

# Bycatch of common dolphins in the Bay of Biscay



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# Context of the Bay of Biscay

There is a long tradition of dolphin and porpoise killing in the Bay of Biscay:

- deliberate destruction of animals perceived as competitors from 1900-1960's,
- intentional catch for subsistence, local marketing of dolphin meat (until early 1970s)





# Context of the Bay of Biscay

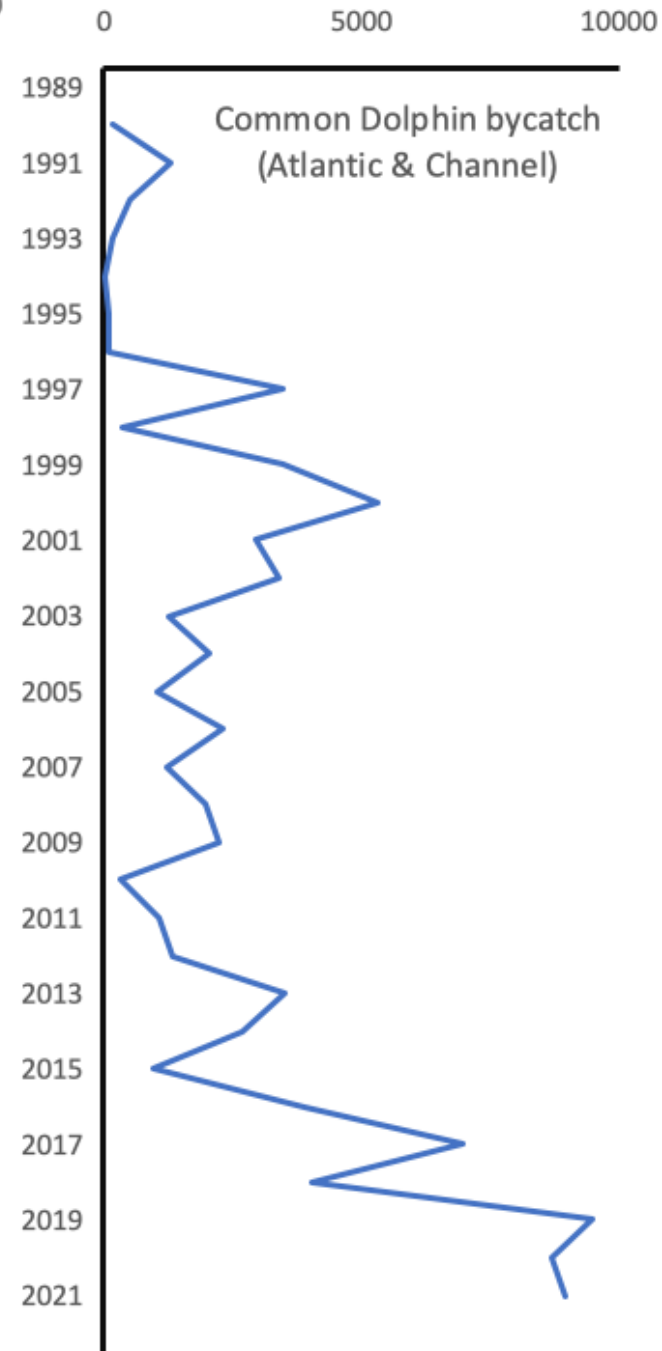
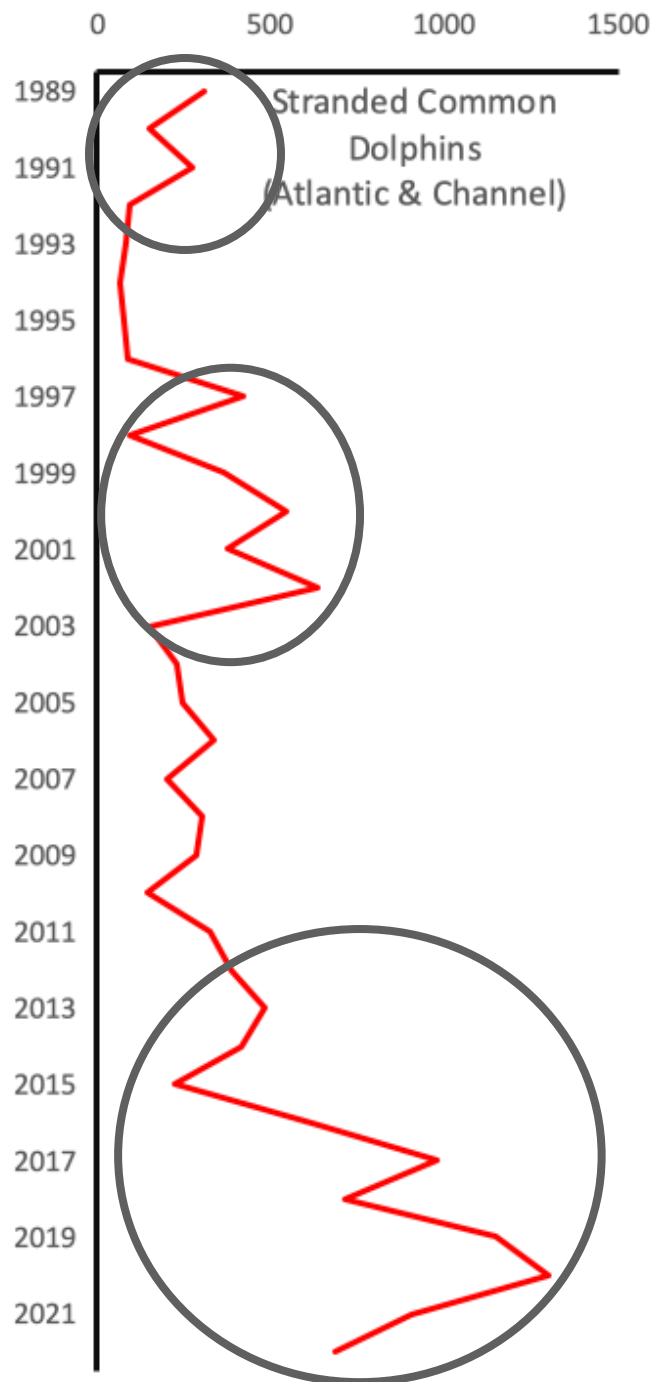
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There is a long tradition of dolphin and porpoise killing in the Bay of Biscay:

