

EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement

Eighth meeting of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries

Thursday 23 May 2024 | 13:00 – 16:00 BST / 14:00 – 17:00 CEST

Brussels & Virtual (EU host)

Minutes of the meeting

Item 1: Opening of the Specialised Committee and adoption of the agenda

The EU, as host, welcomed both Delegations to the eighth meeting of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries (SCF). In the opening remarks, both parties noted the significant progress that the SCF has made to advance on critical issues that will help to better manage stocks and looked ahead to continuing that cooperation in 2025. The parties adopted the provisional agenda for the meeting.

Item 2: Fisheries management and conservation

a) Update on fisheries management and control measures

i. MPAs and HPMAs

The EU welcomed the regular engagement and the importance of the exchanges with the UK regarding the latest developments on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs). The EU referred to its concerns about the impact the recently adopted UK measures on the EU fleet. Both parties expressed a willingness to continue working together to achieve common environmental targets in this area and a common understanding of each other's processes. They also acknowledged that Member States asked for further clarifications on the measures and agreed to pursue technical discussions.

ii. Update on Joint Recommendations

The EU provided updates on the state of play of the EU joint recommendations regarding conservation measures, notably on the prohibition of bottom contacting gear within designated areas in the Dogger Bank, on technical measures derogating from the restrictions on fishing sprat to protect herring in the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) division 4b, and on the upcoming joint recommendations regarding directed fisheries for squid.

iii. Fisheries Management Plans

The UK presented in detail the work around Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs), in particular the three phases of development: (1) drafting and publication of plans, (2) implementation of actions and (3) the review of FMPs every 6 years. The EU thanked the UK for the detailed overview and for their transparency during the whole process, as well as for their availability to explain and engage with Member States and Advisory Councils on these Fisheries Management Plans. The EU shared similar conservation objectives, although expressed concerns on the cumulative impact of FMPs. Both parties acknowledged the importance of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) compatibility when adopting management measures, and the need to continue with regular exchanges to enhance mutual understanding and share expertise.

b) Pollack commercial and recreational

The parties welcomed the cooperation and steps taken regarding the two-fold objective of improving the stock assessment and the management considerations regarding recreational catches. They welcomed the successful April EU-UK expert's workshop with scientists from both Parties and with ICES, where experts exchanged on the state of play of ongoing research. The Parties also welcomed the joint report, drafted with the aim to provide support to ICES in the work on the future benchmark. On recreational fisheries, the UK noted that the management of recreational fisheries remained a priority. The Parties agreed to work under the SCF to further develop the evidence base to provide more clarity on the scale of recreational catches in the Pollack 6/7 fishery to inform future management decisions.

c) Celtic Sea and Irish sea technical measures

The Parties noted the constructive technical discussions on Celtic Sea technical measures, that had led to a joint report aimed at shaping the work. Since then, the Parties have continued discussions and impact evaluations. They agreed to set up a technical meeting to take stock. On Irish sea technical measures, the Parties agreed on the need to advance this work and to work towards a joint evidence base.

d) Skates and rays

Both Parties noted the objective of the agreed roadmap on skates and rays, to explore alternative approaches to the current group TACs. The Parties agreed to consider holding a workshop to look at the options and agreed to discuss further, in order to progress this important work.

e) Spurdog

The Parties welcomed the first milestone of the joint EU-UK expert workshop on spurdog that took place in April, and which provided updates on scientific advancements on discard survival, alternative technical measures, and data collection. This cooperation allowed the Parties to establish a common understanding of the science to explore potential alternative

management measures for 2025. The Parties welcomed a joint report of the workshop, that highlights opportunities for future collaborations and next steps.

f) Small-eyed ray

The UK updated on the progress made towards opening the sentinel fishery in the UK for small-eyed ray in 7e. The data collection scheme will soon allow participating vessels to start gathering data aimed at enhancing a future stock assessment. Both Parties noted they looked forward to future technical meetings to monitor and align data collection.

Item 3: Fishing opportunities, including scientific coordination

a) EU-UK annual consultations for 2024 – recap

As this was the first SCF meeting of 2024, the Parties noted the outcomes of the fisheries consultations between the United Kingdom and the European Union for 2024 (which also covers some stocks for 2025), which took place pursuant to Article 498 of the TCA. The arrangements are documented in the Written Record ([EU publication](#), [UK publication](#)) and Supplementary Written Record ([EU publication](#), [UK publication](#)) for 2024.

b) Guidelines for setting TACs for Special Stocks

The Parties noted the ongoing discussions on this topic and the need to continue discussions as a matter of priority.

c) Roundnose grenadier and black scabbardfish methodologies

The Parties took note of the final methodology agreed at technical level on the apportionment of roundnose grenadier and black scabbardfish for setting the TACs, with a view to help facilitate the TAC setting process between the Parties.

d) Inter-annual flexibilities

The Parties noted the commitment in the 2024 Written Record ([EU publication](#), [UK publication](#)) to exchange inter-annual flexibilities data on how much quota each Party has banked and borrowed between 2023 and 2024.

