



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES

The Director-General

Brussels,
MARE/B3/PS

Dear Ms Bermudez,

Thank you for the MAC advice of 24 July 2024 on the EU-Norway trade of fishery and aquaculture products. You raise a number of recommendations related to additional market access concessions in the framework of the EEA Agreement.

I should first emphasise that **the management of shared fish stocks** in the Northeast Atlantic was an important consideration in the negotiations with Norway, and later on approval by the Council, of the protocol on additional market access for Norwegian fisheries products under the EEA Agreement. Where needed, stock-specific sensitivities were raised and notable adjustments were made compared to the previous protocol (e.g. mackerel). In doing so, the Commission repeatedly sought guarantees from Norway that it would return to constructive cooperation with the EU on fisheries matters. This has been the focus of the Commission's engagement with Norway across the full range of fisheries issues in the past few years, including in the discussions around the renewal of the ATQs Regulation.

Also, let me recall that the basic market access conditions for fisheries and aquaculture products are laid down in the EEA Agreement with Norway and Iceland. The fisheries products have always been considered as sensitive in the context of this Agreement and their market access has not been fully liberalised. Contrary to industrial goods, only partially reduced customs duties are applied on fisheries products and many of them still must pay duties. Exceptionally, tariff rate quotas are laid down for specific products and, periodically, additional market access preferences are negotiated in relation with the EEA Financial Mechanism and Norway Financial Mechanism.

These additional concessions are limited in time and were carefully negotiated with the EEA Contracting Parties. I would like to point out that the **additional bilateral concessions** were agreed in complex negotiations on the access to the EU market for EEA countries' fisheries products on the one hand and on the financial contribution from Norway (and Iceland) to the EU on the other hand. Even though Norway started the negotiations with maximalist demands, the additional market access concessions

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maintain the form of temporary tariff rate quotas. The outcome in these negotiations had to be carefully calibrated to address EU sensitivities in fisheries management of shared stocks and their sustainability.

The above protocol under the EEA is already in place and it is no longer possible to renegotiate the agreed concessions or to modulate them with other available policy instruments (such as ATQs for example which apply *erga omnes* and serve a different purpose). In parallel, the Commission is putting a lot of effort in resetting the relations with Norway on fisheries management, namely through the EU-Norway High Level Dialogue on fisheries and ocean governance. This new framework to discuss EU-Norway relations was agreed between President Von der Leyen and the Norwegian Prime Minister, with the aim of resolving problematic fisheries issues with Norway by placing them in a broader perspective of EU-Norway relationship.

Looking specifically at the agreed quota for **smoked salmon**, the EU imports more of that product from other FTA partners than from Norway (primarily from the UK) and is a very large net exporter of smoked salmon to the world.

Regarding '**production grade**' salmon, the Commission takes the matter seriously since the export measures adopted by Norway may indeed have a distorting effect on competition and the EU access to raw materials. DG TRADE officially contacted Norway on the export restrictions of certain types of salmons that affect EU producers, and further technical exchanges are envisaged to discuss this and other issues affecting our trade relations.

You also raise the issue of **competitiveness** issues faced by your industry. The relevant Commission services are closely monitoring the markets and any information provided by the industry can be a useful input to address the competitiveness of the EU salmon processing industry from a broad perspective. To this end, we could assess the opportunity to engage EUMOFA on performing a study or providing market data and analyses that would feed a study on the subject. I invite you to provide us with further details on the scope and objectives of such a study.

I am looking forward to our continued fruitful cooperation. Should you have any further questions on this reply, please contact Ms Julia Rubeck, our Advisory Councils coordinator, via the functional mailbox MARE-AC@ec.europa.eu.

Yours sincerely,

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