# Sir Keir Starmer condemned by fishermen for conceding 12-year EU access to UK waters



Sir Keir Starmer is facing fierce backlash from the fishing industry following his ill-advised reaffirmation of the UK-EU trade deal, which grants extended access to British waters for European vessels. Elspeth Macdonald, chief executive of the Scottish Fishermen’s Federation (SFF), lambasted his assertions regarding the deal's benefits, labeling them as “insulting” and “patronising,” and charging that the so-called advantages fall woefully short of meeting the industry's needs.

The deal permits EU fishing vessels to fish in UK waters for a staggering 12 years, alarming UK fishermen who view this as a direct threat to their livelihoods. While the government has rolled out a £360 million fishing and coastal growth fund to mitigate the effects of this agreement, it is a mere drop in the ocean compared to the estimated £6 billion worth of fish that will be extracted from UK waters by EU fishermen over the same period. This glaring disparity reveals a troubling reality: British fishermen are being sacrificed for the benefit of EU interests.

Macdonald took aim at the government’s narrative of ‘stability’ through continued access, insisting that what the industry truly needs is leverage and genuine negotiation power concerning EU access. “The instability of the EU’s access from 2026 was our trump card, and you have not only thrown it away but ripped it up into tiny pieces,” she wrote. This frustration resonates widely among fishermen who fear for both their jobs and the long-term viability of the UK fishing sector.

The deal has sparked allegations of a “craven capitulation” to EU demands. Critics like seasoned fisherman James Stephen warn that handing such concessions to the EU ultimately sacrifices the future of the UK fishing industry. The National Federation of Fishermen’s Organisations has voiced similar concerns, suggesting that any agreement that fails to put British fishermen first could lead to a public outcry.

Environment Secretary Steve Reed described the deal as a “reasonably good” outcome for the fishing sector, yet many industry stakeholders adamantly argue that government assurances are out of touch with the harsh realities faced by those in their boats. Reports indicate that Starmer is scrambling to juggle competing pressures as he attempts to revitalize relations with the EU while maintaining support from essential domestic industries.

As negotiations progress, the EU’s potential demands to adhere to its laws in return for gradual economic ties raise alarm bells. This shift threatens to erode the regulatory independence many in the UK fought so hard to reclaim post-Brexit, further complicating the already contentious debate around fishing rights.

Clearly, Starmer’s government is treading a precarious path as it tries to stimulate economic growth through trade deals while simultaneously safeguarding the interests of traditional sectors like fishing. With fishermen voicing their discontent and demanding realistic assurances, the road ahead appears riddled with obstacles, and the stakes could not be higher. Starmer's failure to stand firm on this issue could risk betraying an entire industry for the sake of elusive broader negotiations.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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2. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/keir-starmer-eu-fishing-brexit-b2662710.html> - The Independent reports that Prime Minister Keir Starmer has secured a fishing deal with the European Union, estimated to be worth £360 million. The agreement grants EU vessels 12 years of access to UK waters, a move that has been met with criticism from the Scottish Fishermen’s Federation, which argues that the deal is detrimental to the UK fishing industry. The Federation contends that the £360 million fund offered by the government is insufficient compared to the £6 billion worth of fish that the EU will extract from UK waters over the same period. ([independent.co.uk](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/keir-starmer-eu-fishing-brexit-b2662710.html?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://inews.co.uk/news/uk-fishermen-brexit-warning-keir-starmer-election-3117713> - iNews reports that UK fishermen have expressed concerns over potential concessions to the European Union regarding fishing rights. Fishermen fear that granting EU vessels greater access to British waters could severely impact the UK fishing industry. James Stephen, a fisherman with 44 years of experience, stated that such concessions would be akin to selling the UK fishing industry. The National Federation of Fishermen’s Organisations has also warned that any deal that does not benefit British fishing would lead to public outrage. ([inews.co.uk](https://inews.co.uk/news/uk-fishermen-brexit-warning-keir-starmer-election-3117713?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.gbnews.com/politics/british-fisherman-furious-starmer-plans-eu-capitulation> - GB News reports that British fishing leaders have expressed anger over reports that Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government is planning to grant European boats greater access to UK waters. The proposed deal, which aims to boost the UK's defence industry, includes concessions on fishing quotas, leading to criticism from the Scottish Fishermen’s Federation, which describes the move as a 'craven capitulation' to EU demands. The Federation argues that such concessions would be deeply unpopular across the country. ([gbnews.com](https://www.gbnews.com/politics/british-fisherman-furious-starmer-plans-eu-capitulation?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.agcc.co.uk/news-article/starmer-to-net-eu-arms-deal-at-expense-of-british-fishermen> - The Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce reports that Prime Minister Keir Starmer is on the verge of agreeing a major trade deal with the European Union to boost arms sales, which includes concessions on fishing quotas in British waters. The deal is expected to freeze, rather than further reduce, quotas for European fishermen, softening the UK's previous stance on key stocks such as haddock, herring, and cod. This shift has sparked criticism from British fishing communities, who view it as a blow to their industry. ([agcc.co.uk](https://www.agcc.co.uk/news-article/starmer-to-net-eu-arms-deal-at-expense-of-british-fishermen?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/07/20/eu-wants-access-to-uk-fishing-waters-as-starmer-seeks-reset/> - The Telegraph reports that the European Union is preparing to demand access to British fishing waters in exchange for a closer relationship with the UK. Prime Minister Keir Starmer is pursuing a reset in European relations and hosted a summit for European Political Community leaders at Blenheim Palace. The EU is expected to list 'offensive interests' in future talks, with access to UK fishing waters being a key trade-off in response to Starmer's requests. ([telegraph.co.uk](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/07/20/eu-wants-access-to-uk-fishing-waters-as-starmer-seeks-reset/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.lbc.co.uk/news/starmer-eu-fishing-waters-ecj-uk-brexit-reset/> - LBC reports that Brussels will demand access to British fishing waters and enforce EU laws as conditions for a new trade deal with Prime Minister Keir Starmer. A blueprint of EU negotiators' red lines indicates that the UK would have to follow EU law, marking the first time since Brexit that the UK would be required to adhere to EU regulations. The National Federation of Fishermen’s Organisations has described these terms as a 'neo-colonial relationship with the EU'. ([lbc.co.uk](https://www.lbc.co.uk/news/starmer-eu-fishing-waters-ecj-uk-brexit-reset/?utm_source=openai))