

# House of Commons Fisheries Bill Briefing

September 2020



## Fish from sustainable stocks for public sector food

An amendment is proposed to channel public money towards sustainable UK fishers through fish bought for public sector catering.

### The amendment would support fishers and our marine environment by:

- **Linking public spending directly with the aims of the Fisheries Bill.** [£2.4 billion](#) is spent each year on food and catering services for the public sector. The Fisheries Bill will create Management Plans to restore or maintain UK fish stocks at sustainable levels. In some cases, this will require remedial action including reducing catches in the short term. This amendment would help create a market benefit to taking a long term approach to fishing management – which is ultimately more profitable. Such market-based incentives are preferable to more punitive enforcement.
- **Growing the market for sustainable, UK-landed fish.** Most fish caught in the UK is exported ([up to 80%](#)), and subject to uncertainties in the global market. Increasing domestic demand for sustainably-caught UK fish like hake, haddock, coley, mackerel and crab would create a much-needed boost to the fishing industry in the UK.
- **Supporting the recovery of the UK fish populations that are depleted.** Recovering all UK fish stocks would allow [30% more fish](#) to be landed by UK fleets (457,000 tonnes extra), and create [10,000 jobs](#) in fishing and associated industries like localised processing and transport. These jobs would be in some of the most economically deprived parts of the UK including Cornwall, the east coast of England, west Wales and northern Scotland. It would also allow the UK to produce more food for domestic markets and export. The [additional tourism](#) and [recreational fishing](#) from thriving marine wildlife could add thousands more jobs, with improved biodiversity and more marine wildlife
- **Ensure greater transparency from our public institutions.** Publishing compliance data would ensure a level playing field for businesses, allow public bodies to choose catering companies based on previous performance and thus drive improvement
- **Link public buying directly to the aims of the Bill,** to ensure Government policy is joined up

### Sustainable fish in the public sector at the moment:

Public sector caterers are required to serve fish with certain standards of sustainability – set out in The [Government Buying Standards](#). Compliance with these standards is poor – A [Department of Health report](#), published in 2017 and confirmed by [Sustain research](#) in 2018, showed that only half of NHS hospitals were meeting the basic food standards. When standards are enshrined as a statutory obligation (like school food) the research suggests compliance is better than when they aren't (hospitals).

### Are there any challenges for implementation?

Most of the major caterers and suppliers to the public sector now [have a policy on sustainable fish sourcing](#). Businesses serving [nearly one billion meals per year](#) have pledged to buy sustainable fish, so fish suppliers are used to meeting the needs of their customers and supplying information.

Sustain's analysis suggests that at the moment about 70% of the fish served by contract caterers in the UK is imported, even though in some cases there are suitable sources closer to home including coley, whiting, herring, mackerel and farmed trout. A clear, universal plan for increasing the buying of sustainable fish in the public sector would help to introduce the public to less-familiar species and incentivise supply chain companies to produce new products.

### Some UK fisheries that could benefit from a boost in their market

<b>Hake</b>	Cornwall and the south coast, the North Sea, and West of Scotland	Following stock decline in the 1980s, a recovery plan was introduced based on scientific advice and <a href="#">all stocks are now considered sustainable</a> . Cornish Hake is Marine Stewardship Council certified
<b>Mackerel</b>	All UK sources including West Scotland, North Sea and South-West England	Stocks considered to be healthy
<b>Haddock</b>	All UK sources including the Irish Sea, North Sea, and the West of Scotland.	Stocks across the UK considered to be healthy, Some is Marine Stewardship Council certified
<b>Herring</b>	Caught in the east of the UK, including North Irish Sea, North Sea, Eastern English Channel	Some stocks healthy
<b>Plaice</b>	UK caught from the North Sea	Populations here are increasing
<b>Sardine</b>	South of England	Stocks considered to be healthy

Some other UK fish stocks are very depleted and overfished, and currently losing out on markets because they are considered [‘Fish to Avoid’](#) including North Sea cod, some langoustine populations in the North Sea, herring in the west of the UK and whiting in the west of Scotland. Clear, direct incentives for improvement are required.

We would welcome the opportunity to talk to you about these issues and can provide briefings with more detail.

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Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity. We represent around 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional, and local level. [www.sustainweb.org](http://www.sustainweb.org)