

# 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)



A postcard from *Piriac sur mer*, early XX<sup>th</sup> century



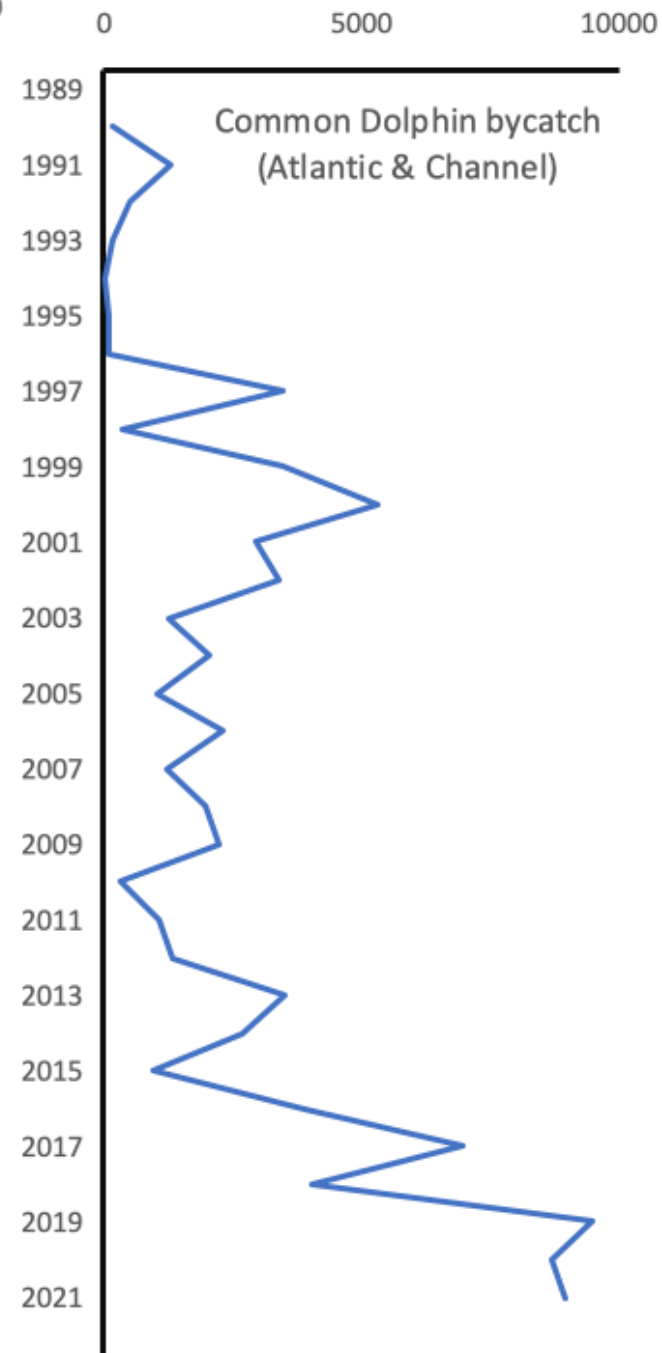
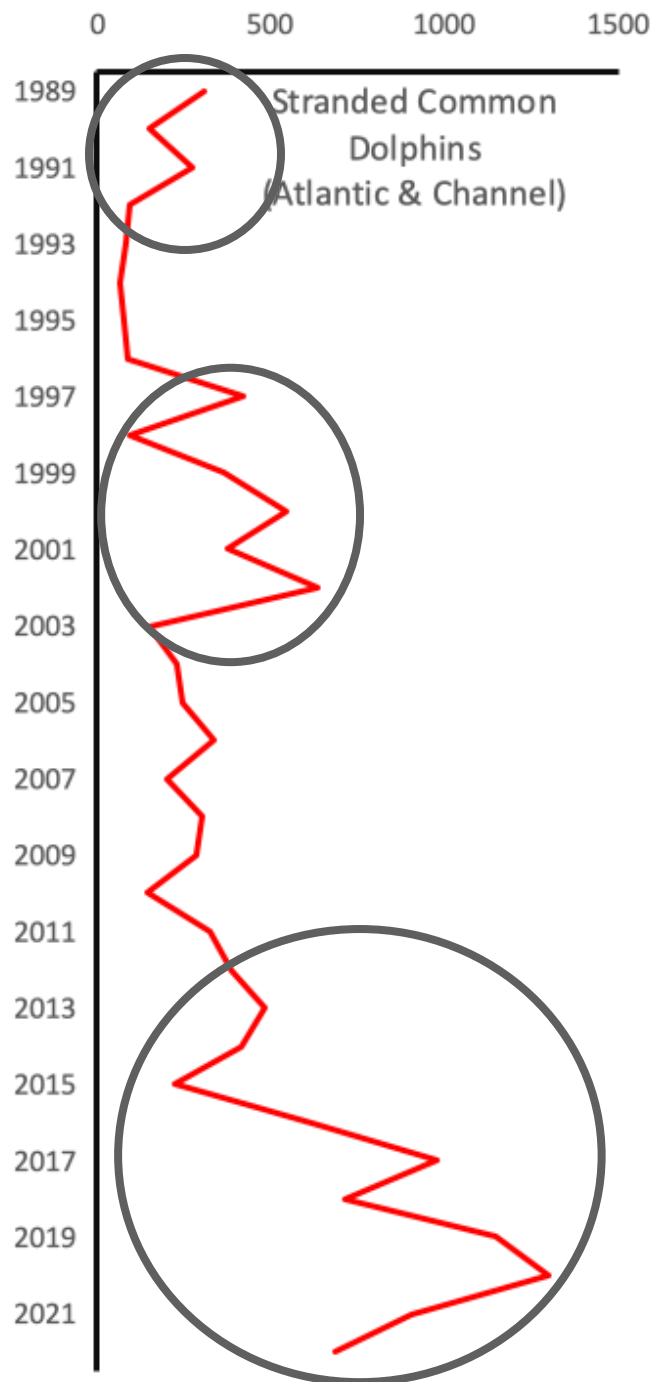
# Context of the Bay of Biscay

