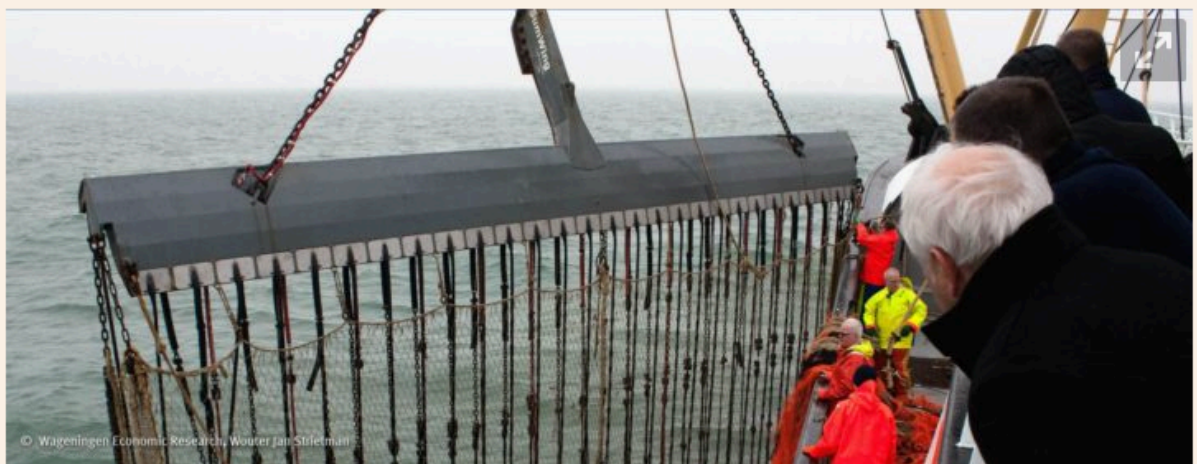


# EU presidency willing to reopen debate on pulse fishing

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The German government, acting as the EU presidency, would be willing to reopen the debate on the viability of pulse fishing, reports [The Fishing Daily](#).

Speaking at a meeting of the European Parliament's committee on fisheries on Sept. 3, German minister of food and agriculture Julia Klockner admitted the German presidency would "weigh all this evidence up", taking into account the situation of the Dutch fishing fleet, international scientific opinion, and recorded consequences for the seafloor ecosystem.

"I am very aware of all the controversies and I know it can be a very emotional discussion as well. Because we are not just talking about the fate of the fish. As I said, we will rely on scientific opinion for this," Klockner is reported to have said.

After a couple of years of impassioned debate, the EU Council formally agreed to ban pulse fishing activities in February last year, the ban set to come into full force on June 1, 2021.

The practice, adopted by Dutch research trawl fleets, uses an electric current to stun bottom-dwelling flatfish, making them easier to catch. It drew criticism from environmental NGOs and other EU member states who claimed it was both inhumane and caused long-term damage to the ecosystem.

However, a report from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea at the behest of the Dutch government earlier this year found that, so long as the sole stock is well-managed, pulse fishing "does not pose any increased risk to sustainable exploitation".

Bloom, the French NGO which spearheaded the anti-pulse fishing argument, has roundly criticized Klockner and the German government's decision.

"Justifying this illegal derogation right after having advocated for a responsible behavior would indeed have been more than perilous, especially given that Germany currently chairs the Presidency of the Council of the European Union and is therefore expected to be exemplary," said Frederic Le Manach, scientific director at Bloom.

The NGO has pointed to the German-registered trawler, BRA-2 BUTENDIEK, which was outfitted with pulse trawl gear in the Dutch port of Den Helder earlier this year as an example of Germany failing to heed the EU's new legislation.

"By striving to continuously flout the general interest for the benefit of their industrial friends, European political decision-makers give the impression that they are doing their best to ruin the already eroded trust that citizens have in them," Sabine Rosset, director of Bloom said.