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PRESS RELEASE

“2015 Challenges”

Eibhlin O’Sullivan, CEO of the *Irish South and West Fish Producers Organisation* and the 2015 Chair of the *Federation of Irish Fishermen* (FIF) said today that 2015 would be yet another challenging year for Irish Fishermen.

“As Chair of FIF, I have a number of priorities for 2015 including the implementation of the Landing Obligation (which means that vessels will now have to land all fish which they catch) which came into for Pelagic species such as Mackerel and Herring at the start of this year and for the much more complex whitefish fisheries beginning in 2016”.

“In addition, the reductions in the 2015 quotas for key species such as Cod, Haddock and Whiting in the Celtic Sea and Pelagic species such as Horse Mackerel and Herring will have a significant impact on those involved in those fisheries in 2015 and FIF will work to try and mitigate the impact of these reductions on our members. We are also focused on ensuring that the necessary scientific data is available for the Key Irish species so as that there are no further unnecessary reductions in quotas as were seen this year. The Prawn fishery is Ireland’s second most valuable one and work is already underway by FIF in relation to issues which have identified in relation to this fishery”.

Challenging the penalty points system implemented in 2014 will also form a significant part of FIF’s work for 2015 *“While FIF understands there is an obligation on Ireland to implement a penalty points system we have written to Minister Coveney on several occasions both before the new system was implemented and after setting out what we believe on the obligations on Ireland under EU Law and pointing out that in our view the way the system has been implemented by the Minister is unconstitutional. To give an example a person will be given points when an SFPA office believes an offence is detected and these points stand even if a subsequent Court case finds the person not guilty. This is clearly contrary to innocent until proven guilty principle. In particular, given the serious consequences of the allocation of points i.e. a vessels Licence being suspended or withdrawal the system has serious implications for the Owner, Master and wider community which it supports and is therefore, a priority for FIF for 2015.”* commented Ms. O’Sullivan.

ENDS

14th day of January, 2015.