

## The Fisheries Bill:

### The case for equivalence

#### **High environmental standards should apply to foreign vessels fishing in UK waters and to UK vessels fishing anywhere.**

Following the UK's exit from the EU, it is likely that foreign fishing vessels will seek to continue to access UK waters for fishing, and it is also likely that UK fishing boats will want to continue to fish in the territory of neighbours like the EU and Norway. Between 2011 and 2015, UK vessels landed fish and shellfish worth around £110 million from elsewhere in the EU Exclusive Economic Zone. The UK must ensure that all vessels in its waters operate to high environmental standards and that UK vessels are held to high standards wherever they are.

#### **Co-operation with neighbours**



Figure 1 ©: R Robertson <https://www.flickr.com/photos/16633132@N04/15415691879/>

Once the UK is an independent coastal state it will need to enter into fisheries agreements with the EU and other countries such as Norway. These agreements will determine how shared stocks are managed and the terms of access for foreign vessels into UK waters and vice versa.

This is an opportunity for the UK to ensure that high environmental standards are built into these fisheries agreements. For example, the Greenland agreement has several monitoring and reporting obligations, including a requirement that all EU vessels fishing in Greenland must have satellite monitoring systems transmitting information automatically to their EU flag state and then sent immediately to Greenland authorities. Norway and the EU have also established an agreement for a system of real time closures in the North Sea and Skagerrak to manage fishing pressure on joint stocks.

The UK should ensure that any agreements it makes with non-EU countries commit UK fishing vessels to high standards when they are in foreign waters. The UK government and devolved administrations must also make sure that the UK can

monitor the fishing activity of foreign vessels and have the resources to enforce UK fishing laws properly to ensure adherence to high standards in UK waters.

## Deep sea fisheries

In the UK, deep sea fisheries for species like grenadier, blue ling or orange roughy are mostly exploited by French and Spanish vessels. Many of the fish species targeted by deep sea fishing are slow-growing and the stocks are at risk from overfishing. For example, international fisheries advisory scientists currently recommend a zero total allowable catch for orange roughy. The deep sea environment is also sensitive and requires protection from bottom trawling.

The UK should manage deep sea fisheries carefully after it leaves the EU and ensure that it has the necessary powers and resources to manage and monitor foreign vessels, as well as UK vessels, requiring them to fish to high environmental and sustainability standards.

## Risk

If the UK does not work with other fishing nations to develop processes and agreements for the way fishing for shared stocks should be conducted in its waters, it may have difficulty monitoring fishing activity, enforcing UK fishing laws and holding all vessels to high environmental standards. Without joint procedures to manage shared stocks, **there is a risk that the UK will not be able to respond quickly to take management action if necessary to manage or conserve fish populations.** If the UK allows its fishing vessels to adhere to lower environmental standards in jurisdictions outside of UK waters, it will export environmental harm to other states. It will also not develop a reputation for world-leading fisheries management if it allows its industry to behave contrary to domestic standards in other territories.

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