



Opportunities for a better deal for the UK fishing industry

The UK Fisheries Bill, due for introduction to Parliament in 2018, needs to have a strong overall vision, to make sure fishers are guaranteed a bright, sustainable future. We believe this is well within the power of UK Government, regardless of the outcome of EU negotiations and trade deals. The UK benefits from being able to sell *some* of its fish, here and abroad, as “sustainably sourced” an increasingly important assurance. But not all UK fish is considered sustainable, often for a remediable reason such as lack of data or management plan, so some UK fleets are missing out on good markets and an estimated £440 million in earnings.

The vision: To help UK fishers secure good markets at home and abroad, in perpetuity: All fish from the UK should be verifiably sustainable by 2025, and marketed as such; either by meeting the Marine Stewardship Council standards or being considered ‘Fish to Eat’ by the Marine Conservation Society.

How can this vision be achieved?

1. **Improving fish stocks and marine ecosystems** is vital. Essential elements of sustainable UK fisheries management include:
 - An ecosystem based approach: managing fish as an integral part of healthy ocean ecosystems, and taking account of the cumulative impact of human activities on the environment.
 - All fish stocks restored and maintained above biomass levels capable of producing the maximum sustainable yield.
 - Fisheries management decisions based on best available science.
 - Fully transparent and accountable fisheries where catches, both target and non-target, are fully documented, infringements are properly enforced and fisheries are effectively controlled.
 - Fishing opportunities allocated on the basis of transparent and objective environmental, social and economic criteria, in a way that incentivises the most sustainable fishing.
2. Maintaining and investing in measures to **support the ban on discards**.
3. **Tackling data deficiency** (currently preventing many fisheries even being considered as a “sustainable source”); increasing data collection and requiring CCTV and location-tracking across all fishing boats.
4. Government has already announced an **annual statement on the state of UK fish stocks** which is very welcome, but it will be a thin document because many are data deficient. The statement should show how a fishery is progressing on a range of measures that determine sustainability, for example: stock, fishery impact on the seafloor and other species, management and adherence to laws.
5. **Targeted funding, new quota allocation** and support from **public sector food procurement** contracts (see further detail below).

This approach would allow the flexibility to trial new forms of fisheries management (for example ‘Days at Sea’) management, even removing catch limits for some species, because it focusses on the outcome of the activity on the ecosystem and stock.

See: www.greeneruk.org/resources/sustainable_fisheries_management.pdf

A bold and confident approach

We must go further than just protecting the status quo after Brexit – lots of UK fish stocks are not currently in good shape. If they were to be rebuilt and better managed, we could reap the rewards in increased landings, an additional £440 million in earnings, and 6,600 new jobs.¹

Targeted funding to help the UK fishing industry

The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, to which the UK currently contributes, must be replaced by a UK fund that can continue to support the transition of all fishing activity to a sustainable basis, including gear modification, data collection and the costs of sustainability certification.

New and better fishing quota allocation system

The UK has the opportunity to come up with new ways to allocate fishing quota. This should reward smaller-scale and sustainable fishing, with very specific rewards for beneficial activities such as participation in fishery improvement projects, implementation of vessel monitoring, observing the discard ban, sustainability certification and being part of Seafish's Responsible Fishing Scheme.

Fish for UK schools, hospitals and the armed forces

Government should act as a leader and a responsible consumer, linking fishing policy with public health and boosting incomes for the UK fishing industry through its public-sector buying, by:

- Confirming the public sector commitment to verifiably sustainable fish

¹ See neweconomics.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Fair-Fishing-United-Kingdom.pdf

- Updating school food standards to require sustainability criteria
- Making healthy and sustainable food standards legally binding for hospitals, prisons and the British armed forces
- Going further in Central Government contracts to demonstrate innovation and even better sustainable fish buying standards

Standards must be legally-binding and enforced. At the moment they are often ignored, or it is not possible to find out if they are being met. In a recent study the Sustainable Fish Cities campaign found that only one of the contract caterers serving large Ministry of Defence contracts could confirm that they met the Government Buying Standards, whilst another² found these same caterers serving red-rated fish. A [Department of Health report](#), published in 2017 and confirmed by [Sustain research](#) in 2018, showed that only half of NHS hospitals were meeting even basic food standards.

