



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

From George Eustice MP
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Richard Burden MP
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Dear Richard

Thank you for your letter of 20 December on behalf of a number of your constituents about bass.

During negotiations to agree the EU bass measures for 2017, the UK sought a balanced package to reduce catches and minimise discards, while providing for some continued recreational angling, including an appropriate bag limit. The UK position recognised the importance of angling to local economies and pressed for the need for a better deal in respect of the recreational catch able to be taken by fishers. We were disappointed we could not move beyond the current scheme and agree a fairer package for anglers.

The bass measures agreed at the December Council included:

- The limit tightened for bass catches by fixed gill nets from 1.3 tonnes to 250kg per vessel per month for unavoidable by-catch of bass, representing an 80% cut from last year's provision, and for all forms of netting at UK level an estimated 88% cut from the former 2011-2013 baseline annual average;
- No provision for other forms of netting than fixed gill net;
- Setting the limit for hook and line fisheries at 10 tonnes per annum (spread across ten months of the year), reducing the catch potential by 23%;
- Setting the by-catch provision for trawlers and seines at 3% per day. This is an increase from 1% per trip that applied in the first 6 months of last year to minimise bass discards, but with a new cap introduced at 400kg per month. At UK level the provision is estimated to result in a 57% decrease from the former 2011-13 baseline average;
- The provision for recreational angling remains unchanged, with only catch and release allowed in the first six months, followed by a daily limit of one fish per fisher.

We are making progress in reducing bass catches at EU level and in terms of stock recovery. We will continue to seek the right balance between the legitimate interests of the recreational and commercial sectors while achieving sustainable fisheries for bass.

George Eustice

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