

Save our fish and fishing industry

It was thoughtless of the Dutch to arrive in our waters with their huge factory ship the Margiris so close to the PM's leaving date from the EU, as if to Hoover up as much of our fish as possible before we leave.

This vessel can catch and process 250 tonnes a day. It was barred from Australia owing to its size and possible impact on their fishing ground. The ship and its nets are designed, we are told, to target pelagic species. The ship is guided by radar to the shoals, and we are assured the nets do not scrape the bottom damaging the sea bed. We are also told this vessel was fishing entirely legally under the rules of the EU's Common Fishery Policy.

Other large factory ships with nets that do drag the bottom can do grave damage to the sea bed and the marine environment. These vessels can catch a lot of fish very quickly and may sometimes catch species of fish in low supply which we want to be left to allow recovery of stocks.

The practice of dragging heavy and strong nets across the sea, especially if close to the sea bed, can drag up many species you do not want to catch at the same time as the ones you wish to attract. If the net size is too small it can catch and kill young fish. The net can damage the sea bed and general environment if lowered too far.

Once we have left the EU we will be able to set our own standards for net size, size of vessel, and impact of fishing style on the marine environment. It is another great argument for just leaving on 31 October and for not making our fish any part of continuing negotiations over our future trade relationship. Mrs May's unpopular Withdrawal Agreement left our fish at risk.