel details and integrate an electronic version of the reports with a case

management system, providing the ability to identify and manage instances of noncompliant vessels. The National Infringements Register project aims to deliver an improved mechanism to capture and report on infringements recorded during inspections as well as providing greater visibility on the status of cases with the introduction of a Case Management System to support the enforcement function. This project will continue in 2021

- **Weighing at Landing:** The Weighing at Landing project supports the requirement to implement processes and infrastructure that meet regulatory obligations by putting in place a system that permits the adequate control prior to transport from place of landing.
- **Quality Management Systems:** The Quality Management System (QMS) project seeks to introduce a formalised system that documents processes, procedures, and responsibilities for achieving quality policies and objectives, and coordinate and direct the organisation's activities to meet its regulatory requirements. The project, which commenced in 2020, will be a multi-annual project across the SFPA.
- **Remote Electronic Monitoring:** Under the proposal for a new EU regulation (COM/2018/368 final) which suggests the mandated use of REM by Member States as a tool to promote compliance with the landing obligation, under the Common Fisheries Policy, this project seeks to understand and identify the electronic monitoring solutions that currently exist to support control activities and which monitor compliance with the Landing Obligation.

The Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine develops and maintains the fisheries IT systems to support the Fisheries control authority (SFPA). DAFM invested a total of €3,436,642.92 in public expenditure for the Integrated Fisheries Information System (IFIS) and electronic reporting systems.

This project covered the following developments:

- Ongoing updates in relation to the technical format UN/CEFACT for the exchange of information as required under EU Regulation.
- FLUX upgrades as required by the EU
- Vessel Software modifications
- Modifications to existing Sales notes systems
- Implement Sales notes Query
- ieInspect – inspection application
- Valid Phase 1 – Valid enhancements – implementation of further crosschecks and enhanced system to support business operations
- Development of an Online portal for Sea food online services (SFOS)
- Licensing Authority – online application Phase 1

The Department of Defence invested €506,930.44 of public expenditure in 2020. The Department have four approved EMFF projects, all of which have now reached the total approved spend. The four projects involved are as follows:

- Contribution to the cost of replacement of Irish Air Corps Maritime Patrol Aircraft.
- Training relating to new Maritime Patrol Aircraft.
- Upgrade of the Fishery Monitoring Centre Lirguard Fishery Protection System - the national VMS management system.

- Support of Specific Species Control and Inspection Programmes (SSCIPS).

Data Collection Scheme

Due to the fact that the full budget allocated to Data Collection under the EMFF has been expended all data collection activities carried out were supported with National Funds only in 2020.

UP 3 – Total Public Expenditure in 2020

Scheme Name	Public Expenditure
Control & Enforcement Scheme (partial – See UP1)	€5,161,663
Data Collection Scheme	€0
Total UP3 - Common Fisheries Policy	€5,161,663

5.4 - Union Priority 4 – Sustainable Development of Fisheries and Aquaculture Areas

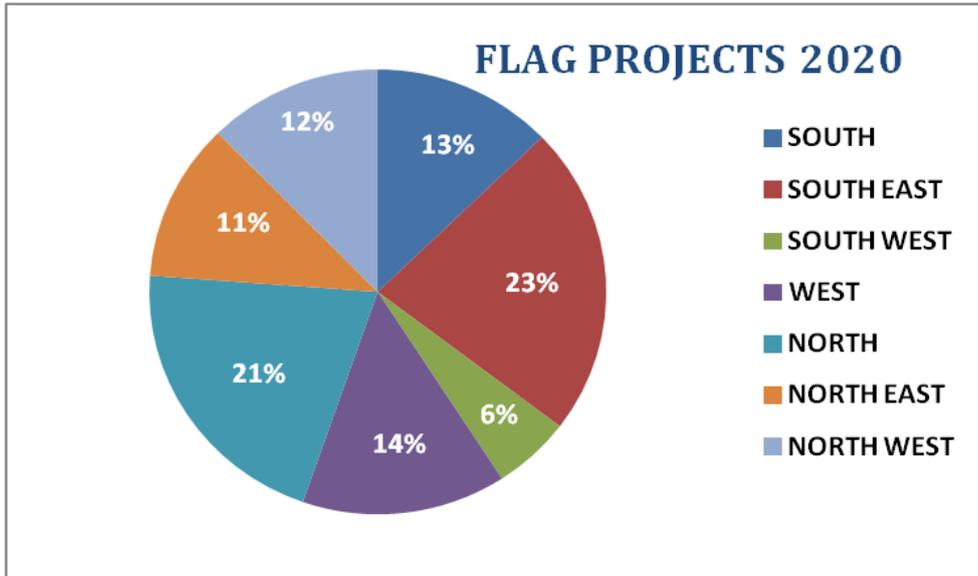
Fisheries Local Area Development Scheme

In 2020, the 7 FLAGs paid out public expenditure of €3,711,707 relating to 235 external/industry projects. The 7 FLAGs initiated their fourth year of project calls in the early period of 2020 including some deferred from 2019. Other approved 2020 projects will be completed and paid in 2021.