- deliberate destruction of animals perceived as competitors from 1900-1960's,
- intentional catch for subsistence, local marketing of dolphin meat (until early 1970s)
- incidental catches (sometimes opportunistically used as food).

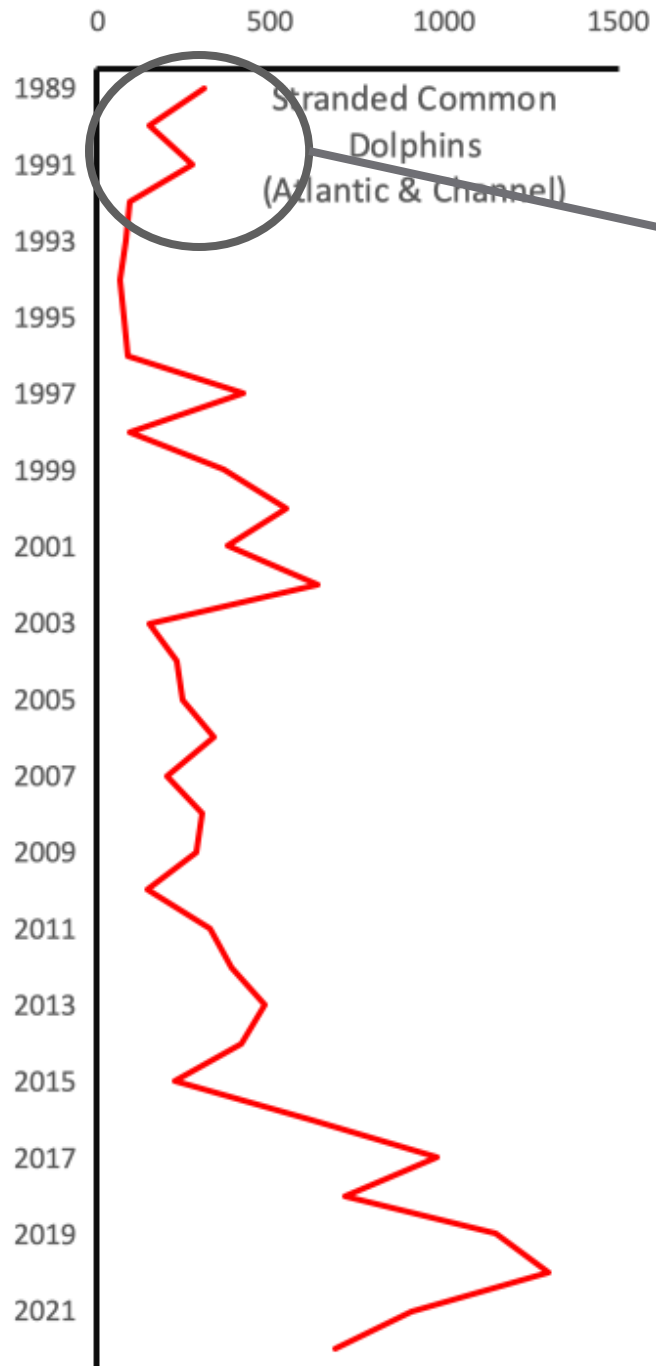


13.04.2023, La Tranche sur Mer (85), France. © Pelagis

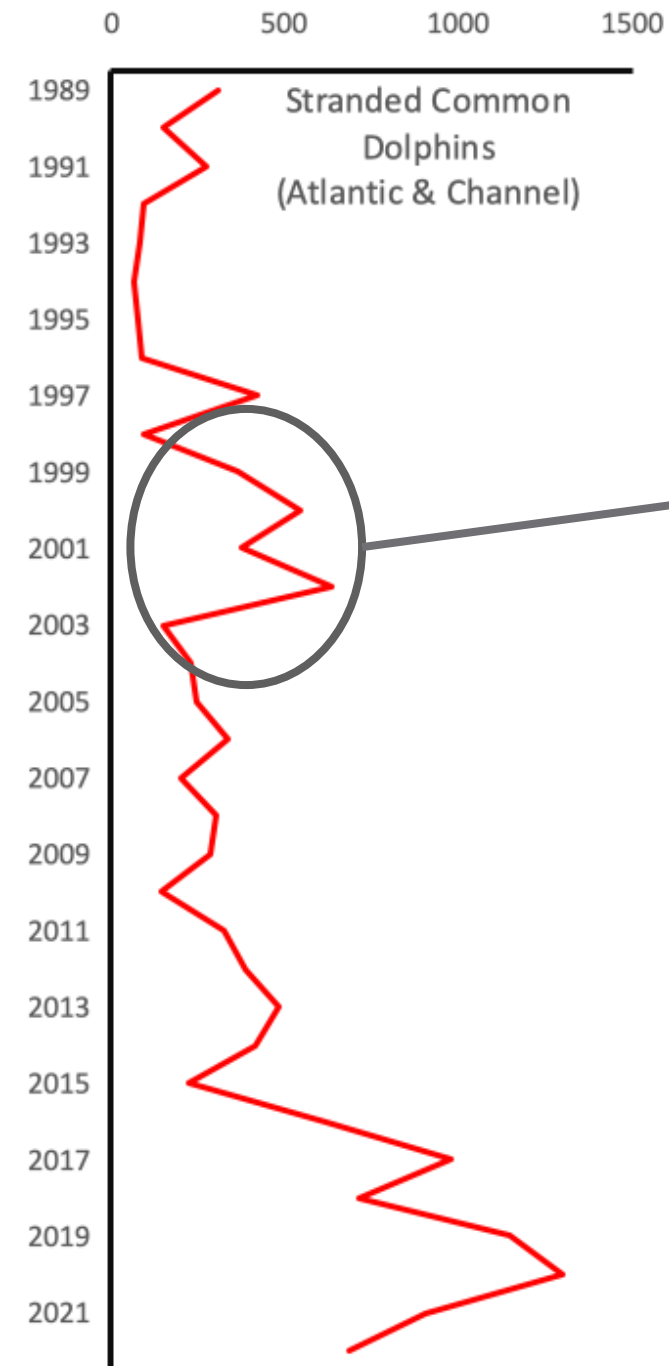


Unusual stranding events were first recorded in 1989-1991, then 1997-2002, and in 2012-14 and 2016-present, with ever increasing intensity.

Bycatch mortality follows the same general pattern, but differs slightly in details, because of the particular wind regime experienced each winter.



- First records of common dolphin strandings with bycatch evidence
- The tuna fishery vs dolphin bycatch controversy
- Reduction in drift-net length in 1991 and ban on Jan 1, 2002.
- Problem: summer offshore fishery whereas strandings were recorded in winter...



- New series of unusual multiple stranding events occurred from 1997-2002, with a large proportion of individuals showing bycatch marks.