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)
- incidental catches (sometimes opportunistically used as food).

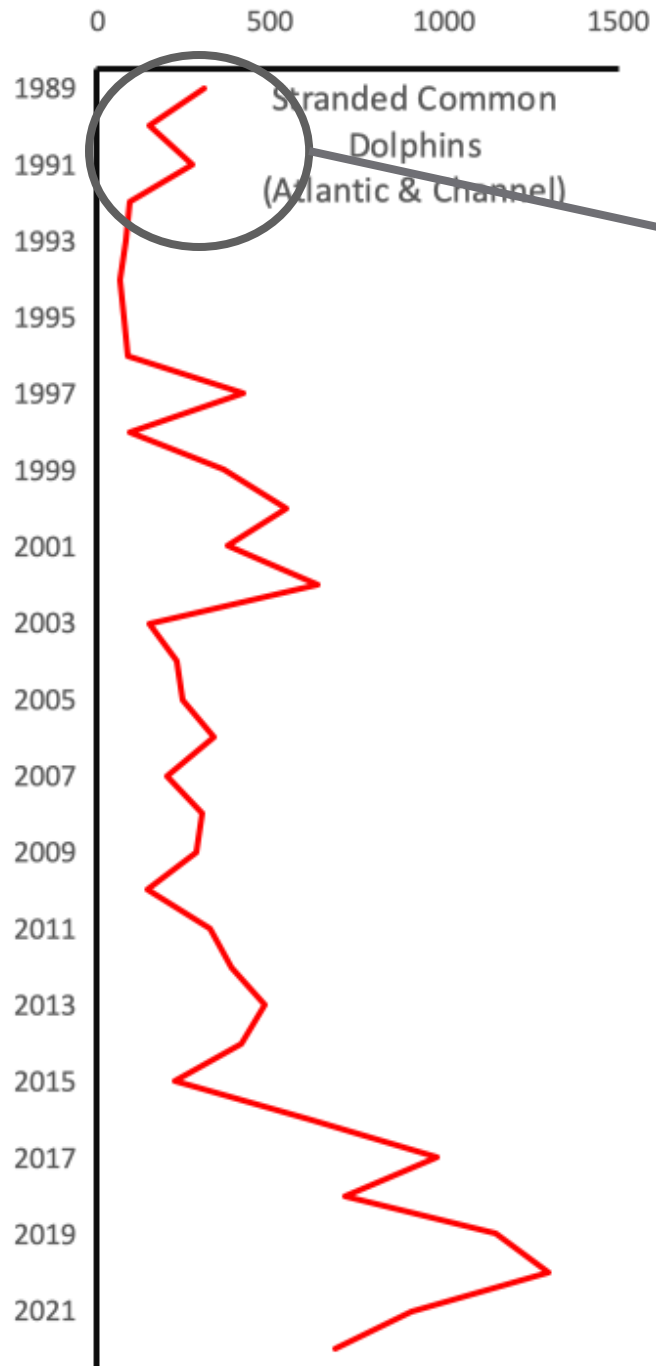


13.04.2023, La Tranche sur Mer (85), France. © Pelagis

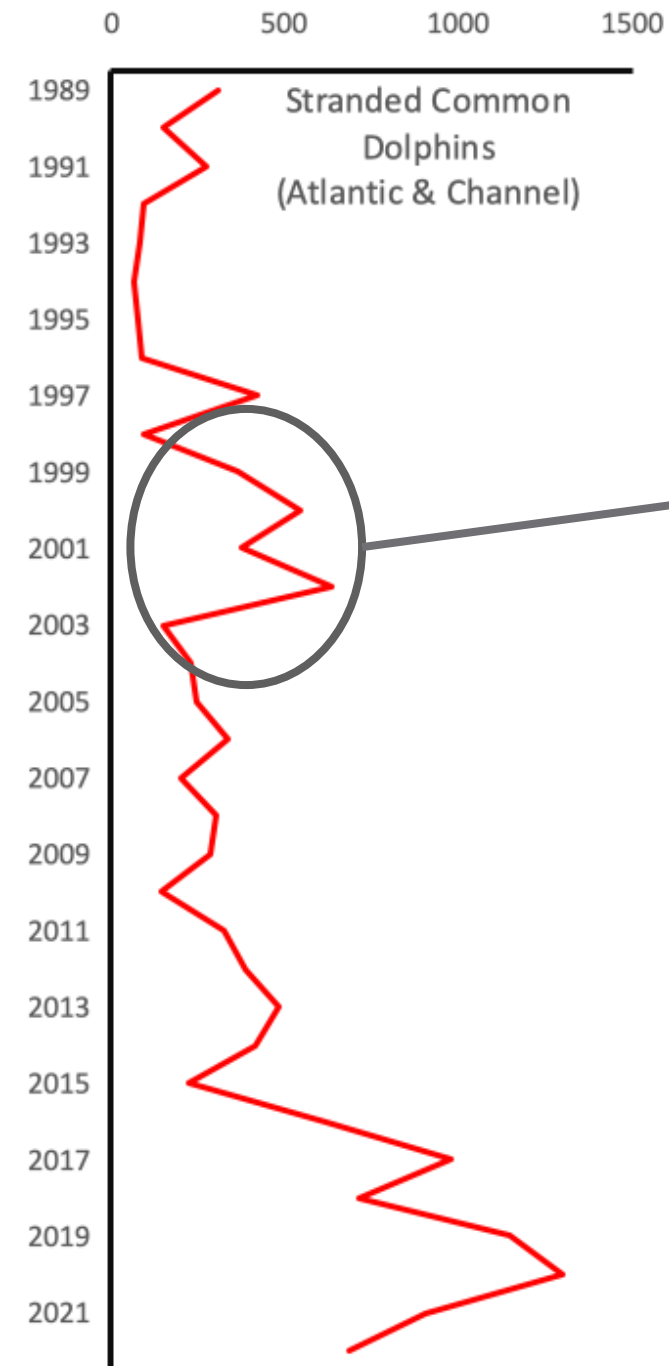


Unusual stranding events were first recorded in 1989-1991, then 1997-2002, and in 2012-14 and 2016-present, with ever increasing intensity.

