

Danish Seine Agreement in the English Channel denounced

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Artisanal fishers and NGOs have denounced what they call, the illegitimate Danish Seine Agreement in the English Channel

Artisanal fishers and NGO's have hit out at what they call the Dutch lobby group that are now trying to legitimise flyshooting (Danish seine-netting) in the English Channel.

Last week, Dutch fishing organisation VisNed claimed that [a deal was agreed](#) between four countries, the Netherlands, Belgium, France and the UK which came into effect on Monday 19 April 2021, but this has been rejected by stakeholders in the Channel who claim that the Dutch are orchestrating a smash-and-grab of their fish stocks.

Today the BLOOM Association writes:

After having exhausted marine ecosystems in the North Sea with its destructive fishing methods such as electric fishing, the Dutch industry is now leading an offensive to conquer new fishing grounds. For the past 10 years, Dutch-flagged and Dutch-owned vessels using Danish seines – a super-efficient fishing gear – have roamed the English Channel. The presence of these industrial vessels is strongly opposed by local fishers, who are constantly warning of resources being plundered and of the destruction of ecosystems.

“These are big boats, and their catches are too significant in relation to the fish available. A single fishing operation by these boats depletes the resource in a given area for at least a fortnight. They started in the southern North Sea, they swept up everything – small-scale fishing has been in great difficulty there ever since – and they are now arriving in the eastern Channel,” explains Philippe Calone, a small-scale fisher in Normandy.

Thibault Josse, from Pleine Mer adds: "From Dunkirk to Cherbourg, there is great concern that the resources traditionally allocated to small-scale fishing will be plundered by the Dutch industry's giants. Fishers are aware that a deal is being hatched behind their backs and anger is rising on the docks in Hauts-de-France and Normandy."

In order to silence the opposition, the VisNed organisation (the same Dutch lobby that promoted electric fishing) has been negotiating for a year now – in total opacity, with certain French, Belgian and British fishing authorities – a Gentleman Agreement, for Danish seine fishing (also called 'flyshooting' by the Dutch) in the Channel. Officially, this draft agreement is presented as a framework for Dutch seine vessels. But BLOOM and Pleine Mer denounce it as a decoy whose sole purpose is to legitimize the presence of these Danish seiners in the Channel, thereby setting a precedent for the plundering of resources and the destruction of small-scale fishing by Dutch industrial fishing. The Organisation des pêcheurs Normands (OPN; Normandy's Fishers Organisation) has already announced its refusal to sign this text.

And while negotiations are still ongoing and no agreement has been signed yet, VisNed has already issued a statement on their website on 15 April announcing that "representatives of the fisheries of the four countries concerned have finally reached agreement on management measures" in the Channel, specifying that this agreement was supposed to start on Monday 19 April.

"The is a hard pill to swallow for VisNed, which was defeated by the European Court of Justice, which rejected the Netherlands' request to overturn the ban on electrofishing. Far from questioning its destructive economic model, the Dutch industry is responding to its "scorched earth" policy with another destructive fishing method, forcing French, English and Belgian fishers to accept the presence of their bottom-set seiners in the Eastern Channel," says Laetitia Bisiaux, Project Manager at BLOOM.

Furthermore, we regard this draft agreement as illegitimate. Among the negotiators, English fishers are represented by Dutchman Andries de Boer, director of the English Lowestoft Fish Producers Organisation. On the Belgian side, the negotiator is a representative of the company Padmos, a Dutch shipbuilder, including seiners. In France, fishers are supposedly represented by the Comité régional des pêches des Hauts-de-France, the Comité régional des pêches de Normandie, the Coopérative maritime étaploise, the Organisation des pêcheurs Normands, and the FROM Nord producer organisation. FROM Nord is chaired by Antoine Dhellemmes, former managing director of France Pélagique, a French subsidiary of the Dutch Cornelis Vrolijk empire. Antoine has been replaced by his son Geoffroy at the head of the company in January 2020, but his positions as Vice-President of the National Fisheries Committee and President of FROM Nord allow him to monopolise French quotas, to the benefit of the Dutch industry and the family fortune.

We are urging negotiators not to sign this agreement and we call on French fishers to turn to their producer organisations and their regional fisheries committees to make their voices heard.