



WATT THE FISH

52'

An immersive character led story of traditional fisherman (coming from Belgium , UK and France) fighting together for survival against powerful industrial lobbies.

An empowering account of ordinary people's struggle uniting to be heard and change European laws.

A campaign to ban Pulse fishing with a happy end which takes us from the Northern European shores to the corridors of the EU Parliament. Heated debates and tensed discussions, demonstrations, Media campaign and scientific controversy are all part of the plot, in this empowering film!

Small-scale fishing in the North Sea has been in the doldrums for the past few years: fish landings are down while quotas and subsidies favour industrial fishing.

Enough was enough in 2014 when the European Union allowed the Dutch to double the size of their pulse trawling fleet. Pulse fishing is a very controversial technique, being both extremely efficient and suspected of having dire impacts on marine life (fish with burns, broken spines, egg mortality...). It has been forbidden for years in main fishing countries worldwide (China, USA, Brazil...).

In Belgium, the UK or France, fishermen are teaming up to express their despair. But the real battle takes places in the corridors of EU institutions and in the media. French NGO Bloom, created to protect marine environment and increase social benefits in the fishing sector, engages in the show of strength in 2016 as a generalization of pulse fishing to the entire EU is in the air. The war is now waged full-scale between Bloom activists and small-scale fishermen on the one hand and industrial fishermen and their supporters on the other hand: tense debates at the European Parliament, demonstrations in ports, media campaigns, scientific controversy...

On February 13th 2019 at 10PM, the long-awaited news has just arrived: pulse fishing will be banned in the EU in 2021. After a 2-year underfunded campaign, Bloom, other NGOs such as Blue Marine Foundation and the small-scale fishermen have won a crucial battle, against all odds and powerful lobbying of the pulse fishing industry. But there is still a long way to go to secure a future for small-scale fishermen and preserve fish stocks; allocation of quotas and subsidies remaining the main bone of contention between small- and large-scale fishermen.

We bring the audience at the heart of this fight with unequal weapons between artisan and industrial fishing. The movies will give access to the complexity of marine politics. Without any voice-over, we are immersed in fishermen lives, fishing with them, following them in demonstrations, discovering their doubts and hopes about their involvement in this European political battle. Aerial and submarine footage will enable the audience to breathe and become more aware of the beauty and fragility of marine ecosystems. An electronic original score will highlight the tension that builds up between both sides.

MAIN CHARACTERS



Stéphane Pinto - president of gillnet fishermen of Northern France. He is very involved in the campaign against pulse fishing

Paul Lines - fisherman of Lowestoft (UK). He works with his son Charles and is also very vocal against Dutch pulse trawlers that emptied his fishing area. Following the Brexit, the UK will recover full control over its waters and will ban pulse fishing in them. That does not prevent Paul from being committed to the campaign against pulse fishing, in solidarity with his colleagues from the rest of Europe

Claire Nouvian - founder of NGO Bloom, at the forefront of the campaign against pulse fishing. She received the Goldman Prize in 2018 (equivalent to the Nobel Prize for environmental activism) and she co-founded citizen political movement « Place Publique ».



Other characters :

- Charles Clover (UK): founder Blue Marine Foundation
- Koen Chiers (Belgium): biology professor at Ghent University
- Nina Holland (Netherlands): researcher on lobbying at CEO (Corporate Europe Observatory)
- Gabriel Mato (Spain): chairman of the EU Parliament on fishing
- Frédéric Drogerys (France): fisherman in Dunkirk (with the yellow vests)
- Peter Aldous (UK): MP (Conservative Party)
- Nigel Farage (UK): founder of UKIP Party
- Yannick Jadot (France): member of European Parliament, French green party

