

# Aiming to cut the food miles and boost UK production

**Question:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to protect marine conservation areas from illegal fishing by large trawlers. (136424)

Tabled on: 12 January 2021

**Answer:**

**Victoria Prentis:**

As an independent coastal state, the UK has full responsibility over how it manages all of our fisheries. All vessels fishing in our waters have to be licensed by a UK Fisheries Administration, and abide by the licence conditions and relevant legislation. We are also committed to ensuring an effective and robust enforcement system. To ensure appropriate arrangements to enforce fisheries regulations are in place to protect our waters, including marine protected areas, the Government has put in place a significant increase in the number of personnel and surveillance assets dedicated to fisheries protection, which includes offshore patrol vessels supported by aerial and radar surveillance. This strong presence will deter against any fisheries infringements.

The answer was submitted on 20 Jan 2021 at 16:39.

**Question:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what Government (a) grant and (b) loan assistance is available to people wishing to expand capacity of vegetable and fruit growing under suitable cover to extend the growing season and protect from weather damage. (136427)

Tabled on: 12 January 2021

**Answer:**

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Government has provided some limited grant support for indoor horticultural growers through the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) for the purchase of innovative lighting, heating and irrigation technology. Funding continues to be available to producer organisations who implement operational programmes in the Fruit and Vegetable Aid Scheme.

From autumn 2021 my department will launch the new Farming Investment Fund, providing grants to farmers, foresters and growers to enable them to invest in the equipment, technology and infrastructure that will help their businesses to prosper, while improving their productivity and enhancing the environment. My officials are working with stakeholders and others on the detailed design of the scheme.

The answer was submitted on 20

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (136425):

**Question:**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will ban supertrawlers from fishing in UK waters to help protect fish stocks and the marine environment. (136425)

Tabled on: 12 January 2021

**Answer:**

**Victoria Prentis:**

We are reviewing our policies for these vessels operating in UK waters including marine conservation areas. Any action needs to be evidence-based and in line with the UK/EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

The answer was submitted on 20 Jan 2021 at 16:41.

Jan 2021 at 16:45.

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## [Fishing for wins](#)

As the government battles the virus we need more wins and optimism elsewhere. We need to get on with the great Brexit wins now we are free to set our own laws and taxes.

This is now crucial for our fishing industry who feel let down. There is scope for major growth in investment and jobs. The immediate task is to protect our fish stocks from plunder by aggressive foreign industrial trawlers, and to help the UK build capacity to fish the grounds in a sustainable way landing much more fish here in the UK. This requires

1. A ban on super large industrial trawlers. The Agriculture Department says there is no definition of a supertrawler . There can be. You could ban all boats of over 100 metres in length, or all boats of over 5000 deadweight tonnes. This would remove the huge Russian and Dutch vessels which dominate and leave more fish for our smaller boats. This would be very popular, and supported by Green groups.
2. Cheap loan and grant schemes to build new under 100m boats for our expanded fishery in UK yards, and a scheme to allow purchase of second hand vessels from abroad which can also increase capacity. With interest rates so low for the government it would be easy to offer soft loans with long repayment dates to get new fishing people involved.
3. Use available regional and development grant regimes to encourage

harbour expansion around our coasts at suitable fishing locations.

4. Speed up Freeports and Enterprise Zones, allotting enough to fishing areas and use them to attract new and additional fish and food processing.
5. Help the UK fishing industry establish new markets for UK fish by adding value, using the fish in ready meals and frozen products, sending much more to fish hungry Asia.
6. For shipping generally, reverse the Factortame ECJ judgement, restoring a minimum UK ownership requirement for UK flagged vessels.
7. Draw up with our shipping industry improvements to requirements for the UK shipping Register to encourage expansion without diluting labour or safety standards.

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## My intervention during the Statement on the Police National Computer, 18 January 2021

**Sir John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):** I thank the Minister, the Home Secretary and the police leadership around the country for the very professional way in which they have responded to a most unfortunate error, an error that none of them wanted or made personally. Will he give us a little bit more encouragement, however, because is it not the case that there are now many good ways to retrieve data that has been wrongly deleted? Might we be looking at a remedy for this in a few weeks' time, when the computer experts have finished their job?

**The Minister for Crime and Policing (Mr Kit Malthouse):** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right that the initial assessment was some optimism about the ability to recover this data, not least because it is held in a number of areas. We will not have the full picture until we get to the end of this week, once we have analysed the report and, of course, looked at the data that we should have deleted but have not because of this error. However, he is quite right that we should be optimistic about that and recognise that all is not lost. There are other ways that this data can be cross-checked, in particular as part of a police investigation. We are working with our policing partners to ensure that they make full use of that, so that they can proceed as usual with their investigations.

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## National free school meals voucher scheme opens to orders

I have been notified by the Government that the national free school meals voucher scheme has opened to orders. Schools can begin ordering free school meal vouchers for eligible pupils from today, adding to the support available for disadvantaged families.

An online service for schools, the scheme allows schools to place orders for supermarket gift cards on behalf of parents and carers whose children are eligible for free school meals.

The vouchers are worth £15 a week per child and families can receive codes by email to redeem themselves, or as a gift card provided by post, collection or delivery to families without internet access.

In addition to the national scheme, schools can continue providing free meals to eligible pupils via lunch parcels, through catering suppliers, or via locally arranged solutions. This might include vouchers for a local shop or supermarket not currently included in the national scheme.

The Department for Education continues to work with LACA, the body representing school caterers to ensure lunch parcels and meals all meet high standards. Guidance developed by LACA and Public Health England is being updated to reflect the additional funding that has been provided to support schools and school caterers in following this approach.

You can read more about the scheme at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-free-school-meals-voucher-scheme-opens-to-orders>

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## Universal credit

Yesterday I accepted the Prime Minister's advice and abstained on the Opposition day motion. I was in two minds about it and gave the government the benefit of the doubt.

On the one hand it is a perfectly fair tactic for the Opposition to table a motion to smoke out a government view on a contentious issue. I prefer it when the government has a view and then defends it with arguments and votes. It would be popular with many if the government just agreed to continue the new higher rate of benefit. On the other hand, I could see that the government wishes to make up its mind on whether to continue the extra £1000 a year Universal Credit to all recipients nearer the budget when it

should have new forecasts of how likely it is people can get jobs to boost their incomes, and how the spending figures generally are placed.

The central idea of Universal credit is to ensure people are always better off working. Higher minimum wages, control of low wage migration, taking lower pay out of income tax are all part of a suite of policies to make it true that it is better to work, whilst ensuring all can afford to live from benefit payments if they are out of work. I was a strong supporter of the increase in UC when the pandemic hit with policies to control it that drove many lower paid out of work altogether, and slashed the overtime and performance related pay of others.

I fear we will need further support for families and small businesses before the pandemic is over and more normal life resumes. I will press for suitable measures in the run up to the budget. I am against the ideas I see in some parts of the media that from March the government needs to rein in spending and borrowing and push up taxes. That would be quite the wrong response when the economy is still limping along way below its levels of income and work of 2019.