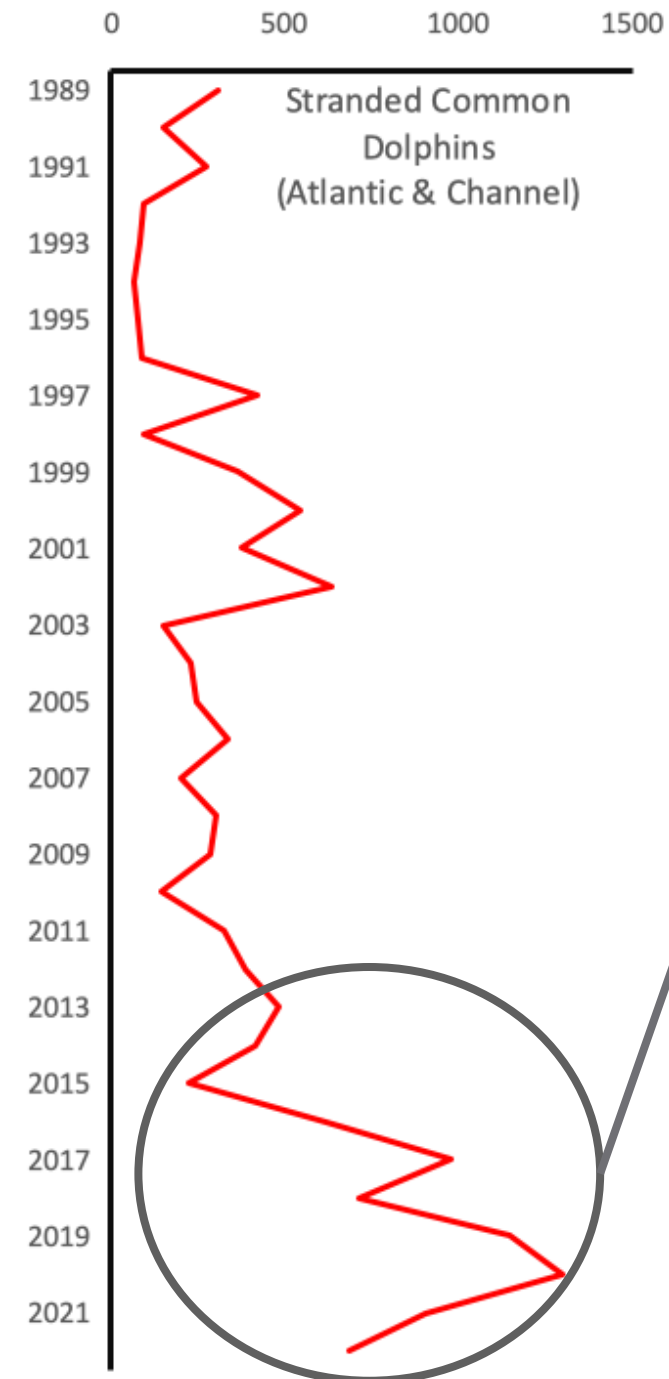
-From 2002-2005, a national working group on bycatch is established under DPMA\* supervision, with DEB\*\*, fishermen representatives, Pelagis, Ifremer

-Focus: bycatch in pelagic trawls

-Research projects (ecology and demography of CD, test of mitigation measures)

\*DPMA: central administration in charge of fisheries

\*\*DEB: central administration in charge of biodiversity



-Unprecedented stranding levels from 2016-onwards, mostly in January to March (but significant catches also in summer time).

-From 2017-onwards, a new national working group on bycatch was established under DPMA supervision, with DEB, OFB, Fisheries Organisations, *Pelagis*, Ifremer, NGOs, and still more recently by EU commission DG MARE and DG ENV...

