



Mr Mark Spencer  
Minister for Food, Farming and Fisheries  
Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

25 May 2023

Dear Mark Spencer,

With reference to the ongoing DEFRA consultation on spatial management measures for sandeel fishing in English waters of the North Sea, I am deeply concerned about the possible measures presented.

The fishing for sandeel in English waters is of great significance to the Danish fishers, and a possible ban will affect not only the Danish fisheries sector, but also the entire value chain with significant economic consequences to follow.

The UK and Denmark hold a longstanding tradition for a close and constructive cooperation through relationship built on common interests and the mutual understanding of fisheries. Denmark has always appreciated this. It is in our common interest that joint efforts on sustainable management of shared fish stocks based on the best available scientific advice between the UK and EU result in a positive outcome for our fleets, while protecting the marine environment and balancing a supply of forage fish.

According to the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) between the UK and EU, the Parties will base conservation and management decisions for fisheries on the best available scientific advice, principally provided by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES).

The Parties also agree to apply proportionate and non-discriminatory measures for the conservation of marine living resources and the management of fisheries resources.

Danish scientists state that the scientific advice for the yearly fishing opportunities for sandeel takes into account sandeel as a forage fish and ensures a sustainable fishery for sandeel.

Furthermore, it has been agreed between the UK and EU to submit a joint request to ICES:

*“to provide further information on how ecosystem considerations, particularly predator-prey interactions and the rebuilding of sensitive higher trophic level species such as certain seabirds, and other ecosystems-based fisheries management aspects are factored in and applied in the provision of single stock*

*advice for forage fish species*". It is important to await the reply from ICES on this request and analyse its consequences in depth.

In this context and in the spirit of the TCA, the current considerations regarding a possible ban for sandeel fisheries in English waters seem to be disproportionate and discriminatory for the Danish fleet. In this regard, I look at the UK approach on this issue with great concern.

My ministry will send a detailed reply to the public consultation based on a scientific analysis of the proposed advice on spatial management measures.

With this letter and the detailed reply that follows, I would urge you to reconsider the matter. Please do not hesitate to contact my services or me for clarifications or further discussions.

Yours sincerely,



Jacob Jensen