

Commissioner Joe Borg
Commissioner for Fisheries and Marine Affairs
European Commission
Rue de la Loi, 200
Bruxelles 1049

9th May 2006

Dear Commissioner Borg,

Re: Reduction of the bycatch of non-commercial species

I am writing to express my concerns about the bycatch of non-commercial species, in particular small cetaceans, in UK waters, a number of which are washed up on the South coast of England every year.

The UK Government has already recognised that there is a significant problem regarding the bycatch of cetaceans -as demonstrated by their 2004 request for the Commission to impose a six month emergency closure of the sea bass fishery in the Channel (under article 7 of Reg.2371/2002) - a request which was declined by the Commission. Then in December 2004 the UK Government introduced a ban on the use of pair trawls for sea bass in the western Channel by UK vessels. They attempted to apply the ban to French and Belgian vessels, but this was also disallowed by the Commission.

Given the Commission's unwillingness to support these attempts by the UK Government to reduce the incidence of this bycatch, could the Commission suggest any further measures which the UK could take either unilaterally or in conjunction with other Member States in order to address this issue.

Additionally, could you confirm what specific actions the Commission has undertaken (or plans to undertake) in terms of researching into the issue of bycatch (both of cetaceans and of other non-commercial species including fish, sharks, turtles, birds and other marine mammals). Could you also inform me what efforts have been made to investigate possible mitigation measures - including gear modification, closed seasons, and further regulation - which would reduce the number of creatures caught as bycatch.

It is essential that the Commission ensures that EU fisheries are managed sustainably and fished responsibly, and this should include ensuring that the impact of fishing upon non-commercial species of all kinds is investigated and reduced.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Lucas'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'C'.

Dr. Caroline Lucas
Green Party MEP for South East England