

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3509/01
by Chantal Cauquil (GUE/NGL)
to the Commission

Subject: Additional information on the death of dolphins in Community waters

The Commission's reply to written question P-3070/01¹ prompts the following comments and questions:

– On the Member States' obligation to monitor incidental captures of dolphins:

Despite the death of several thousand dolphins every year, the Member States have taken no action to set up a system for monitoring the incidental capture and killing of dolphins. As a result, it has not been possible for them to take any research or conservation measures.

The Commission should monitor the fulfilment of the Member States' obligations. If the Member States are unable to supply evidence that they are carrying out this monitoring, can the Commission officially determine that Community law has been broken and take the necessary steps to ensure that its directives are applied?

– On the role of different fishing methods in the incidental capture of dolphins:

The scientific community is in agreement in identifying pelagic trawls as the main culprit in incidental captures of dolphins. Xavier le Pichon (Member of the Institute and former President of IFREMER, the French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea) and Jean Aubouin (Member of the French Academy of Sciences and former head of IFREMER's Scientific Council) have strongly condemned this type of fishing gear. In addition, the Commission has funded about twenty studies which have all reached the same conclusion.

Why, despite this scientific unanimity, does the Commission continue to subsidise the large fishing vessels responsible for this ecological disaster?

– On the Commission's responsibilities:

It is clear that the use of pelagic trawls in Community waters comes within the European Union's sphere of responsibility.

Would the Commission be prepared to amend Regulation (EC) No 894/97² to ban the use of pelagic trawls?

The Commission should bear in mind that this regulation has already been amended to ban the use of drift-nets from January 2002, as this has been linked to by-catches of unintended species, such as dolphins; there is, however, a significantly stronger connection between pelagic trawls and such by-catches.

¹ OJ C

² OJ L 132, 23.5.1997, p. 1.