

PRESS RELEASE

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HUDGHTON CALLS FOR STRUCTURAL INVESTMENT IN THE FISH PROCESSING SECTOR

In the European Parliament in Strasbourg this week, SNP Euro-MP, Ian Hudghton, called on the Commission to provide structural support to fish processors and outlined the innovative options the Scottish processing sector is pursuing. Addressing the Parliament's plenary session on the Langenhagen report on Fish Processing, Mr Hudghton said:

"The overwhelming message of this report is that the European Commission has neglected the fish processing sector. Greater attention needs to be paid to structural support. Processors have been hard hit by management measures of the Common Fisheries Policy, from quota cuts to decommissioning, and other European Union legislation, particularly in the environmental field, but have received little or no assistance.

"Structural support should also be positive, not just reacting to imposed management measures, but being proactive in supporting the sector, promoting new technologies and encouraging effective marketing. There are a number of measures where financial, scientific and human resources can actively contribute to the well being of the processing industry.

"In Scotland the industry is also looking at developing a number of innovative options, including the promotion of electronic trading, product development and diversification, alternative sources of supply, and standardising fish landings, with the possibility of standardised fish boxes. The European Commission must encourage such efforts by providing the necessary - and accessible - structural support to promote their success.

"Marketing is also crucial to ensure the survival of fragile fisheries dependent communities, bearing in mind that every job at sea represents four-five ashore. Processors are often located in rural areas where there is poor transport infrastructure. Market opportunities need to be maximised and improved transport links are essential."

- Ends.

Note: The report, including a number of amendments suggested at Committee stage by Ian Hudghton, was approved by a large majority at the Strasbourg plenary session.