Up to the end of 2020 total public expenditure of €10,392,686 has been committed to projects of which €9,979,572 has been paid which amounts to an 86.6% commitment rate and an 83.1% payment rate when compared to financial targets set out in OP

FLAG projects implemented in 2020 included the following:

- Capital investments in micro seafood enterprises
- Marine tourism and marine leisure projects
- Heritage projects
- Small harbour facilities and environmental projects
- Environmental and training projects



A Survey carried out by BIM on all projects supported under the EMFF OP through the FLAGs recorded the following results due to the EMFF support provided under UP4.

FTE Jobs Created, Reported by Survey Respondents					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	
SW	0	2	3	4	9
S	1	15	17.5	10	43.5
SE	0	16	4	3.5	23.5
NE	13	12	10	4	39
N	33	21	11	14	79
NW	3.5	1.5	15	3.5	23.5
W	1	2	5	7	15
TOTALS	51.5	69.5	65.5	46	232.5

FTE Jobs Maintained, Reported by Survey Respondents					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	
SW	0	2	6	11	19
S	7	13	23	11	54
SE	0	13	4	3.5	20.5
NE	6	20	12	4	42
N	33	8	5	13	59
NW	44	5	14.5	5	68.5
W	6	4	19	22	51
TOTALS	96	65	83.5	69.5	314

New Businesses Created by Survey Respondents					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	
SW	0	0	0	0	0
S	0	4	1	2	7
SE	0	2	0	1	3
NE	2	1	2	0	5
N	3	4	1	3	11
NW	3	1	1	2	7
W	0	1	0	2	3
TOTALS	8	13	5	10	36

5.5 - Union Priority 5 – Marketing and Processing

In 2020, the EMFF Programme supported 39 projects with public expenditure totalling €4,357,762 through four support schemes. These investments supported a broad range of activities, including:

- Promotion of seafood
- Capital investment in seafood enterprises to support value adding investments
- Market development
- Market organisation through Producer Organisations
- Consumer and market research.

Up to the end of 2020 total public expenditure of €25,339,478 has been committed to projects of which €20,839,130 has been paid which amounts to a 68.5% commitment rate and a 56.3% payment rate when compared to financial targets set out in OP.

All output indicator targets have been achieved and even exceeded under UP 5, this may to a revision of these targets under the next modification of the OP document. Result indicator data review was carried out in 2020 for UP5. Progress has been made on identifying and validating data with further work to be carried out in 2021.

Seafood Promotion Scheme

In 2020, Bord Bia invested some €2,000,000 of public expenditure under its approved 2020 work programme. This Work Programme contributed to funding the following initiatives:

1. It's international trade exhibition programme for seafood, which comprised a Bord Bia Ireland Pavilion at the following 2 international trade shows:
 - a. Tokyo Seafood Show
 - b. World Seafood Shanghai

As a result of Covid-19 and restrictions around international travel, Irish seafood processors did not exhibit alongside Bord Bia at both these trade shows. Bord Bia coordinated an Information Stand which was manned by its own local Bord Bia staff. All buyer leads secured at the shows were circulated to relevant seafood processors after each show for follow up.

