

Executive summary

Fishers have wholeheartedly supported leaving the EU, believing that it and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) have been the cause of the difficulties that their industry has experienced in the last four decades, difficulties that many continue to suffer. However, the real causes were changes in the international rules governing access to fisheries, overfishing which required drastic remedial measures and the UK's own policies. The CFP, after a painfully long time-lag, has in the last decade begun to be an effective engine for sustainable fishing but British domestic policies governing quota distribution have not changed and need reform. Over the period, the fishing industry has ceased to be primarily a source of food for the domestic supply chain and become geared to exports while much domestic consumption depends on imports.

At the end of the anticipated Brexit transitional period, when Britain starts acting as an independent coastal state, the fishing industry expects a large quota bonus. In reality, the overriding priority of maintaining sustainable fisheries and the complementary export-import activities of different parts of the seafood industry, including different fishing sectors, mean that getting the right fishery and trade agreements with the EU is at least equally important, justifying trade-offs. In any case, more quota alone will not solve current problems in the fishing industry and will make the need for domestic reform of quota policies even more obvious.