

Press release: December deal delivers for UK fleet and fish stocks

The UK Government has secured a deal that supports the whole of the UK's fishing industry and the long-term health of fish stocks at this year's [annual EU quota negotiations](#).

During two days of intensive talks in Brussels, which concluded in the early hours of this morning, the UK negotiating team worked to deliver increased quota in certain high-value stocks for our fishermen while ensuring stocks continue to be fished at sustainable levels to ensure the future prosperity of our industry.

This year's December Council discussions were challenging for all Member States given scientific advice on quota, which included a recommendation of zero total allowable catch (TAC) for five key species for UK fishermen. A particular challenge was the introduction of [the Landing Obligation](#) from 1 January 2019 – a requirement to cut the discarding of fish.

The agreed deal ensures there are now workable solutions to alleviate the pressure for fishermen while preventing fish from being wastefully discarded unnecessarily. The agreement also includes a commitment to review scientific data as the new regulation comes into effect.

Speaking as the Council drew to a close, Fisheries Minister George Eustice said:

These negotiations were the culmination of months of government-led work with the Devolved Administrations, industry and environmental NGOs, to secure the best possible deal for the whole of the UK fishing industry.

We entered into discussions knowing that a good deal needed to carefully balance progress towards sustainability targets, while ensuring that we listen to the scientific evidence on the health of fish stocks and safeguard a profitable future for our hard-working fleet.

We welcome quota increases for important species like megrim and hake, and progress towards achieving sustainable fisheries – in what was a particularly challenging year of negotiations for all Member States.

Total fishing opportunities agreed for 2019 include increased quotas for:

- West of Scotland monkfish (+25%)
- Western hake (+28%)
- Skates and rays in the English Channel (+10%)

Limits remained the same for Celtic Sea sole and pollack – and where the science showed it was necessary, quotas were reduced for certain stocks, including herring in the Celtic Sea.

The UK delegation included representatives from all four corners of the UK, including Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy Fergus Ewing.

Benefits will be felt around the country with increases in quota for hake, haddock and megrim. Increased quota for monkfish will provide a boost for the Scottish fleet, while Northern Ireland have benefited from an increased share in Irish Sea cod. Agreements on sea bass will offer welcome support to the inshore fleet in Wales.