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.

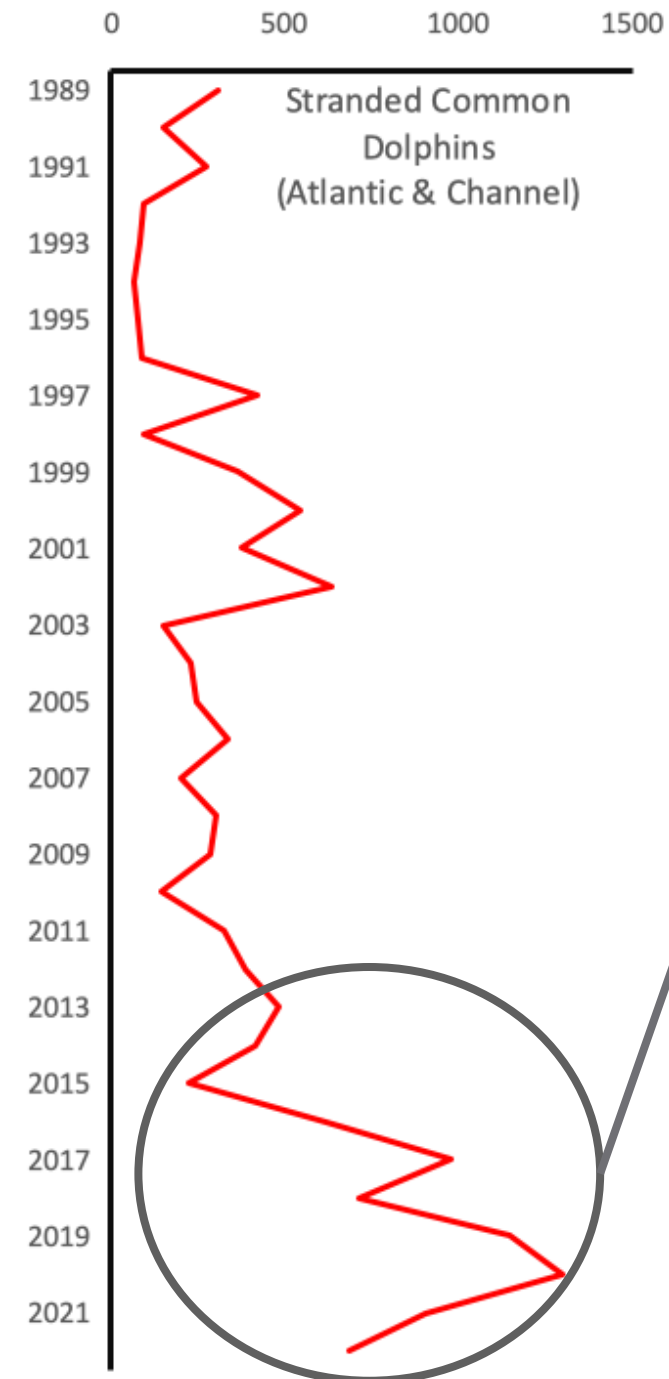
-From 2002-2005, a national working group on bycatch is established under DPMA\* supervision, with DEB\*\*, fishermen representatives, Pelagis, Ifremer

