

Whitby Seafoods – Written evidence (NIP0005)

1. What is the worst-case scenario here for the Northern Ireland fisheries/seafood sector, and what is the best case? Which issues are you most worried about?

There are two issues that may fundamentally affect our ability to continue with our NI business. Firstly, if there were to be tariffs on the raw material we ship from GB to NI, or if there were to be tariffs on the work in progress (WIP) that is shipped from NI to GB.

In a similar vein, we have fresh/chilled produce going NI to GB and vice versa. If this was to be hindered to such an extent that we couldn't ship fresh, we would require £1m+ investment and increased ongoing overheads to allow transfer to happen in frozen state, rather than fresh.

- What challenges do you anticipate for Northern Ireland fisheries/seafood products going into Great Britain?

Depends on the tariff and non-tariff barriers. The outputs from our factory in NI are fresh and can be made with fish from GB, NI and ROI. There is 2-3 days from production in Kilkeel (NI) to freezing in Whitby (UK), one of which is required for transport.

If there is seamless trade for product originating in NI and GB, the amount of paperwork required would be limited for the ROI (ROI = about 20% of our purchases) product alone. If not, there could be additional resource required to support the logistics.

- What do you expect the impact to be on the fisheries/seafood sector of any additional formalities in the following areas after the transition period, for fish being landed in Northern Ireland ports and for seafood products moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland?

- a. Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) formalities
- b. customs (including tariffs), VAT and excise, and product-related regulatory controls.

Delays, the potential to make the operation unviable, additional costs which we may not be able to recoup, potential job losses.

- How can the UK-EU future relationship reduce any possible negative impacts of the Protocol on the fisheries/seafood sector?

Recognize frequent regular importer/exporter to NI and apply exemptions 'very light touch' regime. Financial support/grants to support those negatively impacted with investment to mitigate the impact.

- How can the Government better engage with and provide support to the Northern Ireland fisheries/seafood sector?

Direct and individual meetings to understand/explore our supply chain, and let us know things we know are going to happen (not what may happen, which then changes again).

Do you expect the Protocol arrangements to be ready for 1 January 2020? No

How is COVID-19 affecting the fisheries/seafood sector's preparation for the Protocol?

We are not doing any protocol preparation, as we still have no idea what to prepare for. There needs to be a significant amount of time between negotiations concluding and legislation changing, so that those affected (including industry) have time to prepare. Asking people to prepare for a range of possible outcomes is not going to have good outcomes.

Will the Protocol solve the issues it is intended to? I don't know it in detail, but adhering to an arbitrary date is likely to lead to very bad outcomes.