-Bycatch levels between 4,000 and 9,500/year \*

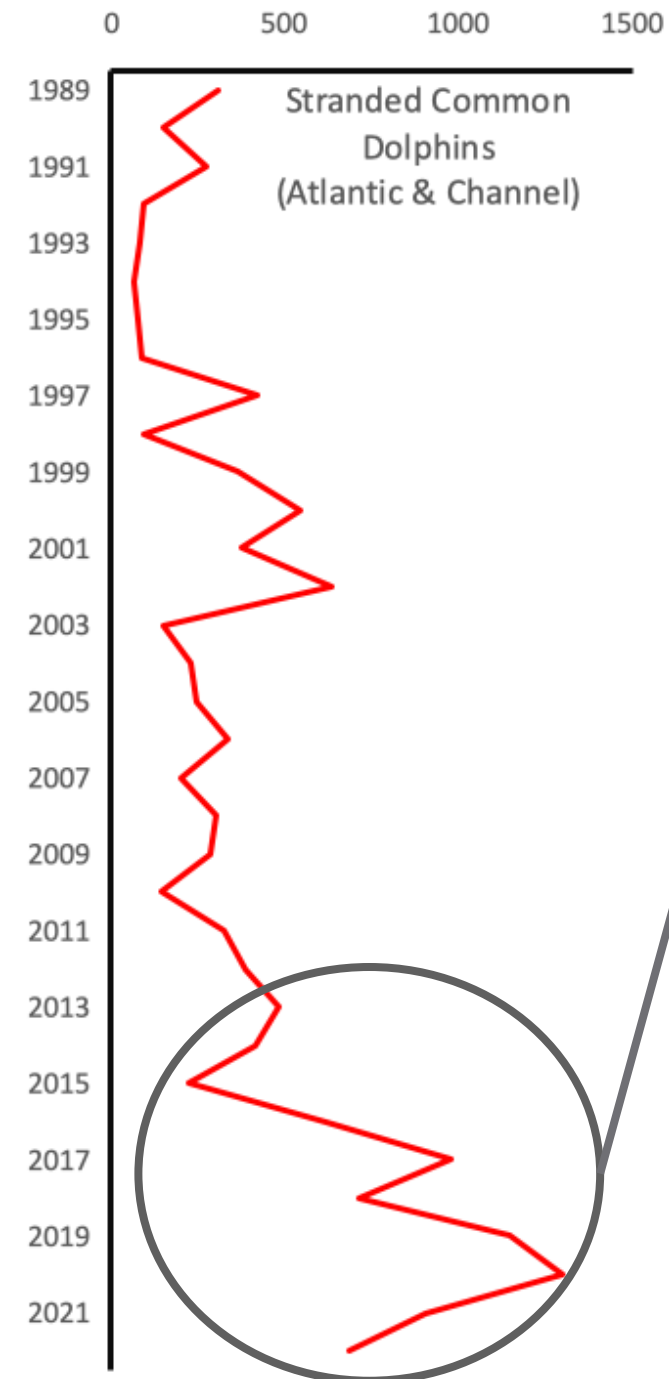
-Abundance stable since 2011 in winter, but distribution more coastal.

-Impact on demography

- Highest levels of bycatch in net métiers.

\*see my talk tomorrow morning





-2019: Self reporting of bycatch become mandatory  
 -DDD pingers on all pelagic trawls after a short feasibility test (PIC, 2018, *Pêcheurs de Bretagne*), mandatory since 2020.

-Many projects at different scales (conservation status of CD, mitigation trials on nets, REM\*)

-Mitigation trials: new Cetasaver efficiency (LICADO), pinger with informative rather deterrent signal (DolphinFree), pinger on hull and activated during setting (PiFIL), reflective line in nets (LICADO).