-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 \*

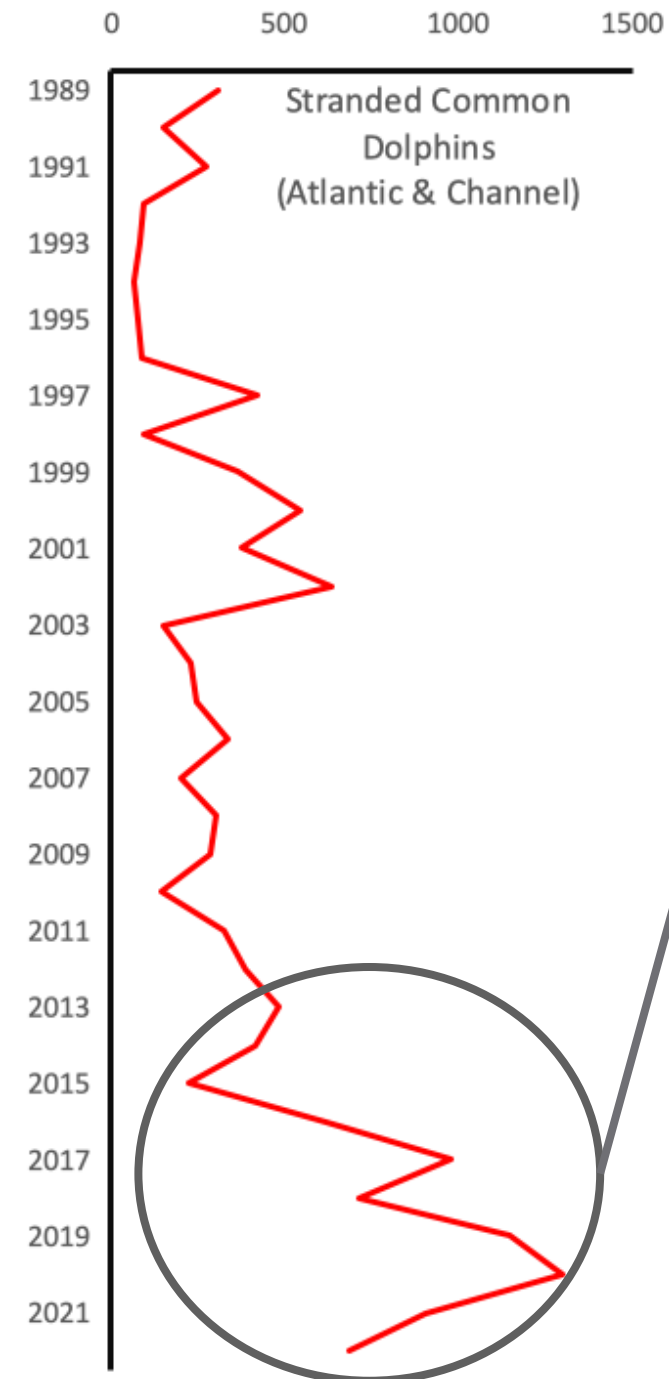
-Abundance stable since 2011 in winter, but distribution more coastal.