2. Bord Bia also utilised its EMFF funds to support five Irish domestic market seafood campaigns in 2020 designed to promote the consumption of Irish landed whitefish and shellfish amongst Irish consumers. It also used its funding to support the sponsorship of an Irish Seafood Trails television series which aimed to educate Irish consumers about the range and diversity of Irish seafood available from the Irish catching sector and how versatile and easy it is to cook seafood. It also sponsored a seafood cookery slot on the Afternoon Show on RTE1 with cooking demonstrations run by Martin Shanahan featuring a range of Irish seafood species.
3. Bord Bia has also continued its placement of 'Feet on the Street' (FOTS) resources in Japan in 2020 through its EMFF funds. These additional on the ground resources resulted in the coordination and delivery of 1 national retail promotion in support of Irish pelagic fish in the largest retail group in Japan. It also resulted in the placement of 12 articles promoting Irish seafood in two of the largest seafood trade publications in the market generating excellent coverage of Irish seafood and the leading exporters supplying the Japanese market. Bord Bia's FOTS resource also facilitated the creation of 15 new Japanese style recipes using Irish shellfish and pelagic fish by 3 leading Japanese high profile chefs. These recipes were then promoted across a range of trade publications in the market aimed at raising awareness about Ireland as a supplier of responsibly sourced seafood. In addition, Bord Bia's FOTS resource helped to develop a suite of new Irish seafood trade advertorials, digital media assets and seafood videos all translated into Japanese, suitable for roll out in support of further Irish seafood promotional campaigns in the market.
4. The EMFF funding was also utilised by Bord Bia to invest in the coordination of a series of B2B and B2C campaigns in Asia to raise awareness about Irish seafood in these target markets (China and Japan). A B2B seafood campaign in Japan was coordinated promoting Irish seafood. In addition, a B2B and B2C seafood campaign in China was also coordinated aimed at educating the Chinese trade and consumers about Irish shellfish, its sustainability credentials, its USP's and information about the Irish supply base. Bord Bia also coordinated 4 x B2C seafood campaigns in France and Germany aimed at educating seafood consumers in both market about what makes Irish organic salmon and mussels unique, focusing on their organic and sustainability credentials and the benefits this delivers in terms of eating qualities.

5. Bord Bia used its EMFF funds in 2020 to enhance its relationships with existing and new customers of Irish seafood across a range of international markets. A series of in-store promotions with leading retail, foodservice and on-line customers in Asia were coordinated to support and grow Irish seafood exports across these markets. Despite the challenging market environment as a result of Covid-19, Bord Bia successfully managed to coordinate 11 emerging market seafood promotions in leading retail and foodservice outlets across China, Vietnam and Japan in 2020
6. Funding allocated to Bord Bia under the EMFF programme allowed for investment in a total of 11 consumer, trade and market research seafood reports across a range of international markets, assisting the industry to consider investment in branding, marketing, customers and new markets informed by robust and market insight.

Producer Organisation Scheme

In 2020, six external industry projects were supported with public expenditure of 431,978.55. Six claims were received from the Producer Organisations in relation to expenditure incurred and eligible under the Scheme.

The grant aid rates involved a mixture of capped maximum assistance at a grant aid rate of up to 65%. Expenditure related to direct staff costs, with other typical costs incurred involving the engagement of consultants to assist in the preparation of the marketing plans and activity reports. Capital items mainly involved upgrading of computer software and equipment.

Seafood Scaling and New Market Development Scheme

In 2020, four external seafood industry projects were approved which involved collectives, each comprising of a collective of unrelated seafood processing enterprises combining to invest in marketing costs to develop markets in Asia and other global markets including retention of the services of native in-market consultancy. The four projects completed and were supported with public expenditure of €221,045.38.

There were two BIM led projects under its internal work programme for the benefit of the sector at a cost of €115,354 in public expenditure. These projects included:

- Whiting & Haddock Category Development - building alignment through the catching sector via the processors to the export markets to increase the amount of value-add whiting processed in Ireland as opposed to shipping product as a commodity to spot markets.
- A Strategic Appraisal of the Irish Pelagic Sector – a strategic appraisal of the sector to assess current activities and how complementary value-add opportunities could be developed.

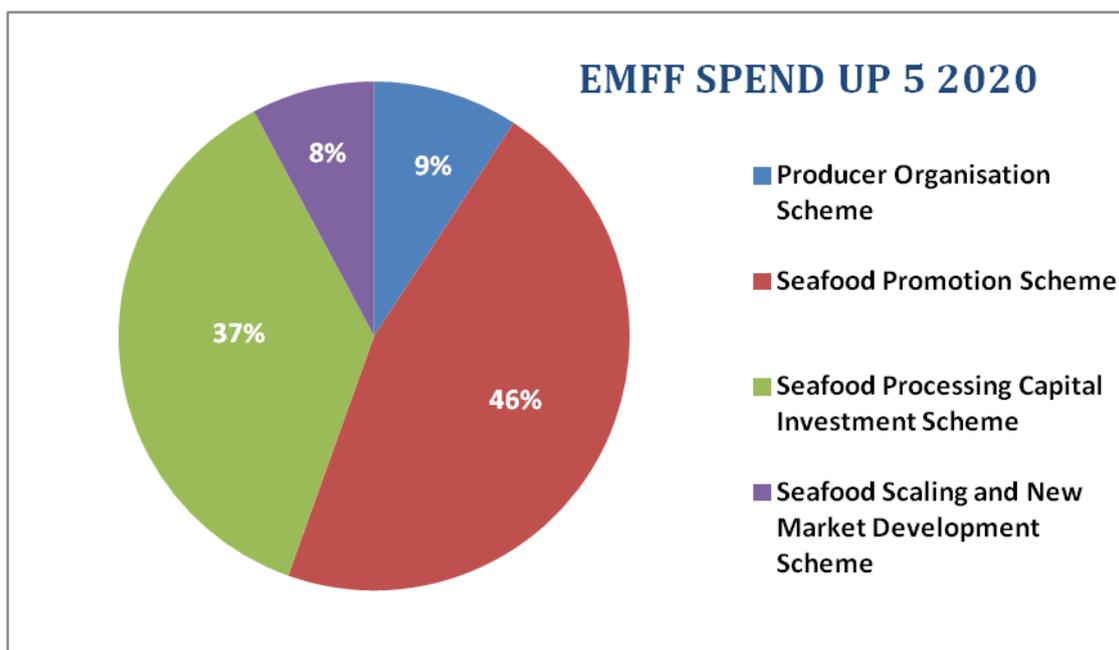
Seafood Processing Capital Investment Scheme

