

2025.10.21

4.17 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity of the Minister for the Environment regarding the potential allocation of a quota for fishing of Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (OQ.240/2025):

Further to the potential allocation of a quota for fishing of Atlantic Bluefin Tuna, will the Minister advise what further actions, if any, will be required in order to maximise the value of any such quota, and how this work will be funded?

Deputy S.G. Luce of Grouville and St. Martin (The Minister for the Environment):

Should a commercial quota for Atlantic Bluefin Tuna be allocated to Jersey or to Jersey-registered vessels, this opportunity will be managed with the utmost responsibility and care. A strict licensing regime will be implemented fully aligned with I.C.C.A.T. (International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna) Regulations and there will be vessel-specific authorisations required. A rigorous application process will ensure that only those vessels which are properly equipped and professionally prepared will be permitted to participate in this fishery. This approach is designed to uphold the highest standards of sustainability, traceability and industry best practice, ensuring that any quota allocated to Jersey is not only respected but also maximised in value for our economy. I would expect as regards funding that that licence application process would be “business as usual” and in-house. I accept that there will be costs for fishing boats to convert to fish for this very specialised catch and that the funding for that could be discussed at the time, potentially using the Marine Support Scheme.

4.17.1 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I thank the Minister for his answers. Just to confirm, if the Minister could reiterate whether, to maximise the value of any such quota, it is about the vessel itself that needs to be equipped and there is nothing else that needs to be done. Are there other issues like facilities on land or marketing that needs to be supported to ensure that the value is maximised or will the Minister just be focusing on vessel specifications?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

To support what I said before, my officers are looking to introduce management measures that prioritise the retention of tuna landings within the local market. By staggering landings throughout the season, we can avoid market saturation and protect the value of this premium product. Our fishing industry and local merchants will need to adapt to the specific requirements of the species, including its seasonality and its handling needs. Looking ahead, should this fishery become established, we will also explore the development of an individual fish-tagging scheme which could enhance traceability and transparency, allowing each fish to be tracked from the sea to the plate. When paired with information such as the vessel of origin and location of capture, this system has the potential to significantly increase market value. I take the Deputy’s sentiments on board. There may be - and I say “may” I am not sure of this - some requirements on the quay side. It is my understanding at the moment that we do have the facilities to process these fish as they would need to be required.

4.17.2 Connétable K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour:

Very briefly, this could be a huge bonus to our long-suffering fishing industry. My question is: are the blue tuna in sufficient numbers for them to be taken, will it be time-barred and are our French counterparts taking tuna already?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

I can assure the Constable that there are sufficient numbers. The whole reason for having I.C.C.A.T. is that all the blue fin tuna, especially in the North Atlantic, are monitored and the amount of the species swimming around Channel Islands water has, I am sure seen by some people on social media, been a huge explosion in numbers, not only here but off the south-west coast of England. I am assured the numbers are there, they are very sustainable. We will take a very small amount. Let us be assured, if we do get some quota, it is not going to be a large amount of quota, and we will work very hard to make sure that that small number of fish are maximised financially by staggering the landings and making sure we do not saturate the market.

4.17.3 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I just would like to maybe ask the Minister to reiterate around the funding needed to support the fishing industry to adapt to vessels and also the fish-tagging scheme that the Minister spoke about, that this would be able to be funded under “business as usual”, there would be additional funding that needs to be found and where would this come in?

Deputy S.G. Luce:

The number of boats which would be allowed to do this may well be very small. The quota will be small so the number of vessels fishing will be small. I expect that that licence application process and awarding to be done as “business as usual” and in-house. When it comes to the requirements on the fishing boats, I think there will be several thousands of pounds that will be needed to be spent on boats in order to convert them in order to land these fish carefully so that the meat does not spoil. I am sure there is also going to be requirements on deck to make sure the meat is treated properly between the time of being caught and being landed. We do now benefit from the Marine Support Scheme, which is a fund of money there to support fishermen and they have been able to access that recently. I am sure when we get to next year, if we get a quota and if we manage to secure enough quota to establish a fishery, that there will be some demands on that fund. I would very much hope that we could use the Marine Support Scheme to help fishermen to convert their boats.