

UK Government and seafood industry make good progress on exports

News story

Today Minister David Duguid spoke with senior figures in the Scottish seafood industry to acknowledge there have been difficulties and provide solutions



Temporary issues felt in the seafood supply chain are steadily improving, UK Government Minister for Scotland David Duguid heard in a meeting he chaired today with senior figures in the industry.

“The UK Government has been striving night and day to help the industry and I am encouraged that solutions now in place are beginning to bear fruit,” he said after the latest meeting of the Scottish Seafood Export Working Group, attended online by the Scottish Seafood Association and Scottish Fishermen’s Federation.

The Minister also spoke with DFDS, the logistics experts who operate the Larkhall hub, through which much of Scotland’s seafood exports pass.

He said:

It is essential that we know precisely what difficulties are arising so we can tailor solutions. The excellent feedback from DFDS is massively helpful. We are working to streamline systems, while supporting exporters and partners such as DFDS, and the commitment to making the system work is clear across the board.

The UK Government has acknowledged there have been difficulties and we want to work together to provide solutions and restore confidence within this crucial sector so that world-class Scottish seafood can be harvested at sea and sped from port to plate for customers here and abroad.

A £23m additional support scheme for the seafood sector has been announced and the UK Government knows the urgency of rapid

delivery. Meetings such as today's allow us to take on board the industry's concerns about the eligibility for that support fund, about making it swift and readily accessible.

There are still issues with the supply chain and we are doing all we can to ease them. I have today written to Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy, Fergus Ewing, encouraging take-up of our offer of additional support for Food Standards Scotland at Larkhall and providing further detail of our direct support for businesses with the embedding of experts to help firms with paperwork required by the EU.

We want a workable, sure-footed system so the industry can maximise the benefits of Britain's new status as an independent coastal state, outside the Common Fisheries Policy.

The £23m fund will be targeted at fishing export businesses who can evidence a genuine loss in exporting fish and shellfish to the EU. Support will be available immediately and paid retrospectively to cover losses incurred since 1 January 2021. The scheme will be targeted at small and medium enterprises and the maximum claim available to individual operators will be £100,000.

The Marine Management Organisation will administer the scheme on behalf of exporters across the UK. More details will be available on eligibility criteria in the coming days. The UK Government will be consulting industry across the UK and working with the devolved administrations on these eligibility criteria before they are confirmed.

Other support provided to the industry includes:

- Constructive dialogue between UK Government and industry has already helped to resolve a number of initial problems that caused difficulties for the industry, including – but not limited to – computer system glitches.
- Issuing clear guidance on the required IT forms and paperwork 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.
- The UK Government is providing extra physical resources to support certification in Scottish Hubs.
- The UK Government has provided specialist certifiers to support Food Standards Scotland and DFDS.
- An experienced certifying officer from Defra is in Lanarkshire supporting Official Veterinarians with the issuing of health certificates.
- Additional Official Veterinarians are on standby, available to Scottish Hubs, to support exporters if required.
- Working with French authorities to ensure that minor administrative

issues associated with EHCs do not prevent goods from entering the market, and working 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. Separately, the Prime Minister has also committed to providing a £100m fund to help modernise fishing fleets, the fish processing industry, and rejuvenate a historic and proud industry in the UK, on top of the £32m that will replace EU funding this year.

Published 22 January 2021