In 2020, 22 external industry projects were implemented and were supported with public expenditure of €1,589,384.93.

The Scheme supports capital investment by seafood processors with the objective of adding value, increasing efficiency and lowering environmental impact. In general, the projects related to fresh whitefish/salmon/shellfish processing and typically involved expenditure on state of the art seafood processing equipment, including fish filleting portioning and packing lines.

UP 5 – Total Expenditure Declared by beneficiaries in 2018

Scheme Name	Public Expenditure
Producer Organisation Scheme	€431,978
Seafood Promotion Scheme	€2,000,000
Seafood Processing Capital Investment Scheme	€1,589,385
Seafood Scaling and New Market Development Scheme	€336,399
Total UP5 - Processing & Marketing	€4,357,762



5.6 - Union Priority 6 – Implementation of the Integrated Maritime Policy

In 2020, the EMFF Programme invested €2,690,372 in support of 29 projects through two support schemes under Union Priority 6.

Up to the end of 2020 total public expenditure of €9,616,327 has been committed to projects of which €5,766,245 has been paid which amounts to a 90.1% commitment rate and a 54% payment rate when compared to financial targets set out in OP.

The output indicator target has been achieved and even exceeded under UP 6, this may lead to a revision of this target under the next modification of the OP document. As regards the result indicator target some progress has been made in achieving this target.

Blue Growth & Marine Spatial Planning Scheme

In 2020, €1,833,247 was invested in 18 projects under UP6, Blue Growth and Marine Spatial Planning Scheme.

Blue Growth Projects (8 projects including 3 new projects)

Five projects continued under the Technical Programmes for Marine Data and Information Quality.

- Extensive work continued on Marine Data Management Quality & Governance, Marine Data Integration & Reuse and Marine Data Analysis & Visualisation to help improve data and knowledge generation, management and sharing in support of a range of policies and directives such as Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Maritime Spatial Planning.
- A Marine Biomaterials Repository was established to provide access to samples and specialised marine data.
- An independent review of progress in achieving the vision, goals and ambitions set out in Ireland's Integrated Marine Plan – Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth was commissioned and delivered in 2020.
- A Marine Foresight Study was undertaken in 2020, which included a high-level assessment and synthesis of national, EU and international policies, strategies and socio-economic analyses of relevance to supporting a sustainable blue economy, using the eight enablers in Ireland's Integrated Marine Plan as a guide.

Marine Spatial Planning projects (10 projects, including 3 new projects)

Three Spatial Data and Evidence projects finished in February 2020. Marine Spatial Planning datasets were collated and maps were prepared to support the Ireland's draft National Marine Planning Framework.

- Two Marine Invasive Alien Species (IAS) projects continued in 2020.
- A project was completed to define and classify Ireland's Seascapes.
- A project to develop a seabed imagery data catalogue commenced in 2019 and is ongoing.

- To better understand Ireland's intertidal Seaweed Resource Distribution, a technology challenge project continued throughout 2020.
- A Socioeconomic Study of Seaweed Harvesting along the West Coast of Ireland started in December 2020.

Marine Biodiversity Scheme:

In 2020, some €857,125 was invested under the Marine Biodiversity Scheme under Union Priority 6. Three projects commenced in 2018 and eight projects commenced in 2019.

NATURA Fisheries Interaction

The project Multidisciplinary digital aerial mapping of the marine coastal environment was continued in 2020 providing estimates of seabird populations and their distribution in the surveyed area.

NATURA Aquaculture interaction, and c/Impact of fisheries on biodiversity and support for MSFD.

