



Irish Wildlife Trust

8 Cabra Road

Dublin 7

D07T1W2

Registered Charity (CRA) Number: 20010966

September 4th 2024

Re: Common Fisheries Policy Evaluation: Call for Evidence

The Irish Wildlife trust welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the call for evidence on the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). We would like to state from the forefront that we do not believe there should be a reform of the CFP as the mechanisms within it are viable to ensure effective protection of EU waters and the issue lies within implementation and interpretation of these measures. Article 17 of the CFP states that when allocating fishing opportunities Member States shall use transparent and objective criteria including those of an environmental, social and economic nature. It also states that Member States shall endeavor to provide incentives to fishing vessels deploying selective fishing gear to using fishing techniques with reduced environmental impact, such as reduced energy consumption or habitat damage. This Article within the CFP has been vastly ignored across the EU. In order to create a sustainable fishing fleet across the EU, help end the practice of overfishing, and reduce bycatch of non-target species, it is imperative that this Article is fully and rigorously enforced and well resourced. Sustainable and small-scale fishers are facing extreme pressures within the industry and are not receiving high enough rewards for their efforts in conserving the oceans and fishing industry for future generations. Article 11 & 18 in the CFP looks at regional cooperation on conservation measures and the process of initiating Joint Recommendations (JR) between Member States and the Commission. This Article has not been utilised and due to this, offshore protected areas are not effectively protected. Damaging fishing activity, such as bottom trawling, occurs within these areas decimating fish stocks and destroying precious habitats. A report released earlier this year has shown that 90% of offshore sites have bottom trawling taking place within them and between 2015 and 2023, 4.4 million hours of trawling has occurred in the EU sites analysed (Special Areas of Conservation designated under the Habitats Directive). This practice is not only damaging and indiscriminate in what

it catches, it is also one of the most fuel intensive fishing techniques and so has a significantly negative effect on climate related targets. In order to resolve this (and other issues in offshore sites), JRs need to be initiated. Once a JR is submitted, the Commission can adopt those measures by means of a delegated or implementing act although this process has been used quite sparingly since the clause was brought in over a decade ago. The JR process lacks specific detail and has several gaps throughout the entire process. There is no clause to ensure that there is early and ongoing stakeholder engagement with all those involved and there is no clear wording on who exactly is responsible for initiating JRs within a Member State. There are also no deterrents in place for failing to initiate JRs and so Member States have not made effective use of the process since it was introduced in 2013 and no infractions have been brought forward. In order to comply with Article 13(4 & 5) of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Article 4 of the Birds Directive and Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, member States must ensure effective conservation measures are in place in their offshore and inshore sites and there should be coherence across environmental and fishery legislation. In order to rectify issues within these Articles there needs to be greater clarity on who has responsibility within Member States in regards to the JR process. There also needs to be clarity on the timelines for different aspects of the process as well as definitions. For example, Member States need to provide sufficient evidence when initiating the JR process but what is considered sufficient evidence isn't made clear. Greater coherence between this Article and other environmental legislation is needed as well as early scientific input in the process.