

Annual fisheries negotiations cut cod quota

EU Ministers have reached a compromise on fishing opportunities at this year's annual EU fisheries negotiations – the last [‘December Council’](#) attended by the UK before it becomes an independent coastal state.

In a year where scientific advice showed concern for the health of fish stocks in many areas, significant cuts in cod quotas were agreed in the Irish Sea, West of Scotland and the Celtic Sea.

There are growing concerns about the state of cod stocks in the North East Atlantic, with North Sea Cod [losing its MSC accreditation](#) in October, despite several years where the fish stock was showing signs of recovery.

Last Friday at the [annual EU-Norway negotiations](#), it was agreed to cut cod quotas by 50 percent in the North Sea. This week limited quotas were agreed for cod in the Celtic sea, Irish Sea and West of Scotland- just enough to allow the landing of accidental catch.

To further protect vulnerable cod stocks, the UK has successfully pushed for enhanced rules on sustainable fishing practices such as changing net sizes, to help the iconic cod make a recovery.

In other areas there were more positive developments, with conservation measures for Sea Bass that the UK pressed for five years ago starting to show a significant recovery in the stock. Modest changes were agreed to allow recreational anglers to take home more of what they catch, with conservation measures remaining in place.

There were also increases for other species with quotas for Haddock in the North Sea rising by 23 percent and Sole in the Western Channel rising by 19 percent.

Speaking after concluding negotiations early this morning, Fisheries Minister George Eustice said:

This year there has been some very challenging science for cod stocks in many parts of the North East Atlantic and we have responded to conserve stocks. I know that some of the quota reductions will be very difficult for some sectors of the industry and there has been considerable debate this year about the importance of bycatch allowances to support the delivery of the discard ban. However, we also know that to protect the profitability of fisheries in the future, we must fish sustainably today.

Some of the problems have been exacerbated by the fact that the EU's outdated method for sharing quota between member states means that the UK gets a very small share of the cod in our own waters. As we leave the EU and become an independent coastal state, we will be in a position to address the unfairness that is inherent in the Common Fisheries Policy.

The agreement for 2020 comes ahead of the UK leaving the EU and becoming an independent coastal state for the first time in over 40 years. As further preparations for leaving the EU, the Government will place into legislation a new legal commitment to fish sustainably and has confirmed that fisheries funding across the UK nations will be maintained throughout the next Parliament.

The UK delegation was led by Fisheries Minister George Eustice but also included the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy Fergus Ewing, Welsh Government's Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs Lesley Griffiths and representatives from Northern Ireland.

Ahead of and during the negotiations, the UK delegation held detailed discussions with the devolved administrations, industry and environmental NGOs.

The agreement sets fishing opportunities for the UK while it remains part of the Common Fisheries Policy. Once the UK has left the EU, it will become an independent coastal state and negotiate on fisheries as a third country with the EU and other coastal states such as Norway and the Faroe Islands.