COVID-19
GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS FOR SEAFOOD SECTOR

The following is a list of the existing support measures as well as additional measures which have been introduced by Government in order to support operators and employees in the Seafood Sector who have been impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Government Departments and Agencies continue to work together to explore further support measures.

SECTION A: New COVID-19 Support Measures

1. GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS FOR VESSEL OWNERS/CREW MEMBERS & AQUACULTURE ENTERPRISES/WORKERS

Information on financial supports available from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to both employees and the self-employed is available at this link here. Some key elements are reproduced below.

COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection is providing a new payment of €350 per week that is available to all employees and the self-employed who have lost employment due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
The self-employed will be eligible for this payment directly from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, rather than the Revenue scheme (below).

Application forms can be downloaded online and submitted by post. Those people with a registered MyGovID account can make their claim online at downloaded here and returned by post to Free Post, PO BOX 12896, Dublin 1.

**COVID-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme**

This scheme, operated by the Revenue Commissioners, enables employees whose employers affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic to receive significant supports directly from their employer. The operation of the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme will be available to impacted employers across all sectors who keep employees on the payroll throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic, meaning employers can retain links with employees for when business picks up after the crisis.

The subsidy scheme will refund employers up to a maximum of €410 per each qualifying employee. The scheme applies both to employers who top up employees’ wages and those that aren’t in a position to do so.

Employers are encouraged to facilitate employees by operating the scheme, by retaining employees on their books and by making best efforts to maintain a significant, or 100% income, for the period of the scheme. Further information is available on the Revenue Commissioner’s website at this link here.

**Other Income Supports**

A number of income supports are available from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection for employees during a COVID-19 related absence or temporary lay-off from work:

- If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, or are medically certified to self-isolate as a result of COVID-19, you can apply for Illness Benefit for COVID-19 absences which is higher than the standard rate. You can apply for this whether you are an employee or if you are self-employed.
• If you have been temporarily placed on a shorter working week, you may qualify for **Short Time Work Support**.

• workers who are **not diagnosed with COVID-19 but who self-isolate**

• workers whose employers **do not supplement/top-up the State Illness Benefit payment (COVID-19)**

• workers who are **requested to stay at home by their employer (COVID-19)**

• workers who **need to take time off work to care for a person affected by COVID-19 (Coronavirus)**

**Support for Business**

Microenterprises can access **COVID-19 loans** of up to €50,000 from MicroFinance Ireland. Loans are available at an interest rate of between 6.8% and 7.8%. Businesses can apply through their Local Enterprise Office or directly at microfinanceireland.ie. Eligibility criteria apply.

  o Microfinance Ireland COVID-19 Business Loan FAQs

**2. GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS FOR SEAFOOD PROCESSORS**

Information is available from the Department of Business Enterprise and Innovation at this link *here*. A partial extract follows:

• The **Credit Guarantee Scheme** supports loans up to €1 million for periods of up to 7 years. Applications can be made to AIB, Bank of Ireland and Ulster Bank. Eligibility criteria apply.
  o Credit Guarantee Scheme for COVID-19 FAQs

• Microenterprises can access **COVID-19 loans** of up to €50,000 from MicroFinance Ireland. Loans are available at an interest rate of between 6.8% and 7.8%. Businesses can apply through their Local Enterprise Office or directly at microfinanceireland.ie. Eligibility criteria apply.
  o Microfinance Ireland COVID-19 Business Loan FAQs
The €200m SBCI COVID-19 Working Capital Scheme for eligible businesses will be available within the next week. Maximum loan size will be €1.5 million (first €500,000 unsecured) and the maximum interest rate will be 4%. Applications can be made through the SBCI website at sbci.gov.ie. Eligibility criteria apply.
  - SBCI COVID-19 Working Capital Scheme FAQs

A €200m Package for Enterprise Supports including a Rescue and Restructuring Scheme is available through Enterprise Ireland for vulnerable but viable firms that need to restructure or transform their business.

3. OTHER CROSS-SECTORAL MEASURES

Taxation Measures

Revenue has posted specific advice for businesses experiencing trading difficulties as a result of COVID-19 including information on tax returns, the application of late payment interest, debt enforcement, tax clearance and customs. Further information is available here.

Banking and Credit Measures

If you are concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on your business or personal finances, you should talk to your bank about the COVID-19 banking measures that have been introduced:-

- Payment break up to three months for business and personal customers affected by Covid-19, to be followed by ongoing reviews depending on the scale and extent of the situation. Customers wishing to avail of a payment break should contact their respective bank.

