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Bloom vows to oppose Scapeche deep-sea MSC certification

Environmental NGO Bloom - which previously worked with Intermarche's fleet Scapeche to try and reduce trawl fishing - has denounced its efforts to gain Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification as "tricking the French people".

Last week's announcement that Scapeche, which is owned by French retail group Intermarche, would enter its deep-sea fish catches (blue ling, black scabbardfish, roundnose grenadier) for certification with the MSC, was not well met by the NGO.

"Yet another attempt from Intermarche to trick the French people," said Bloom founder Claire Nouvian.

The NGO warned MSC's credibility risk being shattering for good if the fishing methods that are widely considered by researchers as "the most destructive in history" get the 'sustainable' label.

The certification process of Intermarche's deep-sea fisheries could last for more than a year. "Bloom will formally oppose this certification by MSC and will commit all necessary resources to ensure that such a fraud will not occur," said Nouvian.

"Intermarche is investing in marketing and communication resources instead of committing to convert its fleet to truly virtuous and sustainable fishing practices."

Bloom feels especially betrayed given it had worked with Scapeche, after the fleet approached it, and made the decision to stop dragging its nets beyond 800 meters deep.

The NGO welcomed this step forward from Intermarche - though felt it was not enough - in return for its implicit commitment to no longer block European regulation on the ban of deep-sea bottom trawling in European waters.

Now, Bloom said Intermarche was simply "neutralizing the NGOs' opposition to its fleet", even as it was supporting the industrial fishing lobby Blue Fish, made up of industrial fishing advocates in Lorient and Boulogne.

"They used the truce with the NGOs as a springboard to a large campaign of 'greenwashing' regarding their unacceptable fisheries," wrote Bloom in a press release.

"Meanwhile, they continued to dictate French policies behind the curtain. They played well for a year, promising that they had nothing to do with the intense lobbying from Lorient and Boulogne against the European proposal to ban deep-sea bottom trawling," states the release. "They just proved that they were not trustworthy. We have learnt the lesson and wish them good luck finding an honest NGO ready to work with them."