KEY DATES OF PULSE FISHING IN EUROPE

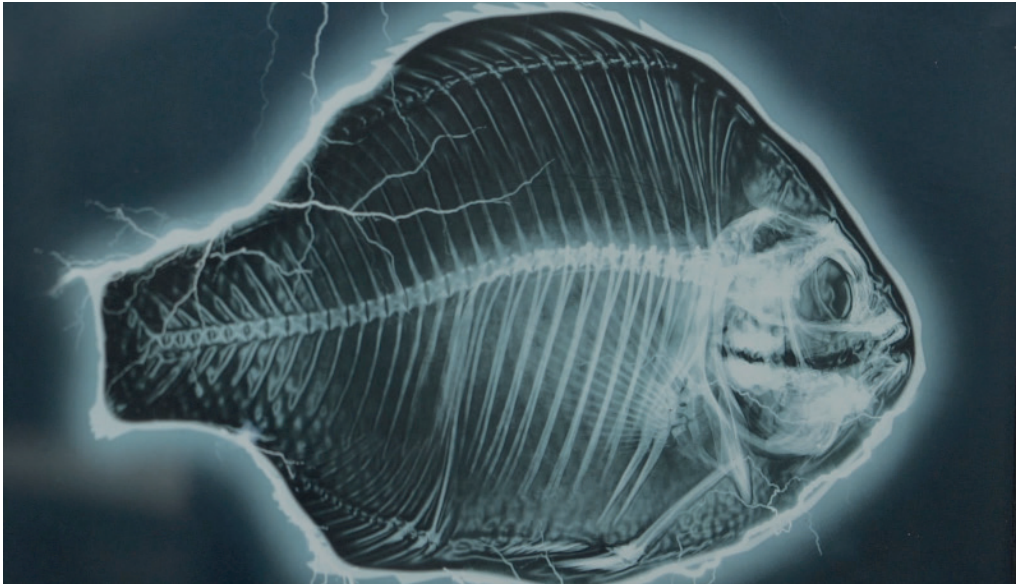
- 1998: Pulse fishing is banned in Europe
- 2007: First derogations authorizing pulse fishing for scientific experiments
- 2014: More derogations are granted to the Dutch pulse fishing fleet. 84 pulse trawlers operating in the North Sea and selling their catches
- November 21st, 2017: Fishing commission of European Parliament votes to extend pulse fishing
- December 2017 – January 2018: intense communication/lobbying on both sides
- January 16th, 2018: European Parliament votes to ban pulse fishing from European waters
- Year 2018: fierce battling between pro and anti-pulse fishing
- February 13th, 2019: decision of the trilogue (EU Parliament, Commission and member states) to ban pulse fishing in 2021

IMPACT CAMPAIGN

Watt the fish is also a campaign whose goal is giving more space to small-scale fishing in European policies. The movie conveys hope to all those struggling, those who lost faith in politics. When properly organized, it is possible to get your voice heard, even at the highest levels.

To reach that goal, an ambitious impact strategy is set up: community screenings in main European fishing harbours, content creation on sustainable fish consumption, online activism... A crowdfunding campaign will also take place in April 2019 in order to aggregate a first circle of supporters who will help us with the outreach campaign.

Main partners of Watt the fish are NGOs Bloom, Blue Marine Foundation and Goodplanet Foundation.



MAIN SEQUENCES AND SHOOTING LOCATIONS

- European Parliament: vote to ban pulse fishing (Jan 16th, 2018). Various MP interventions, small-scale fishermen trying to get in touch with MPs to gather support for their cause
- Ghent (Belgium): 2 days on a scientific boat to collect samples to assess environmental impacts of pulse fishing + one day in a lab of Ghent University
- Brussels: meeting with the CEO (Corporate Europe Observatory) that studies lobbying in European institutions
- Lowestoft (UK): immersion with fisherman Paul Lines and his son Charles
- Boulogne-sur-Mer (France): demonstration of small-scale fishermen coming from many countries to protest against pulse fishing + immersion with local fishermen
- Dunkirk (France): shooting a pulse trawler (drone + images taken from a small boat)
- IJmuiden (Netherlands): Shooting pulse trawlers at their harbour + discussion with pulse fishermen
- Apartment of Claire Nouvian (Paris) / European Parliament (Strasbourg) : a tense alternate sequence on Feb 13th 2019, the day when pulse fishing was officially banned in Europe, between Claire Nouvian's apartment transformed in a « war room » and fishermen gathered at the European Parliament waiting anxiously for the decision to be made
- London: fisherman Paul Lines meets with Nigel Farage (UKIP), Peter Aldous (Tory) and other politicians to defend small scale fishing



Production calendar:

End of shooting: February 2019

Post-production: February – April 2019

Completed movie: April 30th 2019

A co-production:

Ushuaia TV/ InFocus/ Echo Studio/ Gump

In association with:

France 3 Hauts-de-France

A movie writtern and director by:

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