



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels
MARE.C.5/MJ/ac

Subject: Closure of sandeel fishing in Scottish waters

Dear Mr Gougeon,

Thank you for your letter of 2 February 2024, following up to the outcome of the Scottish Government's recent consultation on proposals to close fishing for sandeel in all Scottish waters.

The EU is committed to effectively reduce the environmental and climate impacts of fisheries. Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries is a shared ambition which has been the basis of our close cooperation and good results. I would like to however underscore that such measures need to comply with the principles and obligations under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA).

As regards the full closure of the sandeel fishery, the Commission services and the Member States have, on multiple occasions, expressed serious concerns as regards the measure's compliance with the proportionality and non-discrimination principles and obligations under the TCA.

I personally regret that the United Kingdom has adopted such a restrictive measure that will fundamentally affect EU vessels and undercut Union's access to UK waters. This measure seems to disregard alternative measures which could meet the same objective but have less socio-economic impact on the concerned EU vessels and our processing industry.

In addition, the announced measures clearly fail to take into account the long-term social and economic sustainability and optimum utilisation of shared stocks.

Against this background, I trust that Scotland will reconsider the decision of a full closure of the sandeel fishery, with special regard to its compatibility with the obligations and

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principles of the TCA and as such account for the concerns raised herein. In this regard, the EU reserves its right to make use of available means under the TCA to reach a mutually agreeable solution on this matter.

Yours faithfully,

Charlina VITCHEVA