

To: David Frost, Chief Negotiator, Task Force Europe

15th July 2020

Via e mail

Dear sir,

I write as Director of the New Under Ten Fishermen’s Association [NUTFA], the only representative body specifically for the ten metres and under fleet in the UK.

This sector makes up 79% of the overall fleet by number [4760 vessels out of a total of 6036] and provides over 50% of the catching related employment in the country.

Around 80% of these vessels use passive gears, nets, pots and lines, and the majority of these vessels target shellfish species, whelks, lobster, crab and langoustine.

Whilst the main market for whelk is the far east, the vast majority of other forms of shellfish are sold live to markets in continental Europe, primarily France and Spain.

You will have heard from the organisations that represent mainly larger scale interests of the ‘sea of opportunity’ that awaits us post Brexit and indeed the Secretary of State, George Eustice promised us many thousands of tons more fish as a result of Brexit. All very well and good for those reliant on finfish but potentially not such good news for the shellfish sector. It is also a fact that many shellfish boats simply do not have the finfish resources in their immediate area that they could change to pursuing in the event of a loss of markets for their current catches.

As an ex fisherman, I can testify to the impact that becoming part of the Common Fisheries Policy has done to UK fishing interests over the years and there is no one keener than me to see a rebalancing of fishing opportunities in UK waters for UK interests.

I am however sure that you are aware of the potential for immense disruption to European supply chains and markets unless a reasonable agreement is reached in the current negotiations.

The aforementioned export supply chain is predicated upon seamless and speedy transport of live shellfish across the Channel, without pause or delay. Any hold ups either side of the Channel creates a risk of high mortality rates for the shellfish and consequent financial losses to producers, many of whom would become bankrupt overnight in the absence of markets for their catches.

I recognize that you have a difficult path to tread to on the one hand regain much of what we lost after joining the EU and through being tied to relative stability markers but at the same time seeking to ensure that European markets are still available for our produce and that the current supply chain scenario of seamless transport remains intact.

It is worth noting that the profit margins of the UK’s larger scale whitefish fleet are among the highest in Europe whereas the smaller scale sector tends to operate at much tighter margins in this respect and are therefore far more vulnerable to the loss of markets.

I would therefore implore you to find a balance that provides benefits to all but does not undermine the thousands of fishing businesses reliant on European markets and risk substantial business failure, especially as so many of these vessels operate in areas where there are few if any alternative employment opportunities.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy S Percy

Director

New Under Ten Fishermen’s Association