e) Updates on ICES requests

i. Skates and Rays

The Parties welcomed the agreed joint request sent to ICES to provide skates and rays advice based on implied landings, instead of dead catch, in order to apply the joint EU-UK methodology with a view to facilitate the TAC setting, once the advice is released in October.

ii. Irish Sea sole benchmark

The Parties welcomed the agreed joint request to ICES for a revised advice for Irish sea sole, following the benchmark of the stock. They took note of the commitment in last year's Written Record ([EU publication](#), [UK publication](#)) to review the TAC levels in line with the advice to be released at the end of May.

iii. Horse mackerel benchmark

The Parties acknowledged that the date of the horse mackerel benchmark remained uncertain, and agreed to work together to assess any management implications to recover the stock once the ICES benchmark becomes available.

iv. Seabass allocation tool

Both Parties referred to the lack of capacity within ICES to update the seabass catch allocation tool at the present time. The UK took note of the EU's proposal to pursue a technical meeting with experts and further discussions on other areas not related to data, such as on the catchability of some gears, and welcomed further discussions on this while the benchmark exercise was pending.

Item 4: Non-quota stocks

a) Multi-year strategy for Channel king scallops

The Parties noted their commitment to develop a pilot multi-year strategy for Channel king scallops. They acknowledged the joint paper that was developed in 2022 aimed at framing the process. The EU informed the UK that a webinar on this subject, organised by the North Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC), would take place on 19 June 2024, in an effort to include stakeholders and industry in this process. The UK welcomed the EU's suggestion that this webinar be followed up by a joint workshop with the UK in the Autumn. The UK recalled the EU of the publication in December 2023 of the Fisheries Management Plan for king scallops in English and Welsh waters.

b) Seabass shore-netting

The Parties took note that the seabass fisheries management plan had, among the short-term measures, the objective to review shallow shore-based netting. The EU noted the UK's intention to start this review in the near future.

Item 5: Control and enforcement

a) Cooperation on control: Arrangements on monitoring, enforcement, and surveillance

The Parties welcomed the constructive work on the draft framework on control cooperation. Both Parties shared the intention to seek a formalisation of the document by the next SCF, with a view to have clear procedures to be followed in different scenarios and to share information on control and enforcement.

b) Data and information exchanges in UN/FLUX

The Parties recalled the commitment to seek suitable arrangements for the exchange of data based on the UN/FLUX format, in particular for the exchange of VMS data, fishing activity, vessels and authorisations data. Both Parties looked forward to continuing the cooperation on this point.

Item 6: Any Other Business (AOB)

i) Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM)

The Parties agreed that the announced legislative developments, in both the EU and the UK, called for close cooperation between both sides to ensure that REM standards and technical requirements are compatible and interoperable, and to avoid duplications, creating the possibility to facilitate systems that are compliant in the waters of both Parties.

ii) iVMS

The UK took the opportunity to update the EU on the draft legislation regarding inshore vessel monitoring, including obligations for vessels to report their location every 3 minutes in English waters. The EU recalled the importance of applying the same general principles in terms of data sharing, notably applying the flag state principle and having compatible solutions on both sides. Both Parties agreed to continue exchanging information at technical level.

iii) Access to waters post-2026

Similar to what was discussed at the third meeting of the Partnership Council held on 16 May 2024, the EU recalled the importance of stable and predictable arrangements on access to waters following the end of the adjustment period on 30 June 2026. The EU insisted on beginning discussions with the UK as soon as possible. The UK took the note and explained that the issue would be part of the considerations of the new Government.

Item 7: Closure

The EU, as host, closed the eighth meeting of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries.

[Approved by the Joint Secretariat of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries]

Annex 1: List of participants in the sixth meeting of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries

EU delegation

- EU Co-Chair of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries
- European Commission Officials
- Delegation of the European Union to the UK Official
- Representatives of EU Member States

UK delegation

- UK Co-Chair of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries
- UK Government Officials from DEFRA and FCDO
- Scottish Government Officials
- Northern Ireland Executive Officials
- Welsh Government Officials
- Isle of Man Government Officials
- Government of Jersey Officials
- States of Guernsey Officials
- Marine Management Organisation Officials
- UK Mission to the European Union Officials

Annex 2: Non quota stocks landings

Cumulative UK and EU landings of non-quota species from each other's waters. 2023 figures based on November data exchange between the Parties. Each year these figures will be updated quarterly with provisional figures available from the most recent data exchange between the Parties.

UK NQS landings (tonnes)

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Provisional 2024 totals	2,396	4,583	No data	No data
Final 2023 totals	1,764	3,505	6,291	9,604
Final 2022 totals	2,022	4,303	8,599	12,958

EU NQS landings (tonnes)

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Provisional 2024 totals	6,515	10,911	No data	No data
Final 2023 totals	5,515	11,847	15,970	21,678
Final 2022 totals	4,753	9,262	14,445	23,045

Annex 3: Method for apportioning ICES advice for black scabbardfish & roundnose grenadier

The parties take note of the following method for apportioning ICES advice to TAC management areas for black scabbardfish (BSF) and roundnose grenadier (RNG).

