

## Dutch trawler industry furious as Brussels votes to ban pulse fishing

Europe     February 14, 2019



A pulse fishing net. Photo: Ecomare/Pam Lindeboom via Wikimedia Commons

Dutch fishermen have reacted furiously to Brussels' decision to phase out pulse fishing, a form of trawling using electric currents.

'Lies and emotion have beaten science,' fishermen's organisations said after the vote. 'The European Council, the European Commission and the European parliament have been misled by the lies and emotional campaign fought by French environmental organisation Bloom.'

In total, 42 Dutch trawlers will have to stop pulse fishing this year and 42 can continue until 2021. The agreement also states that six trawlers can continue to use the technique for research purposes.

Dutch farm minister Carola Schouten said the compromise was 'the best' that could be won in the negotiations. It is, she said, a dark day for the Dutch fishing industry which had been banned from a 'sustainable and innovative' way of fishing.

The financial damage to the Dutch fishing sector could be as high as €200m, the fishing organisations said.

### **Research**

Dutch fishermen have invested millions of euros in specialized equipment since the ban on pulse fishing was lifted several years ago under a scheme to allow research into 'innovative methods'. Some 40% of the Dutch fleet now uses the system.

Pulse fishing involves sending a current of electricity through sections of the sea bed, partially stunning sole and plaice and forcing some into the net.

Its supporters say pulse fishing is less destructive than beam trawling, which involves dragging a heavy metal bar across the sea bed. Opponents say it is a cruel and unnecessary method of fishing and is depleting fish stocks.