



Scapêche trawler *Fastnet*

French cartoon breathes new life into bottom trawling ban debate

NGO's deep-sea bottom trawling ban petition jumped from 26,000 signatures to 650,000 in 8 days.

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As the EU Parliament prepares to vote on Dec. 10 on the European Commission's (EC) proposed ban on bottom trawls and bottom gillnets targeting deep-sea fishing within two years, a [cartoon strip](#) in a blog has seemingly turned public opinion in favor of those who want to implement the ban.

The petition -- addressed to French president Francois Hollande -- was started by non-governmental organization Bloom, and advocates in favor of the EC's proposed ban. This proposal is opposed by countries with a sizable bottom trawling fleet, such as France and Spain.

"Our petition jumped from 26,000 signatures to 650,000 in 8 days," Claire Nouvian, head of Bloom, told **IntraFish** on Thursday.

"A round table on the topic was organized last night by the French Parliament," she said.

"The IFREMER (French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea) institute on that occasion took back the support it was so far giving the industry, by saying that the position paper that the lobbies and lobby-friendly MEPs were using was actually not a position paper but a pedagogical paper with shortcuts."

Scapeche breaks its silence

France's largest bottom trawling company Scapeche -- which has been the target of much of Bloom's campaigning -- broke its silence due to the public interest aroused by the blog cartoon, and organized a [press trip last week](#)

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to Lorient, where Scapeche's new managing director, Fabien Dulon, defended the company.

"Contrary to the alarmist NGOs, the species targeted by this fishery (blue ling, grenadier etc) have been steadily increasing for many years," Dulon told journalists.

Deep-sea bottom trawling is very regulated and impacts only 5 percent of fishing grounds, Dulon said. A ban would affect 3,000 direct and indirect jobs in Brittany, Dulon said.

A new petition was started in the UK recently which advocates banning the French fleet from bottom-trawling in UK waters.