Small scale tests



OBSCAME  
OBSERVATION ELECTRONIQUE

LICADO

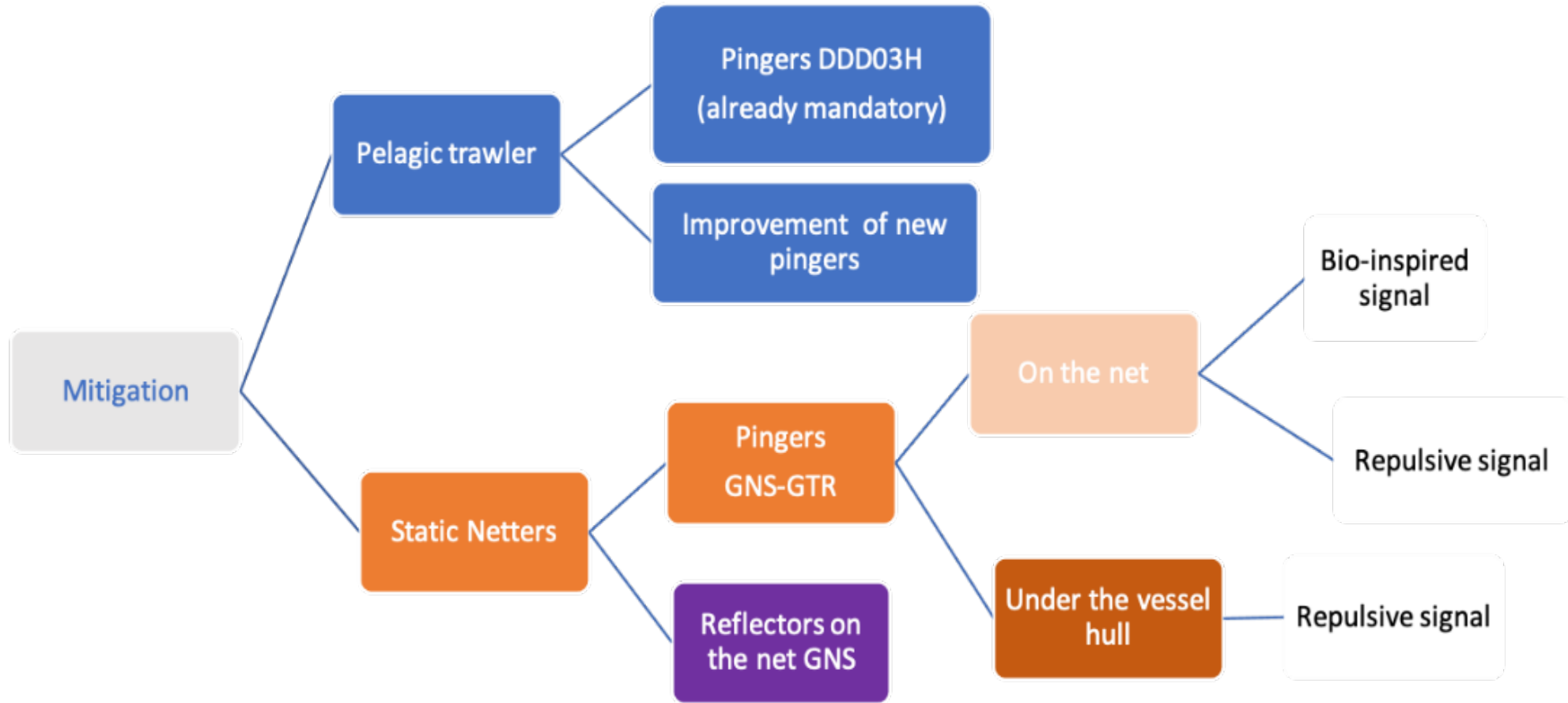


Pechdauphir