Four projects were funded under this theme. The first two, Appropriate assessment of aquaculture activities in SPAs and Appropriate assessment of aquaculture activities in SACs are investigating the interactions between proposed aquaculture activities and Natura features (habitats and species) in Natura 2000 sites, SPAs and SACs, and prepare advisory products as they relate to licencing and management of aquaculture activities in the sites.

The third project is entitled Measure the effectiveness of mitigation measures of managed activities (aquaculture) carried out in Natura sites. On foot of a number of licencing decisions taken or pending in Special Protection Areas (SPAs), it has been deemed necessary to carry out monitoring of the effectiveness of the management actions (i.e. mitigation) or to assess the likely impact of the activities on shorebirds in the Natura sites.

The final project Aquaculture and fisheries interactions with SCI bird species has focused upon the assessment of bird resources in Dungarvan Harbour with a view to developing Individual Based Models for some of the more sensitive bird species.

Impact of fisheries on biodiversity and support for MSFD.

Five projects were funded under this theme. Ecosystem data collection on Irish fisheries surveys in support of MSFD, Natura and Habitat mapping- Phase 2 continues from the 2017-2018 project exploring the application of ecosystem data collection on fisheries surveys in support of marine mammal and seabird observational data for MSFD, Article 17 Habitats Directive and reporting under the Birds Directive; improving sediment classification maps of the Irish Shelf; and analysis of benthic macroinvertebrate survey-bycatch data for MSFD benthic habitats.

MSY proxies for data-limited stocks for key stone species and species sensitive to the impacts of fishing - Phase 2 Capacity building commenced, implementing the approaches developed in MYDAS1 and building capacity to apply these approaches nationally and internationally.

Monitoring the recovery of over exploited deep-water species commenced in 2019 with three days of trawl survey time on RV Celtic Explorer and a further three days in 2020. The results will be used to evaluate whether deep-water species are recovering following the decline of the fishery. Initial analysis indicates some significant changes in catch composition compared to deep-water survey data from the 2000s. Based on this initial analysis, it was decided to continue collecting these data in 2021.

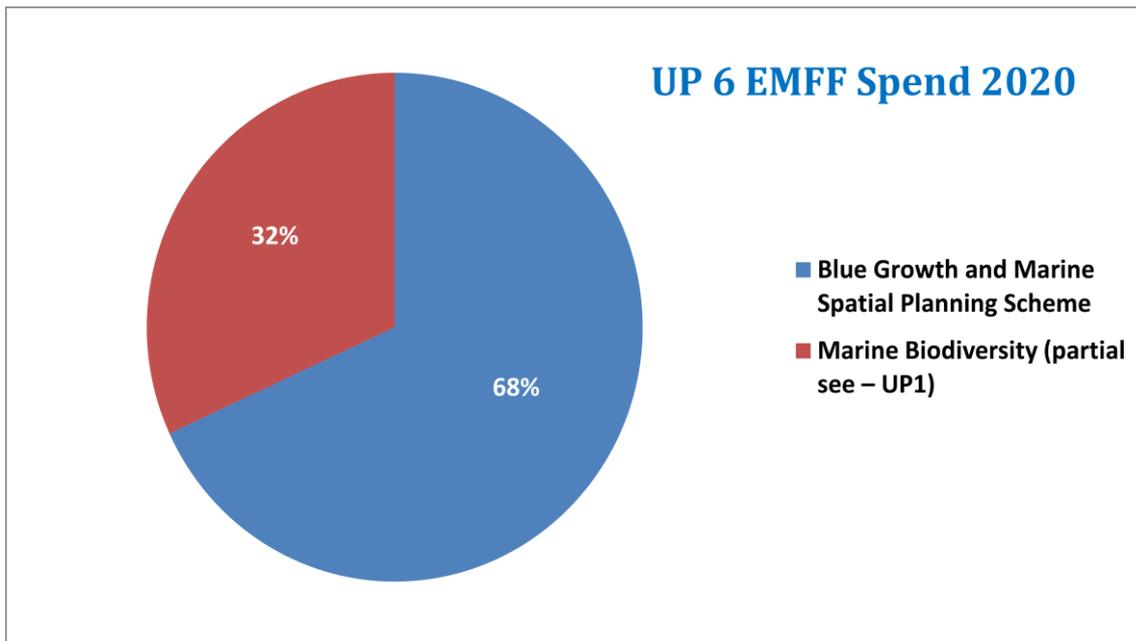
The fourth project, MSFD Indicator assessment D1 and D4 fish biodiversity funded a crucial exercise in conducting the D1 biodiversity assessments for the MSFD assessment cycle. A full D1C1 assessment of fish eligible under the MSFD was completed using the OSPAR FC1 fish biodiversity method and the final report was published in early January 2021.

