

Scottish seafood taskforce to drive progress

News story

A task force dedicated to driving forward the seafood sector in Scotland will meet for the first time this week



The Scottish Seafood Exports Task Force draws together the UK Government and a wide range of key industry representatives from the catching, processing and aquaculture sectors. The Scottish Government has been invited to be represented at both ministerial and official level.

The group will be hosted by the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland and chaired by UK Government Minister for Scotland David Duguid.

Mr Duguid:

We have had extensive consultations with the industry and have been working day and night to resolve issues around the new arrangements for getting our world-class seafood to customers in Europe.

From this ongoing consultation with industry representatives, I believe that the gap they would like us to fill would comprise an action-oriented group. This will work collaboratively across UK and Scottish governments, increasing confidence in the seafood and aquaculture supply chain by ensuring that medium and longer-term export issues are resolved.

I am clear about the need for action. I want the taskforce to track the export process to identify issues stopping or delaying export, and areas of complexity that are not yet well understood.

We want to seek a common understanding on the export process and address concerns by developing solutions to be taken forward by the UK Government, Scottish Government and EU. And we want to ensure there is effective communication with the industry to ensure

traders are aware of issues and of solutions.

Existing working groups which bring together the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the industry to tackle day-to-day issues will continue to operate, and the Scottish seafood sector remains heavily engaged in these.

The new task force will meet fortnightly, with a focus on establishing and pushing forward the actions needed to help secure a prosperous long-term future for the Scottish seafood industry, taking advantage of new opportunities as well as addressing current challenges.

The UK Government have also announced a £23 million scheme which will provide crucial support for fishermen and seafood exporters, who have experienced delays and a lack of demand for fish from the restaurant industry in the UK and Europe. This is in addition to the £100 million fund announced by the Prime Minister in December.

Mr Duguid has written to Fergus Ewing MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism at Holyrood, inviting him and officials to take part in the inaugural meeting this week.

Support provided to the industry includes:

- Dialogue has already delivered swift solutions to a number of problems that caused difficulties for the industry, including – but not limited to – computer system glitches.
- Issuing clear guidance on the required IT forms to stakeholder representative groups, hauliers and businesses.
- Frequent meetings with businesses to understand and address issues as they arise.
- Working closely with individual businesses to help them get used to the new procedures required to ensure that errors or problems are tackled early.
- UK Government has stood up extra physical resources to support certification in Scottish export hubs
- The UK Government has provided specialist certifiers to support Food Standards Scotland and DFDS
- Working with French authorities to ensure that minor administrative issues associated with EHCs have not prevented goods from entering the market and with the EU Commission to help member states adopt consistent approaches.
- Providing extensive guidance as part of a range of measures to help the industry meet new export requirements, including training, regular engagement and weekly bulletins.

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