



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Daniel Zeichner MP
Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
T: +44 (0) 3459 335577
E: correspondence.section@defra.gov.uk
W: gov.uk/defra

Alistair Carmichael MP
Chair, Environment Food and
Rural Affairs Committee
Committee Office
House of Commons
SW1A 0AA

11 June 2025

Dear Alistair,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee and your interest in our work. This letter is in response to the issues raised in your letter of 23 April covering the future of farming and fishing.

I will also take this opportunity to thank you and the committee for your recent report on the 'The Future of Farming'. We are carefully considering the recommendations and will respond in due course.

Farming

"During the hearing your officials outlined the positive impact that SFI has made to date and offered to write to my Committee to provide more detail on this."

We routinely publish evaluation and monitoring information relevant to our farming reforms on GOV.uk ([Future of farming in England - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/future-of-farming-in-england)). We also share information on scheme take up and will be adding 'spend across actions' as a routine part of our statistical updates.

We are happy to share our externally commissioned evaluation into SFI and I have attached some slides to this letter. As you will see 71% of participants rated the SFIEO (SFI Expanded Offer) scheme positively (i.e. scores between 6 and 10, out of 10). This is informing the ongoing work to design a reformed SFI, alongside working with farming and environmental stakeholders and related experts.

Fisheries

"The following commitments were made to write with further information on:

- Why data on Monkfish continues to be deficient.*
- The question posed to ICES when seeking fisheries advice.*
- For pollack specifically, information on the time delay between fish sampling information being captured and decisions being made on catch opportunities."*

Data deficiencies for certain fishing stocks.

The UK collects a huge amount of fisheries data from the 200+ species of fish that are caught in UK waters. This data is both collected by scientific surveys and from fishing

vessels directly. Unfortunately, due to the number of species and stocks in UK waters, and the amount of data required to produce a quantitative stock assessment, some assessments are classed as data poor or have no assessment.

The UK is continuing to invest in fisheries data collection to ensure the most economically important stocks have robust stock assessments to aid their sustainable management. The UK is also at the forefront of developing new methods of producing stock assessments for more data limited stocks. Through these efforts stock assessments are generally improving, for example Northern Shelf angelfish has a quantitative and less precautionary assessment for 2025 compared to previous years.

Question asked to ICES for producing the advice.

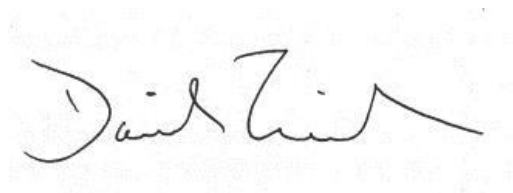
The UK and the International Council for Exploration of the Sea (ICES) have a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which sets out the broad questions that the UK wishes ICES to answer. In this MoU the UK asks ICES to provide “annual advice on fishing opportunities including information on the state of marine ecosystems and human impacts”. Annex 1 of this MoU sets out the stocks the UK wishes to receive advice for, along with the frequency with which we wish to receive it. More specifically, in Annex 1 the UK asks for information on the historical developments in spawning stock biomass, total stock biomass, fishing mortality, and catches as well as information on the state of the stocks and fisheries relative to mutually decided reference points.

Delay between sampling information and decisions on catch opportunities for pollack.

As discussed during the oral evidence session, the annual advice on fishing opportunities on pollack from ICES is released at the end of June for the forthcoming calendar year. This means that the scientific data and sampling information used in the stock assessment needs to feed through to the assessment working group during the first two quarters of the year to be considered in the advice for the forthcoming year. Unfortunately, any additional data collected in the last half of the year will take 6 months before it can be used to inform the stock assessment.

I would like to thank you again for the committee’s work. I trust this response adequately addresses the committees queries. I sincerely apologise for the lateness of this reply.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniel Zeichner', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Rt Hon Daniel Zeichner MP,
Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs**