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RETAIL giant Les Mousquetaires announced earlier today that its fishing fleet, Scapêche, will progressively phase out fishing for deep-sea species, as well as the sale of deep-sea fish in its supermarkets by 2025, reports www.megafishnet.com with reference to FishnewsEU.

The group, which owns brands including Intermarché, Netto and Bricomarché brands, also announced stopping the MSC ecolabeling certifying scheme that the Intermarché fleet had started for its deep-sea fisheries.

This shift from deep-sea bottom trawling towards sustainable fishing practices is referred to as the "Sustainable Fishing 2025" objective and was developed in cooperation with marine conservation organisation BLOOM via the consulting firm Deloitte Sustainable Development. It will require a €50 million investment to implement. The 180-degree overhaul of the group's fishing strategy follows the arrival of a new management team within Les Mousquetaires, who are willing to tackle major environmental issues.

According to BLOOM, the spectacular turnaround of the Intermarché fleet is also the direct result of a massive citizen mobilization in 2013 and 2014 against deep-sea bottom trawling: close to 900,000 citizens then signed BLOOM's petition against this destructive fishing method, a record in the history of environmental mobilizations in France.

This clear expression of the rejection of deep-sea fishing by French people motivated Intermarché to negotiate with BLOOM and to stop bottom trawling beyond a depth of 800 meters from January 2015. The decision by Intermarché preceded any form of regulatory constraint, be it national or European, but it did influence the ongoing European legislative process seeking to reform the deep-sea fishing regulation to a depth of up to 800m.

"Phasing out deep-sea fishing activities is a major decision for Intermarché," commented Claire Nouvian, founder of BLOOM. "The fact that an industrial company has the will to make such a profound and difficult move is an extremely positive sign for the fishing sector in general and for other food production sectors as well. It shows that with vision and courage, nothing is in the realm of the impossible! What matters is to be determined, to engage in the right direction, to listen to citizens, to take one's social and environmental responsibility seriously and to provide the financial and human means to pave the way to success. But, then again, we are aware that this is easier said than done with such large industrial groups and that these important changes are not made overnight."

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