The fifth project is Nephrops and microplastics. This project is investigating the level and type of plastic fibres that might occur in the gut contents of *N. norvegicus* and sediments from the primary six Nephrops fishing grounds around Ireland. Plastic presence and abundance will be tested for correlation with sex (males/females), size (large/small) and whether individuals are recently moulted. This project will inform future MSFD litter monitoring programmes on microplastics detection in marine biota and sediments and make recommendations on the utility of established fisheries sampling programmes to contribute to monitoring Marine Litter.

A review was carried out in 2020 on all projects in UP 6 , some projects were identified as being more appropriate in other priorities specifically UP1 under the Marine Biodiversity Scheme. One project alone amounted to €1 million approval and actual spend of approximately €650,000 which led to a reduction in commitments and operations in UP6

UP 6- Total Expenditure in 2019

Scheme Name	Public Expenditure
Blue Growth and Marine Spatial Planning Scheme	€1,833,247
Marine Biodiversity (partial see – UP1)	€857,125
Total UP6 - Integrated Maritime Policy	€2,690,372



5.7 - Union Priority 7 – Technical Assistance

In 2020, total EMFF expenditure on Technical Assistance amounted to €1,145,274.75. Technical Assistance supported:

- Contracted staff resources for implementing bodies, which accounted for most of the costs
- Costs to implementing bodies of additional resources to implement EMFF Schemes and to project manage EMFF projects
- Information and publicity measures
- Administration related to EMFF schemes and related necessary supports
- EMFF training and workshops
- Consultancy costs relating to Programme Evaluation.

6. - Issues Affecting the Performance of the Programme

While the broad range of measures implemented through the Programme contributed to its success in 2020, a number positive issues made a notable contribution, as follows:

- While most of 2020 was over-shadowed by the Covid-19 Pandemic, with many seafood businesses negatively impacted, the Pandemic had minimal impact on investment and EMFF supports. Demand for grants to support investment was buoyant across the range of support schemes. One area impacted was the planned support to promotion of Irish seafood through international Trade Fairs, but the marketing funds concerned were re-invested in other areas, particularly domestic market promotions and this helped producers impacted by export market disruption. In addition, two Covid specific support schemes were implemented. A Covid-19 Temporary Fleet Tie-up Scheme was implemented over the June to August period with modest expenditure of €193,000 to aid 91 fishing vessels. Towards the end of 2020, a Covid-19 Aquaculture Support Scheme was implemented and

paid out supports of approximately €1 million to 114 aquaculture enterprises in the rope mussel and oyster sectors, with further payments following in early 2021.

- Grant applications to the seven Fisheries Local Action Groups were exceptionally buoyant in 2020, with applications to the value of €10 million received, considerably beyond the funds available. Some €3.3 million was paid out in grants to 235 projects. Many projects approved will feed into 2021 spend.
- A very significant investment programme to modernise the use of information technology in support of control and enforcement and of fisheries and aquaculture management is being undertaken over the course of the EMFF Programme and 2020 saw investment of approximately €6 million in this area. These investments are supporting development of a fisheries quota balancing system, an online Fisheries Management System to facilitate communication of important documents to fishers, and an aquaculture data management and information system (Aquamis) with phase 2 to deliver an online aquaculture licence application and tracking facility.

Issues negatively affecting the performance of the Programme in 2020 included the following:

- As the envelope of EU funds available for Data Collection and also the EU co-funding rate were fixed in the EMFF Regulation, funds available in the Programme for Data Collection were exhausted by 2019 and so there were no EMFF funds available for data collection for 2020. This meant the Government of Ireland solely funded the €8 million approximate cost of Data Collection activities in 2020.
- By the end of 2020, the amount of payments owing to Ireland in respect of expenditure on control and enforcement and that were suspended by the European Commission increased to €24.5 million. Ultimately, the full €37.2 million allocation to Ireland for control and enforcement investment under the Programme will be lost to Ireland unless the issues giving rise to this suspension are resolved and the suspension lifted. Progress was made on this issue in 2020 with the enactment of national regulations giving full effect to the Control Regulation points system requirements in respect of vessel owners. Legislation is still required to give effect to the points system requirements for masters of fishing vessels and this will be progressed through the Oireachtas (parliament) in 2021.
- As the Programme nears its end and given its successful implementation, funds remaining started to become a constraining factor in 2020. Part B of the Sustainable Fisheries Scheme, which funds investment on board fishing vessels, has shown the highest demand over recent years and has been one of the highest spending schemes. In June 2020, the scheme was closed to new applications as funds were exhausted. This is giving rise to a hiatus in grant aid and pent up investment demand.

