

'Painful reckoning' feared as seafood specialist warns businesses still not ready for Brexit border checks

A global logistics specialist in Grimsby has told how she fears a painful reckoning coming for businesses who have not yet got to grips with the new complexities of customs clearances.

Samskip is a major player in the seafood sector, linking Iceland and the Humber.

The company has been advising customers how to manage the new post-Brexit trade arrangements but foresees problems ahead for the businesses who don't know how to access specific help.

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Legal changes on importing animal products, including seafood, meat and dairy goods, from the European Union and those in the economic area, into Great Britain, will finally be introduced in January after deadlines have been pushed back.

Physical checks were put off to July.

Fresh fish supply is one of the most critical impacts to delays, with frictionless trade a key phrase since the campaigns ahead of the 2016 vote began. Port hold ups for perishable goods impact on shelf life, with seafood one of the most susceptible.

Hulda Robbins, general manager of Europarc-based Samskip UK, said: "We began our Brexit preparations in 2017 and have moved goods for customers we had not worked with before as the new

trading arrangements started.

“However, there is no doubt there is a ticking time bomb ahead with some businesses who have yet to get to grips with the new requirements. This is understandable. The rules are completely different to the barrier-free trade nearly all of them have been used to for many decades.”

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After Brexit, exports to the EU from the UK have been subject to strict controls, but the UK opted for a phased approach on imports from the EU to allow for a period of adjustment to the new processes.

Requirements will include notifying authorities in advance on consignments entering Great Britain and uploading a certified Export Health Certificate (EHC) using the Import of Products, Animals, Food and Feed System (IPAFFS).

Ms Robbins said the challenges for businesses are daunting and advises the complex forms and procedures that a business has to comply with are best handled by a customs intermediary, like Samskip, that has specialist software to help goods clear customs properly.

“Uncertainty about supply chains is what leads to panic buying and shortages,” she said. “It can threaten a business’s very existence. The new rules are going to be a part of life for everyone who relies on imports or exports.

“It is a complicated process. Non-compliance could lead to goods being denied entry or their destruction and fines of up to £2,500.”

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