

EU AND INTERNATIONAL FISH QUOTA NEGOTIATIONS



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Introduction

Most fish caught by Scottish fishermen are managed by the European Commission under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). An important part of the management process is the use of Total Allowable Catches (TACs), which sets the amount of fish that may be caught each year.

Scientific advice on the current size of fish stocks, estimated future stock levels and recommended TACs for individual fish species is published each year by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES). Member states are required to fish within environmental limits, therefore this stock assessment provides fishery managers in the Scottish Government, other member states and the European Commission with the necessary information on which to base decisions on how much fishing should take place and where.



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There are two sets of negotiations involved in setting TACs:

INTERNAL NEGOTIATIONS

These negotiations relate to internal stocks – those confined to EU waters and fished solely by EU Member States. Examples include Norway lobster (*Nephrops* – prawns), hake, monkfish, megrim, skates and rays and a number of west coast stocks including cod and herring. TAC decisions on the bulk of these stocks are taken each year at the December Council.

There are other stocks, such as those in the deep sea, for which negotiations occur every two years at November Council.

The responsibility for setting the Clyde herring TAC, conducting scientific surveys, and enforcing the strict license conditions, however, sits wholly with Marine Scotland, as the Clyde is found exclusively within Scottish waters. The TAC for this stock must still be set within certain parameters and notified to the Commission.

EXTERNAL NEGOTIATIONS

In advance of December, several rounds of negotiations with non-EU countries must also take place - external negotiations. These relate to fish stocks that are managed jointly because they cross international boundaries and aren't fished exclusively by EU member states.

These negotiations set the TACs and quota for these stocks, which are then confirmed at December Council. In many cases, these negotiations also establish exchanges of quota and arrangements allowing mutual access to fish in each other's territorial waters.

Negotiations include:

- **EU/Norway:** Two-way talks, known as bilaterals, that set TACs for a range of North Sea stocks, the management of which is shared between the EU and Norway. This includes cod, haddock, whiting, saithe, plaice and herring. The talks also establish exchanges of quota (the 'balance') and mutual access arrangements.
- **Coastal States:** a number of meetings involving the EU member states, Norway, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Russia. These talks deal with mackerel, blue whiting, Atlanto-Scandian herring and red fish.
- **EU/Faroes:** Further bilaterals that establish exchanges of quota and mutual access arrangements. This agreement provides important whitefish opportunities to the Scottish whitefish fleet in Faroese waters.



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Preparing for Autumn Negotiations

Many months of preparation go in to the Autumn negotiations:

- **June - November.** New scientific advice on the size and recommended TAC level for each fish stock is published by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas.
- **July - December.** The Scottish Government works with colleagues in the UK Government to prepare for the negotiations, drawing on scientific advice, Ministerial priorities and talking to Scottish interests and other EU member states.
- **October - December.** External negotiations take place, the outcomes of which are carried forward for discussion and approval at December Council.
- **November - December.** The Commission publishes its first proposal for TACs for 'internal stocks' in the coming year. This marks the beginning of the internal negotiations ahead of December Council.
- **December.** At December Council, EU Fisheries Ministers conclude internal negotiations. The outcomes are brought together with those from the external negotiations to finalise the TAC and Quota Regulation for the coming year.

Further Information

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