-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



Pechdauphir



LICADO

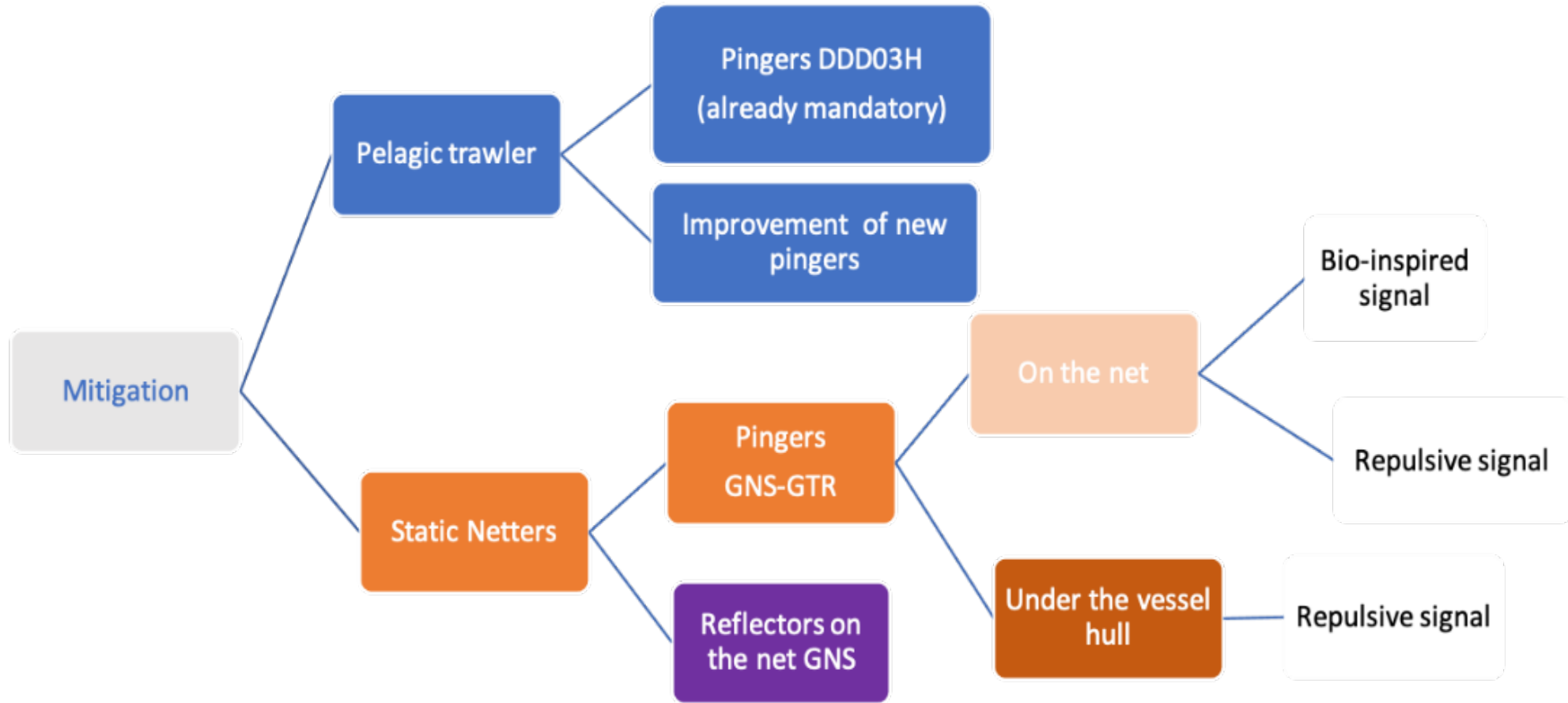


