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My Lords,

**Fisheries Bill: Committee (Day 1)**

I am grateful to noble Lords for their well considered and helpful contributions to the debates on the first day of Committee for the Fisheries Bill on 2 March. I said that I would write on a matter raised by Lord Caithness, but I thought it would also be helpful to expand on two other matters raised during the debates.

Fishmeal

Lord Caithness asked about the level of production of fish meal. The Sea Fish Industry Authority helpfully produce a range of general information on fishmeal and oil which is useful in setting the context of its production and use.

In summary, worldwide 5.6 million tonnes of fish (i.e. 9% of caught and farmed fish) was used to produce fishmeal and fish oil in 2017. This is a declining trend and well below the peak level of more than 30 million tonnes in 1994.

In the UK, 34,000 metric tonnes of fishmeal was produced in 2017, which amounted to about 5% of EU production. Some of the species used in production are sandeel, boar fish and Norway pout, which are not used for human consumption, as well as mackerel and herring trimmings.

Further detail can be found at:

- <https://www.seafish.org/article/fishmeal-and-fishoil>; and
- [https://www.seafish.org/media/Publications/Seafish\\_FishmealandFishOil\\_FactsandFigures2018.pdf](https://www.seafish.org/media/Publications/Seafish_FishmealandFishOil_FactsandFigures2018.pdf).

Stock definition areas

I thought it would be helpful to expand on the point Lord Cameron of Dillington raised about quota being available in certain stock definition areas.

“Stock definition areas” (e.g. Areas VIIA, VIIB, VIIC, VIID and VI as mentioned during the debate) are used to set boundaries for the overall management of stocks. A “stock” in this context is the population of a given species within each stock definition area. In broad terms, these are populations of fish that do not mix with populations of the same species in other areas and which respond independently to fishing pressure. The boundaries of these areas

are based on scientific advice on the natural range of each stock and/or other political decisions. The EU's stock management units (i.e. the areas over which the EU sets Total Allowable Catch or TAC) do not always align with the stock units that are assessed by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), which can be problematic. Nonetheless, changing these boundaries would not directly affect the allocation of fishing opportunities within the UK (e.g. to Cornish fishermen).

Quota is apportioned each year by the UK Government between the Fisheries Administrations. It is then allocated by each Fisheries Administration to their respective industries. This process is primarily based on Fixed Quota Allocation (FQA) units which represent fishing track records from a defined reference period. There are a number of FQA units for most quota stocks. The holders of these units are given a share of the quota in that stock each year.

As set out in the 2018 Fisheries White Paper, the Department does not intend to change the allocation method for our current quota in England. We will continue to use FQA units as the main basis for allocation. However, we are exploring other means of allocating additional quota negotiated for when we become an independent coastal State. The Department held a call for evidence about this in 2019 and will be engaging further with industry and other stakeholders this year. One of the matters the Department will consider is whether and how it could take a more regionalised approach to quota management.

Changing the boundaries of the stock areas would not in itself create a more or less regionalised approach to allocation, and changing stock areas in ways that do not align with the natural range of the stock can present sustainability concerns and create significant monitoring and management problems.

### Natural England

Lord Teverson raised the issue of how Natural England is consulted on fishing matters. Advice from Natural England plays a key part in the formulation of Defra policy and there are internal avenues by which they contribute. For example, it is part of the Marine Outcomes System which brings together organisations from Defra Group who have marine and fisheries responsibilities, including the core Department, the Marine Management Organisation, Cefas, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Environment Agency.

Natural England is also directly engaged by the Department to provide advice on marine and fisheries policy development to deliver Marine Protected Area (MPA) objectives, and to support achievement of Good Environmental Status in the wider seas. This also includes developing tools and approaches to assist policy developers and decision makers in assessing the impact of fishing and achieving sustainable fisheries, as well as providing MPA site condition data to support assessment of policy effectiveness. For example, Natural England has also been coordinating a cross-Defra group to provide advice on how an Ecosystem Approach to fishing could be implemented after we leave the EU.

I hope noble Lords find this additional information helpful. I am copying this letter to all noble Lords who took part in the debates and I shall be placing copies of this letter into the Libraries of both Houses.

*Yours ever,  
John*