

Why are we forsaken?

A Heartfelt Letter by Fishermen Who Feel Forsaken

My name is Steve Barratt and I live in Ramsgate Kent. I work in an industry that is not wanted by either the EU or the UK Government and everything that could have possibly been done to stop me from going to work has been done.

I expect alarm bells are ringing as to what I actually do for a living, could I be a drug runner, a people trafficker, an internet hacker, a hit man or something similar?

Well, you will be pleased to know that I am none of the above – I am in fact a commercial fisherman operating an inshore, under 10m boat out of Ramsgate Harbour.

I work in a mixed fishery and catch quite a variety of fish such as cod, bass, plaice, skate, dogfish, dover sole and many more. It is impossible to avoid these fish when in a situation whereby I have no quota for a particular species.

When I catch fish with no quota the EU ruling is that I must return it to the sea. In most cases these fish are dead or have little chance of survival. The EU are aware of this and despite receiving many protests and plea's to change the quota system are not prepared to do so.

They are hell bent on making everyone abide by the CFP (Common Fisheries Policy). This is an inept quota system where fish can only be landed if quota is available. If quotas not available, they have to be dumped dead into the sea.

To make matters worse, the UK Government is hell bent on enforcing these rules and regulations. They have employed numerous people and organisations to police any fish landings that are made in the UK.

The EU has decreed skates and rays are 'endangered' and have

given virtually no quota for this species. Fishermen are seeing an explosion in skates and rays, they are everywhere, yet because quotas don't reflect this we have to dump skate dead into the sea.

We then have to keep catching and dumping skate as we try to catch other fish to make a living. This makes it impossible for a boat to be profitable and does nothing for conservation.

Our Government needs to be held to account over this gross miscarriage of justice and the rules and regulations need to change to provide the industry with a better way of operating. Unfortunately, this cannot be done until we successfully leave the EU.

Only then will we be able to take back control of our territorial waters, abolish the Common Fisheries Policy and implement a better and more sustainable method of management of the industry – the government can't keep the status quo for the sake of the fishermen or the fish.

Under no circumstances can this industry be involved in any so-called transition period where we're stuck in the CFP. Out must be out on 29th March next year before what is left of the British fishing industry is consigned to museum and memory.