PiFIL



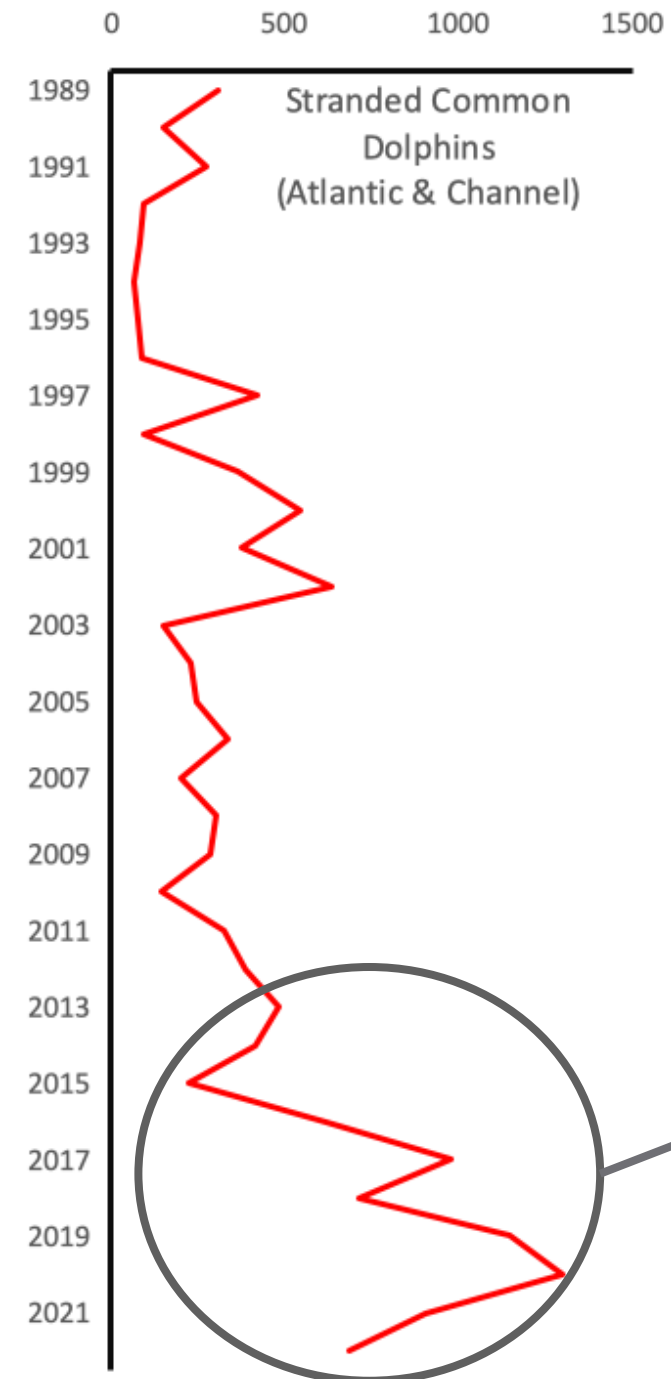
\*See Stéphanie Tachaires' presentation about OBSCAME project