Why legal standards are needed for public food

Sustain's analysis suggests that at the moment about 70% of the fish served by contract caterers in the UK is imported, even though we have suitable, sustainable sources closer to home including coley, whiting, herring, mackerel and trout. Clear, universal and predictable standards would incentivise suppliers and other supply chain companies to produce compliant products, confident that they have a ready market for their goods. In our experience, companies producing food meeting legally binding school food standards have also found new markets elsewhere.

Contact: Ruth Westcott, Sustainable Fish Coordinator, Sustain
ruth@sustainweb.org Tel: 020 7065 0902; www.sustainablefishcity.net

² www.sustainweb.org/news/dec17_caterers_league_table/

Table: Top fish species for the UK fishing industry, with commentary on conservation status, showing why it is currently hard for UK fishers to access markets that increasingly demand verifiable sustainability – in many cases this could be remedied through better data and management plans				
Species	Value to UK fishing industry (£ million) ³	Verifiably sustainable UK sources ⁴ . Green = Marine Conservation Society ‘fish to eat’ (1 or 2 rated)	UK sources currently considered ‘unsustainable’ (and briefly, why not) Amber = Marine Conservation Society ‘fish of concern’ (4 rated); Red = Marine Conservation Society ‘fish to avoid’ (5 rated)	
Cod	68	North Sea (MSC certified)	Cornwall (stock still too low and catches too high – but improving)	Celtic Sea; Rockhall; West Scotland (stock still too low, some areas don’t have effective management)
Crab	59	All UK	none	
Haddock	45.5	Scottish is MSC certified; Rockall; Irish sea	Celtic Sea; Cornwall (stock is declining or static)	
Hake	41	MSC certified in Cornwall	None	
Halibut	1	None	All areas around UK (data limited)	
Herring	87.4	Nearly all UK stocks are MSC certified	Cornish; West of Scotland and West of Ireland (stock below healthy levels)	
Langoustine (scampi)	106.8	West of Scotland; Celtic Sea	North Sea (data deficient and fishing is damaging)	Farn Deeps (data deficient and fishing is damaging)
Lobster	40	Jersey; Cornwall (pot-caught)	Rest of the UK (data poor – no stock assessment)	
Mackerel	288	All stocks – nearly all are MSC certified	None	
Monkfish	73	none	Trawled in Ireland; Channel; Bristol Channel; Cornwall (stock uncertain; stock and catches unknown)	
Plaice	51	Some North Sea areas; Eastern Channel; Cornwall; some MSC certified	Most of Ireland (data deficient – no stock assessment or catch data)	
Scallops	75	Hand-dived scallops only	Wales; Cornwall; Isle of Man	Channel; offshore (lack of data)
Seabass	5	None	Scotland; parts of Ireland (vulnerable to overfishing and stocks very low)	Rest of the UK (vulnerable to overfishing and stocks v. low)
Sole	34	North Sea; Irish; Channel; South Cornwall	Celtic Sea (caught as bycatch but catches too high)	Irish Sea (stock in serious decline); North Coast of Cornwall (no stock data)
Squid	29	none	NE Atlantic, jig caught or trawled (not a protected stock so little management to ensure stocks stay healthy)	
Turbot	9.5	North Sea by trap or hook-and-line	Cornwall (data poor – no assessment of stock)	

³ From Defra landings data: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-sea-fisheries-annual-statistics-report-2016

⁴ Defined as either certified or considered ‘Fish to Eat’ by the Marine Conservation Society. See all the ratings here: www.mcsuk.org/goodfishguide/search