

Leaving the EU next March would provide a big boost to our fishing industry

Over our years in the EU some of the worst damage the EU has done is that to our fishing grounds and fishing industry. Environmentalists are rightly upset by the industrial trawler techniques ripping out so much fish, only to see a lot of it thrown back into the sea dead under the infamous discards policy. Our fishermen and women have seen more and more quota allocated to foreign vessels. There has been a big decline in our fishing fleets, and a big decline in the proportion of the catch landed in the UK.

As soon as we leave the EU the UK becomes an independent coastal state with full control over our own waters. We will decide how much fish it is safe to take out of our seas, and how much of that should be fished by UK vessels. The opportunities are great. People in the fishing industry think we could catch and land twice as much as we do today by taking back control of our own fish stocks, whilst removing fewer fish from the sea overall with no discards. They also think there is considerable spare capacity in the present UK fleet, given the controls on fishing.

Work is well advanced with systems to regulate the amount of fish taken without having to throw dead fish back into the sea with all the extra damage that creates. That means we can land more in UK vessels whilst still taking fewer fish overall. If we landed in the UK twice the amount currently landed, that would add £900 m of raw fish value. This becomes £3.5bn of total value for the UK once the fish have been processed and sold on to final customers. We would develop more fish processing industries, often in coastal communities that need more jobs and more value added processing.

These policies would boost employment, cut our balance of payments deficit on food, provide more wholesome local food, and reduce environmental damage. The seas would be plundered less, and there would be fewer food miles travelled from trawler to plate. It's another compelling argument against delay in exiting the EU.