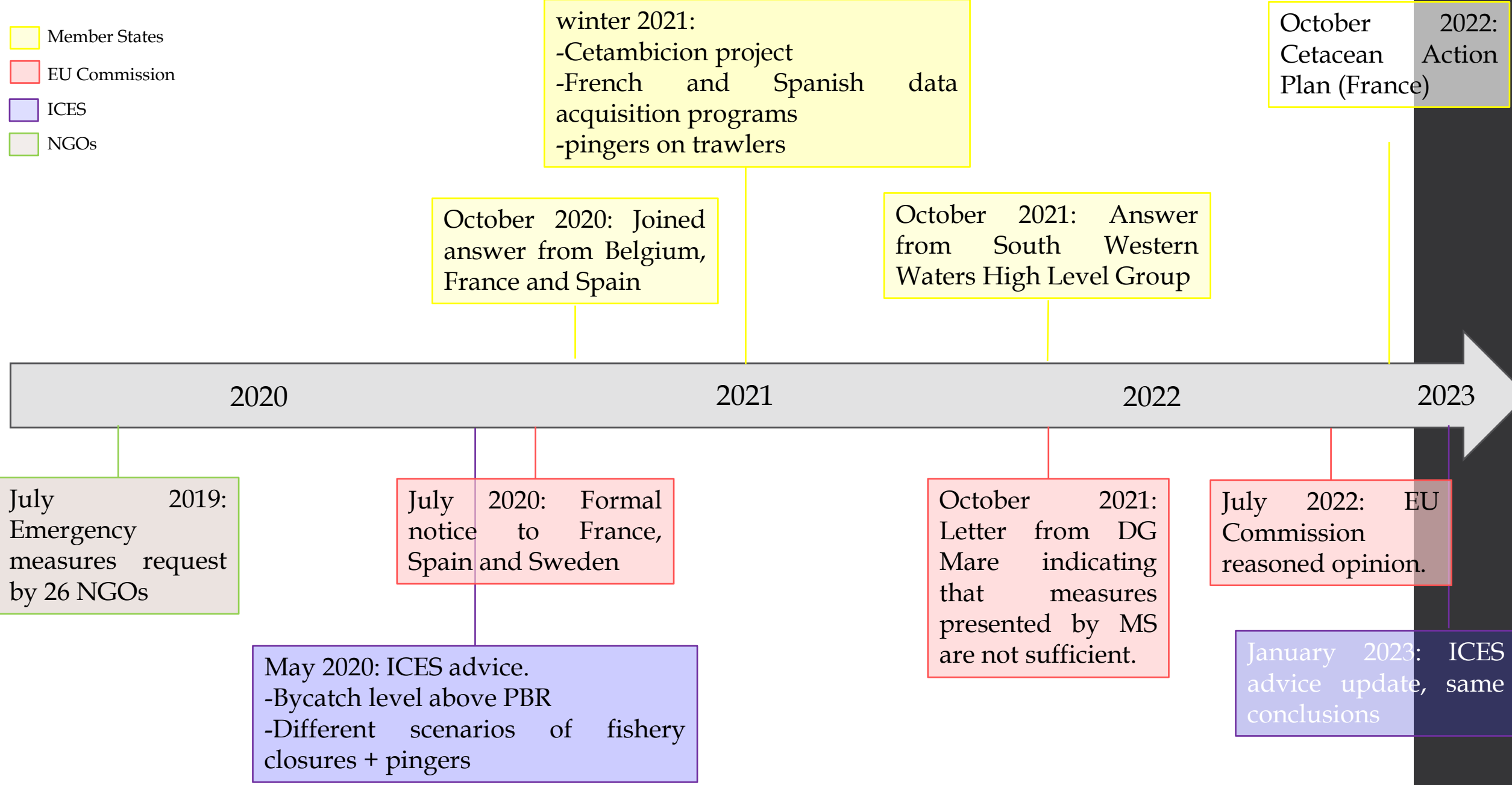
All results: ICES. 2023. Workshop on mitigation measures to reduce bycatch of short-beaked common dolphins in the Bay of Biscay (WKEMBYC2; outputs from 2022 meeting).