7. - Promotion of the EMFF Programme

Managing Authority Information and Publicity Actions

In 2020, information and publicity actions were severely curtailed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All major events that were to be the focus of Information and publicity actions were cancelled and these included the following:

1. The Irish Skipper Expo - which is the premier event information and networking event for the catching sector was to be held in March 2020 in Limerick
2. European Maritime Day & SeaFest 2020 - a major public event showcasing Ireland's abundant maritime resources by raising awareness of the value and opportunities provided by the sea and also celebrating our proud maritime heritage. SeaFest is a key part of Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth: An Integrated Marine Plan for Ireland and its goal of increasing participation and engagement with the sea was to be held in Cork in May 2020.
3. Irish Ploughing Championships - joined with two other European Structural and Investment Funds (ESF & ERDF) at Ireland's largest publicity event was to be held in Carlow in September 2020.

In 2020, the EMFF Managing Authority working with other departments began work to centralise all government information onto a central website called gov.ie this involved moving information from the previous EMFF sections onto this website. (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b4b81-european-maritime-and-fisheries-fund-2014-2020/>)

Also in 2020 the EMFF MA has worked with other EU funds to develop both a communications network that is required under the proposed CPR regulation and as part of that work a new website specific for EU funds has been developed and will continue to be developed in 2021. The website address is eufunds.ie

Press releases were issued throughout 2020 to highlight particular noteworthy EMFF activities.

These were as follows:

- 8 May 2020 - *Creed announces Temporary COVID-19 Voluntary Tie-Up Scheme for parts of the Fishing Fleet*
<https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/6490c1-creed-announces-temporary-covid-19-voluntary-tie-up-scheme-for-parts/>
- 11 June 2020 - *Creed announces €3.5 million investment in six seafood processing companies*
<https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/015e4-creed-announces-35-million-investment-in-six-seafood-processing-companies/>
- 1 July 2020 - *Cowen announces €3.4 million investment in 15 aquaculture enterprises*
<https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/91753-cowen-announces-34-million-investment-in-15-aquaculture-enterprises/>

- **27 July 2020** - Minister Calleary announces grant awards of €1.2 million to 93 projects by EMFF Fisheries Local Action Groups
<https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/3d7b5-minister-calleary-announces-grant-awards-of-12-million-to-93-projects-by-emff-fisheries-local-action-groups/>
- **21 September 2020** - Minister McConalogue announces further grant awards by EMFF Fisheries Local Action Groups
<https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/ded0e-minister-mcconalogue-announces-further-grant-awards-by-emff-fisheries-local-action-groups/>
- **11 October 2020** - McConalogue announces €1.4m in grants supporting €4.9m investment in eight seafood processing companies
<https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/78fac-mcconalogue-announces-14m-in-grants-supporting-49m-investment-in-eight-seafood-processing-companies/>
- **22 October 2020** - Minister McConalogue announces Covid-19 Aquaculture Support Scheme
<https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/9aaa8-minister-mcconalogue-announces-covid-19-aquaculture-support-scheme/>
- **23 October 2020** - Minister McConalogue announces further 33 grant awards by EMFF Fisheries Local Action Groups
<https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/c0fce-minister-mcconalogue-announces-further-33-grant-awards-by-emff-fisheries-local-action-groups/>
- **7 December 2020** - Minister McConalogue welcomes deal on new EU €6.1 billion Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund
<https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/24b5e-minister-mcconalogue-welcomes-deal-on-new-eu-61-billion-maritime-fisheries-and-aquaculture-fund/>

BIM Information & Publicity Actions

As the primary intermediate body for the EMFF Programme, BIM has been designated tasks by the EMFF Managing Authority to ensure that Programme's objectives and funding opportunities offered by the EMFF are disseminated widely to potential beneficiaries and all interested parties.

BIM maintains a dedicated EMFF Scheme website (<http://www.bim.ie/schemes>) where it provides summary information on each scheme, and access to scheme brochure documents, application forms and key contacts.