PiFIL

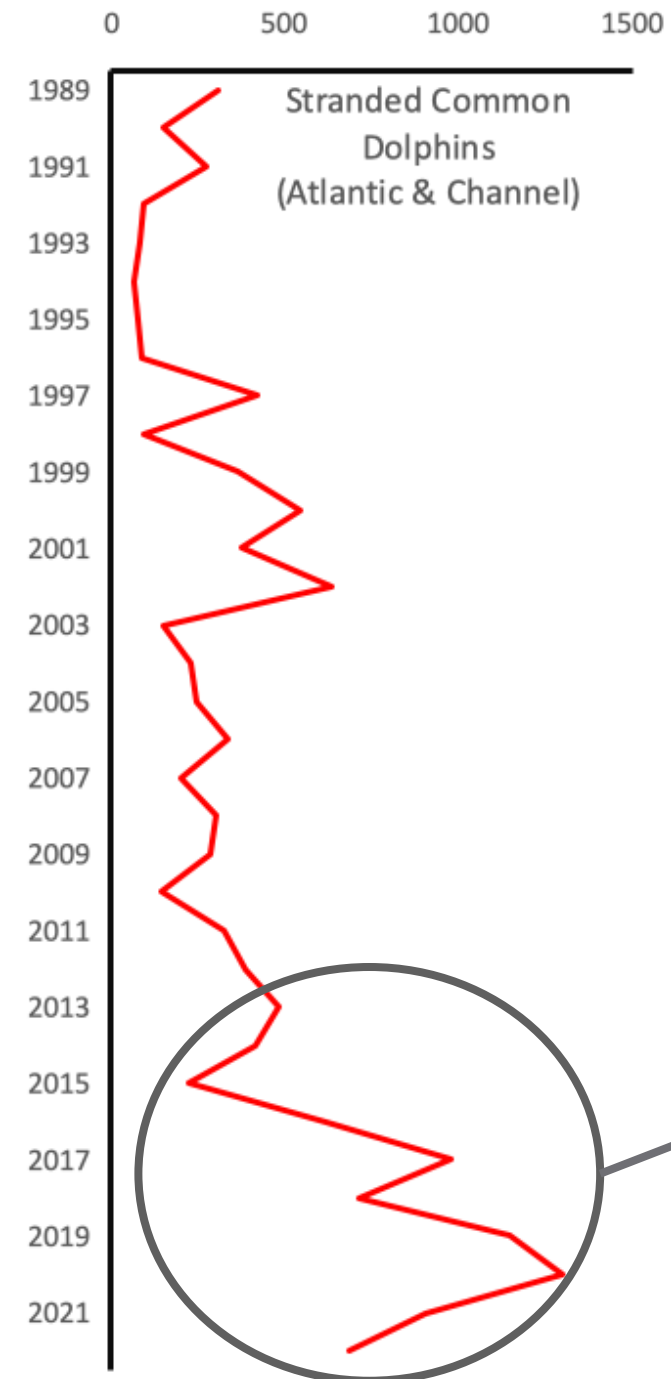
\*See Stéphanie Tachaires' presentation about OBSCAME project