Historic landings as reported to ICES for the period 2017-2021 have been used as the basis for apportionment. This represents the most recent period for which ICES has published the landings by ICES division.

Black scabbardfish

For BSF, the parties engaged within the Specialised Committee on Fisheries (SCF) to consider approaches to the split of the advice into BSF/56712- and BSF/8910 TACs.

ICES assesses BSF as a single biological stock. The northern and southern components represent different life stages of the stock (younger fish in the north, older fish in the south). There are large scale migrations between the northern and southern areas.

Historically ICES had subdivided the headline stock advice into catch advice for three distinct management units: the northern component, the southern component and an 'other' component. Since 2022, ICES has provided only a headline catch advice figure for the entire biological stock and has not proposed splits for these sub-components as it did not 'consider these catch proportions necessarily represent sustainable harvest rates for the different components of the stock' (ICES, 2022).

Average proportion splits for the northern and southern component have been calculated using the sum of landings over the reference period (2017-2021) and these proportions used in allocation. This follows the approach used for the TAC-realignment of witch, lemon sole, turbot and brill ([EU link](#), [UK link](#)).

Some landings are not covered by the two TAC units (e.g. ICES subdivisions 4 and 14). Over the 2017-2021 reference period 12.28% of landings are from outside either BSF/56712- or BSF/8910. This percentage is therefore removed from the ICES advice figure to leave 87.72% of the advice to be split between BSF/56712- and BSF/8910.

Over the reference period (2017-2021) the proportion of landings between the two TAC units is 37.05% in BSF/56712 and 62.95% in BSF/8910.

Allocation in or out of TAC Areas

- Deduction for landings outside TAC areas is 12.28%
- Remainder to allocate is 87.72%

Allocation key to TAC area

- BSF/56712 is 37.05%
- BSF/8910 is 62.95%

Roundnose grenadier

For RNG the parties reviewed the current management via the SCF and a request to ICES was submitted, to advise on the most appropriate management approach to ensure these vulnerable stocks are not overexploited.

ICES reviewed method proposals from the EU and UK and concluded that there was "...little difference in the fundamentals of the two methods" and that "provided the existing deep-sea fisheries regulations restricting the depth of operation of deep-sea fishing remain in place, neither of the two proposed apportionment approaches seems likely to bring the stock to the point of conservation concern".

The parties acknowledge that ICES found neither of the methods to be more sustainable than the other, and thus they welcome the following approach for apportionment:

Three ICES biological stocks map to the two TAC management areas RNG/5B67- and RNG/8X14. Some landings also fall outside these TAC management areas. In some cases, the percentage of total landings coming from outside the TAC management areas

is highly variable, and a fixed average tonnage deducted from the total advice is therefore considered appropriate. This deduction is calculated from the average annual catch landings reported by ICES in areas outside the TAC management areas in the reference period 2017 - 2021. As the deduction (of third-party catches/outside of management areas) is fixed, if the ICES advice is less than or equal to the deduction then the catch advice is zero tonnage.

After deducting the fixed tonnage to account for catches made outside the TAC management areas the remainder is allocated to the individual TAC management areas using the proportion of historical landings in each TAC management area. Only the Faroes-Hatton biological stock maps to two different TAC units.

The method for determining the percentage split used above for the BSF proposal is not considered appropriate for RNG. The proportion of landings of the Faroes-Hatton biological stock from ICES Division 12 have decreased dramatically between 2017 and 2021 from 60.62% of total landings to 0.00%, largely driven by new fishing regulations. Using average total landings over the reference period (2017-2021) would allocate a substantial tonnage to an area where fishing no longer takes place. Therefore, constructing the average split based on the annual proportion of landings in each of the two TAC areas is a better approach and will give a smoother transition of catch apportionment in possible future revisions.

To calculate the split, a moving average approach was used, and this new split is set out in the table below. This figure is designed to be fixed for five years, though can be reviewed earlier through the SCF.

The following table gives the tonnage deductions and subsequent splits of advice to TAC unit.

ICES Stock	Deduction for off-quota landings (tonnes)	RNG/5B67- split to TAC unit (%)	RNG/8X14 split to TAC unit (%)
Faroes-Hatton stock (rng.27.5b6712b)	18	52.52	47.48
Mid-Atlantic stock (rng.27.5a10b12ac14b)	1	0	100
Others (rng.27.1245a8914ab)	98	0	100

Annex 4: Publication of expert workshop reports on pollack and spurdog

The parties have conducted expert workshops on pollack and spurdog under the SCF and produced the relevant reports.

These reports have been published on GOV.UK and the European Union website:

- [Spurdog report \(GOV.UK\)](#)
- [Spurdog report \(EU site\)](#)
- [Pollack report \(GOV.UK\)](#)
- [Pollack report \(EU site\)](#)