Further information on the schemes and events supported by the EMFF can also be found on the BIM website at <http://www.bim.ie/news-and-events/>

In administering EMFF grant schemes, BIM requires as part of the letter of offer that beneficiaries acknowledge the EMFF funding received in a number of ways. Where they have a company website, they must acknowledge the EMFF aid in an appropriate section of the website. Where they have business premises, they must display in a public place (such as reception area) an A3 sized poster to a specified format acknowledging the EMFF aid. Some examples are as follows (scroll down at link to see acknowledgement):

http://www.gallagherbros.ie/ocean_farm.html

<https://www.keohaneseafoods.ie/>

<https://www.goodfish.ie/about-us/>

<https://goatsbridgetrout.ie/investments/>

<http://www.premierfish.ie/site/news/>

Larger-scale EMFF supported activities planned for 2020 were cancelled by and large, including BIM's sponsorship of the Irish Skipper Expo and participation at European Maritime Day and Seafest.

However, the following communications activities took place in 2020:

- A video-led campaign across BIM's social media channels aimed to publicise businesses in Ireland's coastal regions that have benefitted from the EMFF supported FLAG scheme.
- A two-day workshop for the oyster industry in Carlingford. The event, supported by EMFF, was attended by 85% of businesses from the oyster industry in Ireland. EMFF branding was displayed at the workshop and used in BIM presentations.
- A webinar to promote and encourage registration to its EMFF supported National Water Stewardship Programme. The programme, developed specifically for the Irish Seafood Industry, aims to provide seafood processing sites with a structured approach to managing water on site, as well as support at each step as they progress on their journey to better water stewardship.
- A communications campaign across regional radio, print and digital media was delivered in recognition of the efforts being made by members of the Irish fishing sector, harbour masters and wider coastal communities in their participation of the EMFF supported Clean Oceans Initiative.
- Activation packs, comprising flags and bunting and hoodies made from upcycled plastics were distributed to the skipper and crew of all 95% of trawlers who signed up to the Clean Oceans Initiative.

8. – Evaluation of the EMFF OP 2014-2020

In 2020, the EMFF Managing Authority entered into a contract with RSM Ireland for evaluations of the EMFF Operational Programme 2014-2020

RSM Ireland carried out the following evaluations:

1. Effectiveness Evaluation - focused on how well the EMFF Programme was being implemented, with the key question being how effective have EMFF measures been in achieving the Specific Objectives and the targets set in the OP. This was carried out by evaluating each scheme against Key Evaluation Questions.
2. Process Evaluation - focused on the delivery mechanism of the EMFF OP 2014-2020. This evaluation assessed management structures and implementation methods and evaluated the effectiveness and efficiency of the management and delivery system.

The process evaluation identified lessons learned which can be implemented in the next programming period 2021-27.

The main recommendations proposed in the final report included the following.

Recommendations for Current Programme.

1. Continue to keep spend under review and reallocate from schemes unlikely to spend full allocation to those where demand exists.
2. Covid Response - Should any allocated funding that is unlikely to be expended be identified, the MA should explore opportunities to provide supports that are sector specific and align with regulations.
3. The MA should engage with scheme managers/IBs to ensure a clear plan and processes – with clearly designated responsibilities - are put in place to capture data to determine RIs. Approaches which should be considered in terms of setting out a process/data sources for the remainder of the OP

Recommendations for Future programme

1. Evidence from this evaluation points to a number of areas for consideration in future programming (to be considered within the scope of regulations/guidance on the EMFAF).
2. The current programme includes a very broad range of supports offered via many different schemes. There is scope to streamline the number of interventions in the interests of efficiency, clarity, clear targeting (to increase uptake) to areas of need, minimising any potential for overlap.
3. To improve programme management efficiency, a bespoke IT system should be introduced which integrates information from IBs as well as providing necessary information to report to the OPMC and the EC. rests of efficiency,
4. Building on the positive experience of the online portal developed by BIM (GEMS), learning from the introduction of this portal should be examined with a view to moving more grants online (build on positive experience of BIM / GEMS portal).
5. The MA should clearly detail and communicate the purpose for which Technical Assistance should be used and through Admin Agreements ensure that this is implemented and monitored;
6. The MA should provide training at the outset of the programme and as significant developments emerge – clearly setting out roles/responsibilities / processes – to manage expectations of all parties.
7. Under the new programme, a new centralised communication strategy to promote awareness of the EMFF in a coherent and consistent manner should be agreed by DAFM, and rolled-out by Implementation and Beneficiary Bodies.
8. In some sectors, where there is an ongoing need for support (economic drivers to support growth and competitiveness) and/or uptake has been low, support should be put in place to build capacity (within the scope of regulations (e.g.: networking, knowledge transfer, dissemination)), raise awareness and provide a pathway to relevant interventions of benefit

All evaluations described above can be found on the following link or be made available on the link when finally published:

<https://eufunds.ie/european-maritime-and-fisheries-fund/programme-implementation>