CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

INQUIRY ON THE NEGOTIATION OF THE FUTURE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UK GOVERNMENT

SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH SEAFOOD ASSOCIATION

This submission sets out the key objectives of the Scottish Seafood Association (SSA) for the Brexit trade negotiations. The over-arching aim of the organisation, which represents the interests of Scotland’s seafood processing sector, is to create a secure, stable and profitable industry.

The SSA already has 50% of processing businesses, small, medium and large, across the country in membership and continues to expand. As such, it is recognised as part of the wider supply chain from sea to plate, promoting a global sustainable seafood industry.

The six months between now and December 2020 will be a critical time for the processing sector, the UK Government having indicated that it will not extend the Brexit transition period. Our joint key priorities for the trade talks between the UK and the EU27 are a deal that paves the way for continued tariff-free trade and access to labour.

TRADE: In 2016, the UK exported around £1 billion worth of seafood to EU countries. The UK also imported a similar value of seafood from those nations, meaning a deal is in the interests of both sides.

According to the Scottish Government’s modelling of the impact of Brexit, scenarios range from an £85 million decrease in output in Scotland’s seafood sector and the loss of 429 jobs, 44% of those in the processing sector (with no re-allocation of quotas and a move to WTO trade rules) to a £540 million increase in output and the addition of 5,000 jobs (with re-allocation of quotas in line with zonal attachment and liberalisation of trade rules).

Clearly, in the negotiations the UK must secure control over access to its waters, allowing for uplifts in quotas over time while maintaining unfettered access to EU markets. This will allow for the regeneration of our coastal communities through increased capital investment and jobs.

LABOUR: Seafood processing in Scotland employs almost 5,000 people, twice that of the catching sector.

Against a backdrop of heavy reliance on migrant workers from other EEA countries, which make up 48% of the workforce across the sector as a whole, and 70% in the Grampian area, it will be vital that processing businesses continue to gain access to this labour pool.

The UK Government’s proposed points-based framework for immigration must evolve to take into account the sector’s employment needs.
Jimmy Buchan
Chief Executive
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