



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

The Rt. Hon. Mark Spencer MP
Minister of State for Food, Farming and Fisheries

2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

T: +44 (0) 3459 335577
E: correspondence.section@defra.gov.uk
W: gov.uk/defra

Sir Robert Goodwill MP (Chair)
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

4 January 2023

Dear Sir Robert,

I am writing to confirm the UK has reached agreement with the EU, Norway and other coastal States in the North-East Atlantic on catch opportunities for 2023. Across these negotiations, the UK has secured agreement on 86 Total Allowable Catches (TACs), providing £750 million of potential fishing opportunities.

In these negotiations the UK Government worked closely with the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive, and the outcomes secured by the UK will enable us to improve the sustainable management of our fish stocks in support of the whole of the UK fishing industry in the short and long term.

UK-EU Agreement

The UK has agreed 69 TACs and arrangements for non-quota stocks with the EU for 2023, providing fishing opportunities of more than 140,000 tonnes. In total, this is worth around £282 million, based on historic landing prices. As a result of quota share uplifts agreed in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the UK has around 30,000 tonnes more quota from these negotiations than it would have received with its previous shares as an EU Member State.

An initial estimate suggests the number of TACs that align with scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) has increased by 13% compared to last year. This is the largest increase since 2020 when the UK first started using this metric. The Government will publish early in 2023 a full assessment of the number of TACs set consistent with ICES advice across all annual negotiations.

For non-quota stocks (NQS), we agreed a roll-over of access arrangements for 2023 to ensure continued access to fish NQS in EU waters, worth around £25 million per year to the UK fleet. This is alongside further flexibility for seabass management measures within the ICES advice.

For 2023 we have also agreed access arrangements outside of the TCA provisions for the first time in the UK-EU written record. This will include access for spurdog in the North Sea and for albacore tuna.

The UK and EU have also made additional commitments in the written record to work together through the Specialised Committee for Fisheries to improve the management of particular stocks. These include further commitments on progressing the management of deep-sea stocks, as well as reviewing the effectiveness of technical measures, with a view to supporting recovery of vulnerable stocks.

UK-EU-Norway Trilateral Negotiations

The UK has also reached agreement with Norway and the EU on catch limits for 2023 for six stocks, worth over £202 million to the UK fishing industry in the North Sea and a further £11 million in other waters around the UK, based on historic landing prices.

The Parties agreed increases in TACs for five of the six stocks, including North Sea cod. They have agreed to a cut in North Sea Herring. All TACs are at or below the level advised by ICES. For two stocks (haddock and whiting), the Parties agreed to take a more precautionary approach than the scientific advice to avoid risks to the recovery of North Sea cod given the close interactions between the stocks, and set a 30% increase on each.

The Parties renewed their commitment to deliver Long Term Management Plans for their shared stocks, and have agreed to develop new and more effective management measures for the North Sea herring fishery, focusing on stability for industry and sustainability.

The Parties also agreed to continue building on the work undertaken this year on Monitoring, Control and Surveillance of their shared stocks.

UK-Norway Bilateral Negotiations

The UK has agreed with Norway on continuing to allow vessels to access our respective waters for demersal fisheries, as well as exchanges of quota worth around £5 million to the UK fleet. UK vessels will be able to fish their North Sea whitefish quotas, such as hake and cod, in Norwegian waters, up to a total of 30,000 tonnes. We also agreed to reciprocal access for herring, up to 20,000 tonnes. On exchanges, we secured around £3 million worth of North Sea quota from Norway (including valuable stocks such as monkfish), together with around £2 million worth of stocks in Arctic waters. This complements over 5,200 tonnes of cod in waters around Svalbard, worth an estimated £10 million, that Norway has allocated to the UK under a separate arrangement.

The mutual access will also allow respective fleets more flexibility to target the stocks in the best condition throughout the fishing year, supporting a more sustainable and economically viable fishing industry.

Multilateral 'coastal State' negotiations

The UK has agreed TACs at the level advised by ICES on the three stocks we share with other coastal States in the North-East Atlantic: mackerel, blue whiting and atlanto-Scandian herring (ASH). The opportunities will be worth over £250 million to the UK fleet in 2023.

The UK also chaired negotiations throughout 2022 on a new quota-sharing arrangement for mackerel. These negotiations are making steady progress, and the UK remains committed to securing a fair, sustainable and comprehensive sharing arrangement. Negotiations will resume in early 2023, with an aim of concluding them by 31 March, alongside parallel discussions to agree new quota-sharing arrangements for blue whiting and ASH.

I am copying this letter to Lord Kinnoull, Chair of the Lords European Affairs Committee, and Sir William Cash, Chair of the European Scrutiny Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Rt. Hon. Mark Spencer MP