- In addition, applications for payment breaks as a result of COVID-19 will not affect credit records.
• The banks agree there is a need for a simplified application process to make it as easy as possible for businesses and personal customers impacted by Covid-19 to receive support from their banks.

• Banks will also defer court proceedings for three months.

• The banking system stands ready to provide working capital support.

• The main non-bank lenders also confirmed their intention to support the range of measures announced by the country’s main retail banks.

SECTION B: Existing Supports Available Under EMFF Programme

1. Fisheries Sector

Capital Investment

Fishermen may receive grants of 40% for investments on board up to a maximum of €150,000 (a higher 70% rate applies for small scale coastal fisheries vessels).

Groups of fishermen, fisheries producer organisations, and fishing co-operatives may receive grants of 50% or more to undertake projects at fishing ports and landing sites and other appropriate locations ashore to add value to catch and facilitate the landing obligation.

http://www.bim.ie/schemes/sustainable,fisheries,scheme,/ 

Young fishermen under 40 years of age may receive grants of 25% up to €75,000 towards the cost of acquiring their first fishing vessel.

http://www.bim.ie/schemes/special-assistance-for-young-fisherman-scheme/
Fishing vessel owners may receive grants of 40% (60% vessels under 12 metres) to enhance the safety of their vessel and crew up.
http://www.bim.ie/schemes/fleet,safety,scheme/

Marketing Supports

Grants of 40% to a maximum of €50,000 are available to any seafood enterprise to support the cost of trade show visits, and foreign customer visits. Grants of 60% to a maximum of €200,000 are available to collectives of unconnected seafood enterprises working together to develop foreign markets. Grants cover market research, customer visits, inward buyer visits, trade show participation and in-market agents.
http://www.bim.ie/schemes/seafood-scaling-new-market-development-scheme/

2. Seafood Processing Sector

Capital Investment

Seafood processors may receive grants of 30% for investment in value adding equipment and 15% for other investments such as building works, with investments of up to €3 million supported.
http://www.bim.ie/schemes/seafood,processing,capital,investment,scheme/

Innovation / New Product Development

Grants of 50% up to a maximum of €100,000 per project are available to seafood processors for investment in product and packaging innovation and new product development.
http://www.bim.ie/schemes/seafood-processing-innovation/

Business Advisory Services

Grants of 50% up to a maximum of €100,000 per project are available to seafood processors for contracting of business advice service, including business planning, marketing, environment management, energy efficiency etc.
http://www.bim.ie/schemes/seafood-processing-innovation/

Marketing Supports

Grants of 40% to a maximum of €50,000 are available to any seafood enterprise to support the cost of trade show visits, and foreign customer visits.
Grants of 60% to a maximum of €200,000 are available to collectives of unconnected seafood enterprises working together to develop foreign markets. Grants cover market research, customer visits, inward buyer visits, trade show participation and in-market agents.

http://www.bim.ie/schemes/seafood-scaling-new-market-development-scheme/

3. Aquaculture Sector

Capital Investment

Aquaculture farmers typically receive 40% grants up to a maximum of €1 million, but this rises to 50% for new entrants and for certain novel investments.

http://www.bim.ie/schemes/sustainable,aquaculture,scheme/

Innovation / Research

Grants of 50% up to a maximum of €200,000 per project are available to aquaculture enterprises for research, studies, trials, and other measures to develop technical, scientific, or organisational knowledge on their farms, to investigate and trial alternatives to veterinary medicines, or to develop new processes on their farms.

http://www.bim.ie/schemes/knowledge,gateway,scheme/

Business Advisory Services

Grants of 50% up to a maximum of €200,000 per project are available to aquaculture enterprises to purchase consultancy and advisory services of a technical, scientific, legal, environmental or economic nature.

http://www.bim.ie/schemes/knowledge,gateway,scheme/

Marketing Supports

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http://www.bim.ie/schemes/seafood-scaling-new-market-development-scheme/
SECTION C: USEFUL LINKS

Government COVID-19 Information website

Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine (www.agriculture.gov.ie)

BIM (www.bim.ie)

Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection

Revenue Commissioners (www.revenue.ie)

Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation (www.dbei.gov.ie)

Enterprise Ireland (www.enterprise-ireland.com)

HSE COVID-19 Information
(https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html)