



THE PUBLICATION OF PREVIOUSLY UNRELEASED DATA REVEALS THAT THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT HAS HIDDEN THE TRUTH ABOUT ITS DEEP-SEA FISHING ACTIVITY

FRANCE'S POSITION ON THE REFORM OF THE EUROPEAN DEEP-SEA FISHING REGULATION APPEARS UNJUSTIFIABLE IN THE LIGHT OF THIS NEW INFORMATION

Paris July 14, 2014

On 2 July 2014, the French Institute for the Exploitation of the Sea (Ifremer) released data on the activities of French deep-sea bottom trawlers that French non-government organizations (NGOs) have been demanding since national multi-stakeholder negotiations took place in 2009. With the launch of the reform of the European deep-sea fishing regulation in July 2012, these data became essential to inform the public debate on the implications of the phase-out of deep-sea bottom trawling proposed by the European Commission.

For five years NGOs have requested the exact number of bottom trawlers working beyond certain depths and information about the exact composition of the deep-sea bottom trawl catch. For five years the French government and the administration have refused civil society any transparency. Finally though, Ségolène Royal, Minister of Ecology, has stepped in and put an end to the reign of opacity by ordering the administration to make the data available. In so doing, Mrs Royal allowed important revelations to occur. NGOs were in for a big surprise...

- **Lies about the number of boats truly impacted by the deep-sea fishing regulation**

The document confirms what NGOs suspected: the government and the administration have hidden the truth by claiming that the number of vessels affected by the regulation would be "extremely important". **The [Ifremer report](#) concludes instead that "the number of bottom trawlers with an activity in deep water is low."** Indeed, the document mentions that **in 2012 only 12 French bottom trawlers fished at depths greater than 600 metres more than 10% of their time, and only 10 of them fished beyond 800 metres.** Even taking a threshold of 10 hours of operation annually (i.e. just one day of fishing per year), the number of bottom trawlers fishing beyond 800 metres depth was only 26.

Moreover, French retailer Intermarché announced in January 2014 that its six specialized deepwater trawlers would no longer drag their nets beyond 800 metres depth as of early 2015. Their commitment extends to the three deep-sea bottom trawlers acquired in June 2014 from the industrial fleet "Dhellemmes". This means that if the ban on deep-sea bottom trawling were implemented today at a threshold of 800 metres, **only one French ship would be affected by the regulation.**

"This newly released information shows that our politicians, starting with the Minister of Fisheries Frédéric Cuvillier, lied when hammering that the prohibition of deep-sea bottom trawling would have "very severe socio-economic consequences". This is false. Today, Cuvillier defends the activity of a single boat, which only fishes in deep waters a third of its time." said Claire Nouvian, founder of BLOOM, whose [petition](#) against deep-sea bottom trawling has nearly achieved a historic 860,000 signatories thus far.

"The position of France on the deep-sea fishing regulation is not only ridiculed and unworthy, it is a true scandal which damages the image of our nation abroad as well as that of socialist politicians. This situation is no longer tenable," added François Chartier of Greenpeace France.



- **France, gravedigger of endangered deep-sea sharks**

The data also reveal the dark side of deep-sea trawling. Now that [observer data](#) are finally public, NGOs understand why they were so long hidden: it appears that endangered species are among the largest catch of French trawlers. In 2012, deepwater sharks represented about 6% of the total catch of French deep-sea trawlers off the coast of Scotland, and over 30% of total discards.

Of the 13 shark species for which data are available for the year 2012, 11 (85% of shark species caught) have an IUCN status showing that they are at risk of extinction. 232,770 kilos of deepwater sharks, including a majority of endangered species were caught and discarded dead by French vessels operating in deep waters. The Leafscale Gulper shark (*Centrophorus squamosus*), a species in danger of extinction in the North-East Atlantic, makes up the 10th most caught species by French trawlers.

"In opposing the ban on deep-sea bottom trawling in Europe, the French government defends a fishing practice which captures endangered species. It is not only politically but ethically untenable. France must revise its position, it no longer has a choice," concluded Philippe Germa, Director General of WWF France.

- **NGOs call on Ségolène Royal**

The Italian Presidency has asked EU Member States to confirm their position on the deep-sea fishing regulation by 15 July 2014. NGOs now clearly expect France to support the ban on deep-sea bottom trawling and to make it known publicly. In an [open letter](#), they have appealed to the Minister of Ecology, Mrs. Ségolène Royal, to whom all eyes are now turned.

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Today, seven street artists across Europe, including London and Brussels, are calling on EU governments to ban deep-sea bottom trawling. Follow the spectacular artistic performances live [on BLOOM's site](#).

Over [300 international scientists have called on EU decision makers](#) to support the ban of deep-sea bottom trawling:

The [New Economics Foundation](#) has calculated that each tonne of fish caught by deep-sea bottom trawling represents a cost to society of between €388 and €494.

About BLOOM www.bloomassociation.org

BLOOM is a nonprofit organization founded in 2005 working for marine conservation and protection of sustainable fisheries through an approach of public awareness and scientific mediation of environmental issues, the production of independent studies, as well as the participation in public consultations and institutional processes. Its actions are aiming at the general public as well as policy makers and economic actors.

BLOOM is a member of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition www.savethehighseas.org