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



France vs EU Commission infringement procedure.

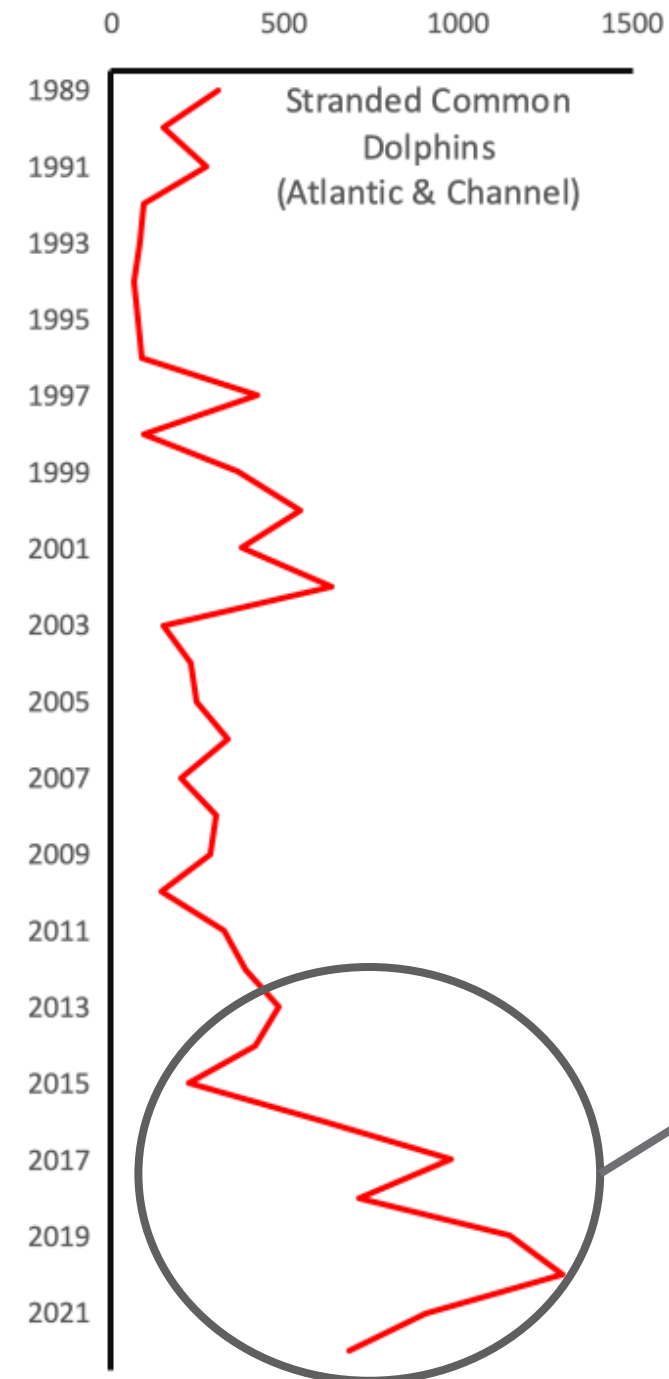
- Member States
- EU Commission
- ICES
- NGOs





# 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