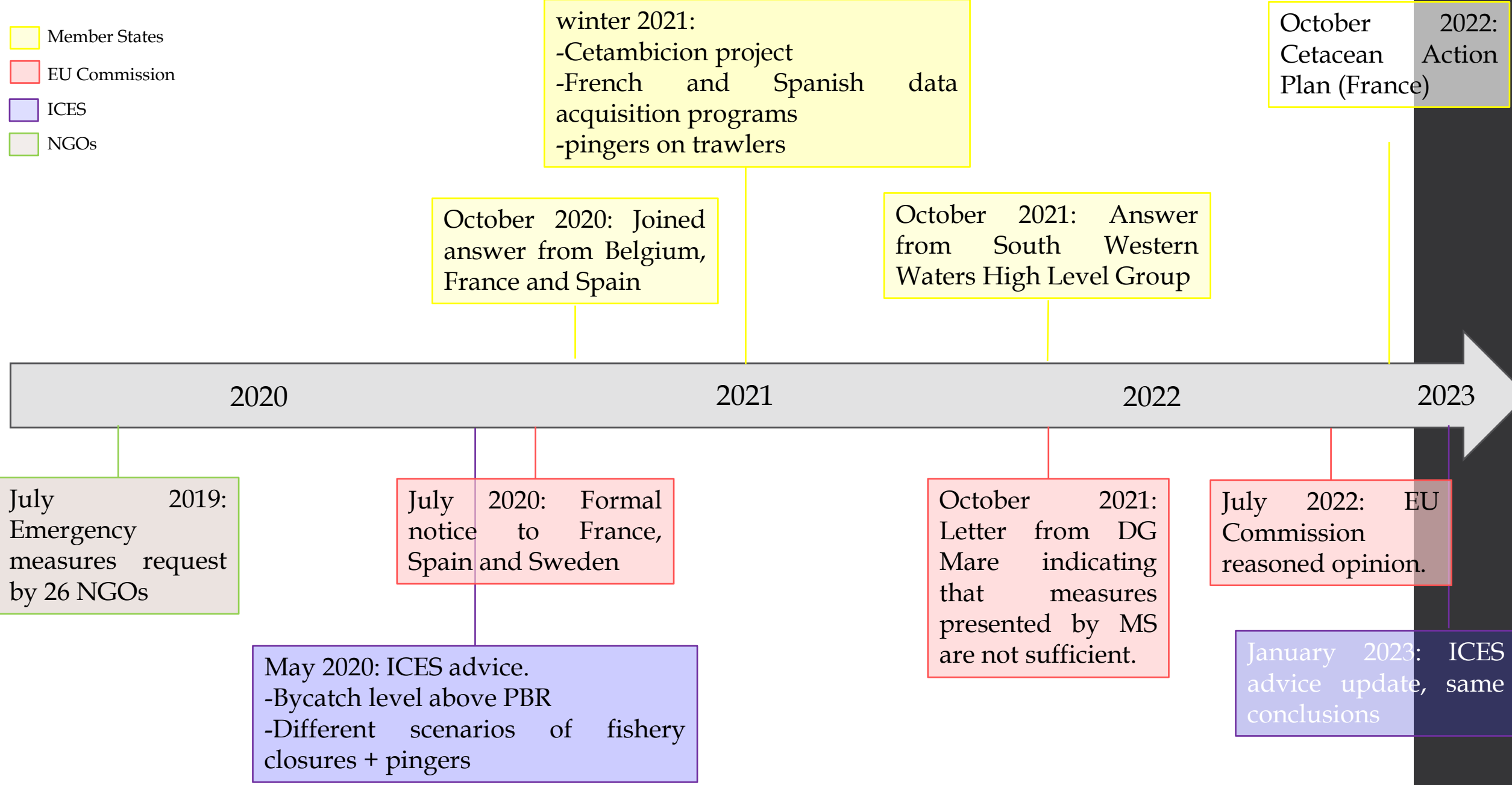
All results: ICES. 2023. Workshop on mitigation measures to reduce bycatch of short-beaked common dolphins in the Bay of Biscay (WKEMBYC2; outputs from 2022 meeting).

