
DEAL REACHED BETWEEN NORWAY AND EU

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Fisheries Secretary Fergus Ewing has expressed disappointment at the outcome of fishery negotiations between Norway and the European Union, which have concluded after a third round of talks in Brussels.

A significant 50% cut in the North Sea cod quota for 2020 was agreed, reflecting scientific advice on declining numbers.

Further key points from the negotiations include:

✓ further quota reductions in 2020 for saithe (-15%) and whiting (-13%), but increases in haddock (23%) and plaice (17%) and a rollover (0%) for herring – all within the scientific advice

• seasonal closures to protect North Sea cod while spawning in the first quarter of the year

✓ a new EU/Norway working group that will develop further management measures in early 2020 to reduce catches of cod to promote stock recovery

✓ the exchange of quota levels between Norway and the EU was rolled over unchanged from last year

Scotland will now lead on developing a package of measures with international partners to make the reductions in quotas easier to manage.

Mr Ewing said: This year's talks have taken place against some difficult scientific advice – particularly for North Sea cod. While I welcome an agreement, the outcome is disappointing.

A cut of this size will be very challenging for Scottish fishing businesses. We recognise the need to manage fish stocks sustainably, necessitating a substantial reduction, but it is regrettable that once again the main burden has fallen on Scotland. We have significant concerns about a methodology that recognises poor cod stocks in the Southern North Sea, but seems to disregard much healthier numbers in Northern waters. We will press for action to address this.

The Scottish Government will do everything we can to support the industry. Our attention now turns to next week's December council negotiations in Brussels – potentially our last as a member of the EU. It is clear that Brexit considerations are playing a role in this year's negotiations, with Scotland's interests being compromised by being part of the member state which is choosing to walk away, but I will continue to do all I can to champion the interests of our fishing industry.

Kaynak/Source: