

Annual Report 2020-2021

The essentials



Foreword from the Board Chair

Dear members,
Dear supporters,
Dear defenders of the oceans and small-scale fishers,

This annual report represents the outcome of our actions in 2020 and 2021, two years marked by the COVID-19 crisis. At the beginning of the sanitary crisis, we saw how a drastic slowdown in human activities allowed nature to catch its breath. But this relief was short-lived. Our oceans and our artisanal fishermen need BLOOM more than ever!

We warmly thank all our supporters, individual donors, foundations and companies. Thanks to them, we have been able to pursue work on all of our research programs, without slackening our attention and efforts. The progress made during these two years is impressive in regard to electric fishing, fishing agreements, fishing subsidies, seafood eco-labels, as well as awareness and education.

I would also like to thank the entire BLOOM team, which has maintained an admirable commitment despite the difficulties of the health crisis.

I am proud to have been a modest supporter and companion of BLOOM for the past 15 years. From the beginning, I was impressed by the strategic vision and the search for efficiency instilled by its founder, Claire Nouvian. Since then, BLOOM has grown and progressed significantly. It has become more solid, notably by assembling a multi-talented team. But it has preserved its original DNA. It sets its goals, priorities and tactical plans with great discernment. It bases all its decisions on facts and science. It courageously denounces blindness, inaction, irresponsibility, hypocritical manoeuvres and posturing, and fraud. It maximises the impact of every euro contributed by its supporters. Well done BLOOM!

Enjoy your reading.



Flavien Kulawik
Board Chair

PROGRAMS

Electric Fishing

ABSTRACT

When BLOOM started its campaign to ban electric fishing in Europe, by filing a claim with the European Commission against the Netherlands, in October 2017, victory looked impossible due to a hostile political ecosystem and fierce industrial opposition. But after two years of intense campaigning, with the support of French, Belgian, English, Dutch and German artisanal fishermen, European NGOs and the public opinion, we managed to completely turn the political ecosystem in favor of prohibiting electrocution as a means to catch fish. **As a result, we succeeded in obtaining the full ban on electric fishing in European waters.**

On 16 January 2018, with an overwhelming majority (571 votes against 60), the European Parliament adopted a full ban on electric fishing. A Trilogue agreement on the Technical Measures Regulation, which includes electric fishing, was finally concluded on 13 February 2019. The regulation entered into force on August 2019 and the total prohibition of this destructive method became effective as of the 1st of July 2021.

A two year-period was therefore granted to EU fleets, especially Dutch ones, to transition out of electric fishing. BLOOM remained fully mobilized to monitor the attempts by industrial fishing lobbies to overturn the new regulation, including at the European Court of Justice. We pursued our in-depth monitoring of industrial fleets, closely followed the actions of institutions, revealed more frauds, took legal actions and kept the institutions accountable for their inaction.

HIGHLIGHTS

1 January 2020

20 electric fishing licenses expired bringing to 22 the number of vessels able to continue using this destructive method. However, this number still exceeded the limit of 5% of the beam trawler fleet allowed to use electric fishing (15 licenses maximum) that was established when electric fishing was reintroduced in Europe.

20 March 2020

BLOOM called on the European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Mr. Virginijus Sinkevičius, to take action with regards to the Netherlands' failure to comply with EU rules on electric fishing.

26 May 2020

Dutch MEPs Annie Schreijer and Peter Van Dalen announced that they will pressure Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius to reopen the debate on electric fishing and ultimately call for the repeal of the ban on electric fishing.

5 June 2020

In the face of the Netherlands' repeated violations of EU regulations on electric fishing and the European Commission's failure to respond satisfactorily to our three complaints in 2017, 2018 and 2019, BLOOM appealed to the European Ombudsman.

30 July 2020

Following our referral to the European Ombudsman and the opening of its investigation into the European Commission's failure to fulfill its obligations, the Commission acknowledged that the Netherlands had issued an illegal number of licenses to equip its vessels with electric trawls.

15 September 2020

BLOOM published the report "[Beyond Illegal Fishing](#)". Through our analysis of unpublished whistleblower data, our report revealed the extent of the fraud that was at work even before the ban on electric fishing took place: the number of Dutch vessels equipped with electric trawls was greater than the number of exemptions officially granted by the Netherlands and some of these vessels were fishing in prohibited areas.

17 September 2020

In the face of the European Commission's inaction despite the proven fraud and evidence produced by BLOOM against the Netherlands, we launched a citizens' platform demanding the European Commission to impose sanctions.

12 October 2020

BLOOM launched the "#JePortePlainte" campaign, which allowed citizens to lodge individual complaints with the European Commission to demand enforcement and sanctions against the Dutch government. More than 27,000 individual citizens' complaints were sent to the European Commission.

March 2021

BLOOM launched in collaboration with the fishermen's association LIFE (Low Impact Fishers of Europe) a complaint to the European Commission's competition department. Thus, nearly 40 French, Belgian, English and Dutch fishermen asked for the reimbursement of public subsidies that financed the illegal development of electric fishing.

15 April 2021

The Court of Justice of the European Union rejected the Dutch request to revoke the ban on electric fishing. The Court asserted that the "Precautionary Principle", a pillar of the Common Fisheries Policy, prevailed over the "Innovation principle", which does not apply to fishing.

30 June 2021

An exclusive investigation by the Dutch newspaper "NOS" revealed, on the basis of internal Dutch government documents, the inner workings of the fraudulent allocation of illegal Dutch licenses for electric fishing and confirmed years of organized fraud.

1 July 2021

The full ban on electric fishing came into effect. BLOOM continued to raise public awareness through screenings of the documentary "[Watt the fish](#)" which chronicles BLOOM's successful campaign against electric fishing.

July 2021

Following the NOS investigation, the European Commission decided to reopen the 2017 and 2019 complaints that BLOOM had filed against the electric fishing illegal licenses.

August 2021

In absence of a response to LIFE's complaint to the European Commission's Competition Department, BLOOM followed up with a lawyer's letter to the Commission.

November 2021

The European Commission responded to LIFE's complaint by claiming that the electric fishing vessels had NOT received EU subsidies, despite the indisputable evidence provided by BLOOM.

In conclusion, because of the repeated infringements of Dutch fleets and Dutch public authorities, BLOOM remains mobilized. We are continuing our investigations and monitoring. Furthermore, the ban on electric fishing did not stop the development and expansion of other highly efficient fishing devices. This is the case of "fly-shooting". In December 2021, BLOOM requested a general moratorium on this fishing method from the European Commission.

PROGRAMS

Fisheries Subsidies

ABSTRACT

The European Union has made a commitment to end the harmful fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing by adopting the Sustainable Development Goal 14.6 as part of the SDGs set by the United Nations in September 2015. The scientific consensus is clear: there will be no sustainable fisheries as long as financial incentives are given to fleets to overfish. Yet political will is lacking and secrecy about the allocation of subsidies to the fishing sector still reigns supreme.

BLOOM's research program aims to establish the precise amounts involved, to identify the different categories of beneficiaries, and to assess the adequacy of this funding with the social and ecological objectives set at European level through the adoption of various legal frameworks such as the Habitat Directive, the Common Fisheries Policy or the Financial instruments for the fishing sector.

BLOOM has decided to put an end to the lack of transparency of the fishing sector by developing an ambitious research program seeking to:

- (1) Collect data on European fisheries subsidies
- (2) Analyse the data in order to understand how subsidies are allocated
- (3) Make the data available to researchers, decision-makers, institutions and citizens wishing to take a critical look at the way public funds are used.

The first results of this long-term work have been made public over the years with our reconstructive calculation of subsidies given to electric trawlers for example. In 2021, our research focused on COVID grants to the fishing sector. In parallel to our research work and scientific publications, we pursue our efforts towards increased transparency to obtain access to public data, including via legal actions as we did against the French government which was failing to publish crucial fisheries subsidy data.

HIGHLIGHTS

Mobilization against inequitable COVID subsidies

In order to help the fishing sector cope with the difficulties caused by the COVID crisis, the European Union has released emergency funds from the EMFF (European Maritime and Fisheries Fund) to finance temporary suspensions of vessels' activities. After an analysis of the aid allocation documents, BLOOM decided to blow the whistle about the inequity of this public aid mechanism in France.

On 25 May 2020, BLOOM launched a public intervention platform called "**Dare save small-scale coastal fishing**", allowing citizens to call on the French government to ensure that public funds to fishermen are allocated according to social and environmental criteria and seek to protect the common good as well as employment.

Scientific publications

[The Global Fisheries Subsidies Divide Between Small- and Large-Scale Fisheries](#)

Schuhbauer A, Skerritt DJ, Ebrahim N, Le Manach F and Sumaila UR (2020)
Frontiers in Marine Science

A reconstruction of global fisheries subsidies showing that of the USD 35.4 billion subsidies provided in 2018, 19% went to the small-scale fishing sector while more than 80% went to the large-scale (industrial) fishing sector. This analysis also shows that the majority of the subsidies to the large-scale sector are in the form of capacity-enhancing subsidies (USD 18.3 billion) with fuel subsidies being the highest overall subsidy type (USD 7.2 billion). Fuel subsidies are especially harmful as they perpetuate fuel inefficient technology. Since the last estimate of the global fisheries subsidies divide, the percentage of capacity-enhancing subsidies within the SSF has increased from 41% in 2009 to 59% in 2018.

[A 20-year retrospective on the provision of fisheries subsidies in the European Union](#)

Skerritt D, Arthur R, Ebrahim N, Le Brenne V, Le Manach F, Schuhbauer A, Villasante S, U Rashid Sumaila (2020).,
ICES Journal of Marine Science, Volume 77, Issue 7-8, Pages 2741–2752

A retrospective review of the last 20 years of fisheries subsidies in Europe showing that, although some progress has been made, as a result of the removal of certain capacity-enhancing subsidies, it is still too slow and insufficient given the proportion of overexploited stocks and the significant amount of capacity-enhancing subsidies remaining. Furthermore, the true extent of any reduction in capacity-enhancing subsidies may be shrouded by the Pollyannaish classifications of subsidization, but most disconcerting are the positions adopted by both the European Parliament and Council of the EU, which aim to reintroduce some of the most harmful subsidies, thereby putting the progress needed to achieve sustainable fisheries at risk.

[Sustainable objectives and commitments deceived by fisheries subsidies for 'temporary cessations in times of COVID](#)

Le Brenne V, Bisiaux L, Le Manach F (2021),
Marine Policy, Volume 132, 104670, ISSN 0308-597X

A detailed analysis of the allocation of COVID aid in France based on the list of EMFF beneficiaries published in December 2020. BLOOM's analysis shows that 82.5% (i.e. 12.2 million EUR) of COVID subsidies were allocated to vessels using destructive fishing methods (otter trawls, dredges, seines) although these vessels represent only 22.1% of the French fleet.

Legal actions to obtain French data

For almost seven years, BLOOM has been engaged in a legal battle with the French administration (the Directorate of Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture) to obtain data on the use of the EFF (European Fisheries Fund, 2007-2016) in France. Several appeals have been launched and pursued in 2020 and 2021 in order to recover the public data but so far, still unsuccessful despite rulings in our favor (Access Commission to Administrative Documents, Administrative Tribunal, Council of State). This gives a sense of the resistance which is lodged right at the heart of public authorities, revealing how biased the French government is towards its fishing lobbies.

PROGRAMS

Fishing agreements

ABSTRACT

Our research program aims to unpack the subject of 'fishing agreements', i.e. the economic partnerships established between certain coastal countries and large fishing nations/units such as the EU, China, Russia and Japan. Since their inception in the late 1970s, these fishing agreements have been regularly criticized. They have allowed the fleets of developed countries to fish in the abundant and poorly monitored waters of Africa, while the African countries receive little financial reward in exchange.

While scientific models agree that i) tropical waters will be dramatically depleted by global warming and ii) a major biodiversity crisis is underway, these agreements remain poorly understood and continue to contribute to overfishing and biodiversity loss in African waters, with poorly understood effects on food security and socio-economic stability in these coastal regions, contradicting the roadmap of the Sustainable Development Goals, established in September 2015 by the UN General Assembly.

Our program on fishing agreements seeks to create transparency, to improve marine conservation in Africa, to stop the excessive fishing pressure from the North on the South, and to protect fishing communities by limiting competition with foreign industrial fisheries.

HIGHLIGHTS

Analysis of the notion of 'Surplus' for the French Development Agency (FDA)

This report represents a detailed overview of fishing agreements (European and non-European) in Africa, a discussion of their legal basis and the notion of 'common goods', as well as pathways towards agreements compatible with the challenges of the 21st century. By employing various fields of literature, we question the theoretical foundations and tools that have served as a basis for the development of fishing agreements.

[Questioning Fishing Access Agreements Towards Social and Ecological Health in the Global South](#)

Le Manach F, Andriamahefazafy M, Legroux N, Quentin L (2021)

AFD, Research Papers, Number 203, ISSN 2492 - 2846

PROGRAMS

Labels

ABSTRACT

In 1997, the MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) label was created to 'guide', as its name suggests, the general public towards sustainability, and in turn the entire fishing industry. Citizens could finally buy fish "guilt-free". 20 years later, disillusionment is bitter for the scientists and NGOs who supported the launch and the approach of this ecolabel — initially created by the WWF and food giant Unilever, and which has since then become the world leader in seafood ecolabels.

Critics, shy at first, became more numerous and severe, questioning both the lack of ambition of the label and the application of its standards, as well as the impartiality of the certification process.

SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATION

BLOOM and its co-authors from the universities of New York (United States) and Dalhousie (Canada) conducted an exhaustive analysis of all MSC-certified fisheries since the origin of the label and revealed the extent of the MSC fraud, which, in stark contrast with its affirmations, certifies mostly industrial, destructive fisheries.

1. BLOOM and co-authors have calculated that industrial, high-impact fisheries have accounted 83% of MSC-certified catches between 2009 and 2017, but only 32% of the MSC's photographic illustrations over the same period.
2. In contrast, small-scale, low-impact fisheries have accounted only 7% of the certified volumes between 2009 and 2017, but 47% of the illustrations. The MSC label thus created its alternative reality, "guilt-free", to fit to that desired by citizens who are increasingly concerned about their purchases' environmental impact.

[Small is beautiful, but large is certified: A comparison between fisheries the Marine Stewardship Council \(MSC\) features in its promotional materials and MSC-certified fisheries](#)

Le Manach F, Jacquet JL, Bailey M, Jouanneau C, Nouvian C

PLOS ONE

AWARENESS-RAISING & EDUCATION

LECTURES

In 2020 and 2021 BLOOM researchers continued to give lectures in major French programs :

- [AgroParisTech](#) (Paris and Montpellier)
- [Sciences Po](#) (Paris and Grenoble)
- [EDHEC Business School](#) (Lille)

DOCUMENTARIES AND BOOKS

['Watt the fish'](#) - Documentary on BLOOM's campaign to ban electric fishing

BLOOM participated in screenings followed with round tables to present the movie and discuss with audiences.

['Animal'](#) - Documentary on the 6th mass extinction and how to advocate for change

Interview of Claire Nouvian during one of BLOOM's campaign in the European Union institutions.

[Animal, cahier militant](#). Actes sud, 2021, 208 pages

Lengthy interview of Claire Nouvian and Mathieu Colléter to explain industrial fishing and advocacy in European and national institutions.

FESTIVALS & CONFERENCES

Ashoka Talks 'Beyond Heroes', Students National Conference for Sustainability, 5° Revue Annuelle des Nouveaux Usages de l'ANRT, Alternatiba Festival (Pantin), Ocean Action , Elle Green Festival at the GoodPlanet Foundation, Ocean Day Festival (Paris), Pluies de Juillet Festival, Fish4ever,...

MEDIA IMPACT



THANK YOU

BLOOM would like to thank its partners for their support :

2020

French Foundations: Fondation Cabestan, Animaux Sauvages endowment fund, Fondation Lemarchand, Fondation Ensemble, Meyer Louis Dreyfus fund, 1% for the Planet France endowment fund, Fondation Nature et Solidarités 59

International Foundations: OAK Foundation, Levine Family Foundation, The Waterloo Foundation, Georg Waechter Memorial, The Elsevier Foundation

Companies: Main Gauche, Brigand des Mers, Pilotes PLV, Biocoop, SPRL Roquigny, X Composite, Naturenvie, Maison Babel, Finaxys, Nutergia Laboratoire, GMBA Mécénat, Logis 2018, EURL Louvres

NGOs: Paygreen, Lilo, R'Store, Big Game Fishing Club France, Boomerang for Earth Conservation

Pro Bono: KLB Group

Skills-based volunteering: Sébastien Girard, Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP law firm, Guillaume Griffart et Jean-Philippe Minaud

2021

French Foundations: Fondation Cabestan, Animaux Sauvages endowment fund, Fondation Lemarchand, Fondation Ensemble, Meyer Louis Dreyfus fund, 1% for the Planet France endowment fund, Fondation Nature et Solidarités 59

International Foundations: Georg Waechter Memorial Foundation, Levine Family Foundation, The Elsevier Foundation, Synchronicity Earth

Companies: Logis2018, Naturenvie, KLB Group, Main gauche, Nutergia laboratoire, Aryga, Lumiere Et Refuge, Biocoop, Roquigny, Louvres SARL, GMBA Mécénat, Ramses, Pilotes PLV, Xcomposite, Abiocom, Maison Babel, Champlain, Naturkosmetik, Cornu,...

NGOs: Paygreen, Lilo, Big Game Fishing Club France, Je fais ma part,

Pro Bono: KLB Group, Dr Laurent Gravot

Skills-based volunteering: Sébastien Girard, Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP law firm, Chloé Saynac (Saynac & Partners), Guillaume Griffart, Jean-Philippe Minaud, Laura Chovet-Ballester (Alkemist Avocats), Sarah Ait Benali (Andes)



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