ICES Scientific Reports. 05:03. 66 pp. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.21940337>



France vs EU Commission infringement procedure.

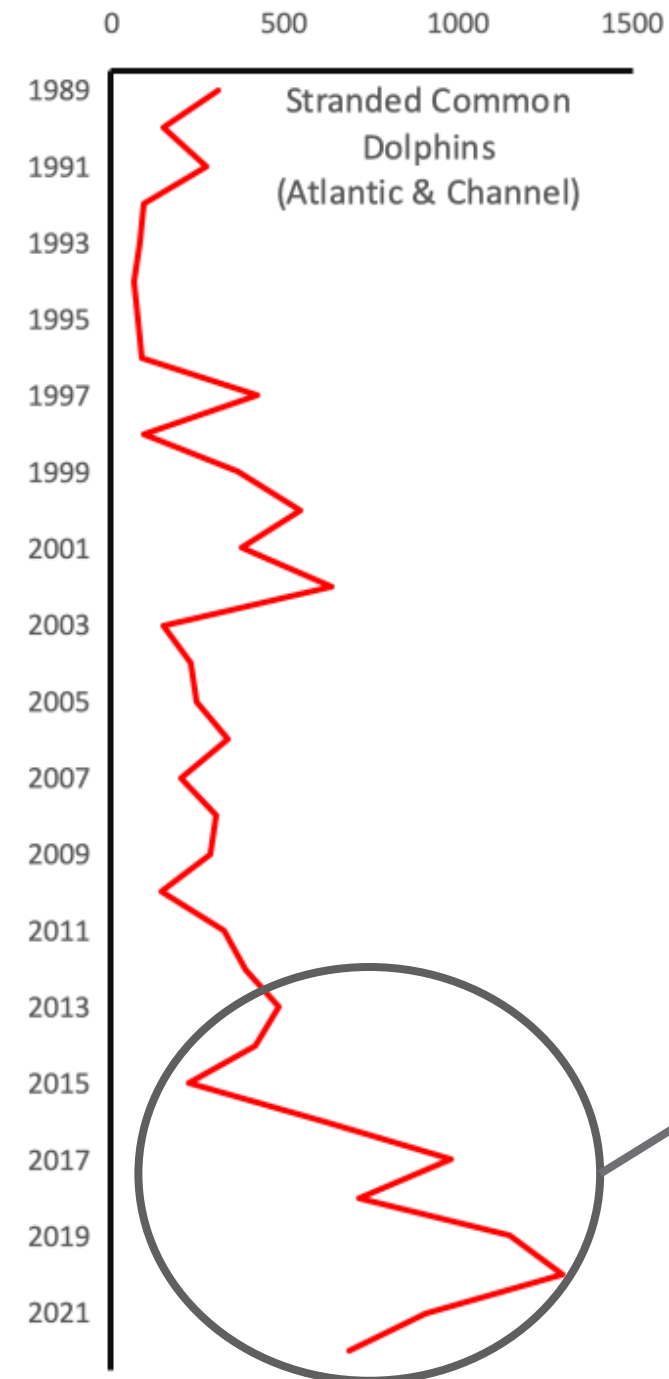
- Member States
- EU Commission
- ICES
- NGOs





# France Action Plan 2022-24 (version as of October 2022)

- 1- Compulsory contribution of gill netters to the test of one of the three technical mitigation measures in 2023-24:
  - - Hull pinger (PIFIL) : 130 vessels
  - - informative beacon on nets (DOLPHINFREE) : 45 vessels – acoustic reflectors on nets : 40 vessels.
- 2 – monitoring of the above mentioned netters either by onboard observers (100 vessels) or by digital cameras (100 vessels).
- 3 – VMS on all pelagic trawlers and netters working in the BoB.
- Time line : gradual implementation of the three items in 2023 (administrative and technical delays); fully operational in 2024; data analyses and conclusion in 2024; decision by end 2024\* : expand successful measures/spatiotemporal closures if none.



-France vs EU Commission infringement procedure: Last step before referral to the European Court of Justice.

-March 2023: Following legal complaint of 3 NGO's, the French Council of state imposed fishery closures to reduce bycatch in the Bay of Biscay

-Demonstrations from fishing industry, suspension of some research programmes