

GILLIAN ANDERSON STRIPS BARE SHOCKING TRUTHS OF DEEP SEA FISHING

British taxpayer's money is being given to French fishing trawlers to destroy the deep seabed in British waters.

This is the message being promoted by Gillian Anderson and others in the latest collection of "Fishlove" images, the photographic campaign that is highlighting the issue of collapsing fish stocks.

The collection, photographed by French portrait photographer Denis Rouvre, includes images of Gillian Anderson, Olivia Williams, Goldie and a number of French celebrities posing with fish.

Anderson's Fishlove portrait with a deep sea Conger Eel is being released to coincide with last ditch efforts to end deep-sea bottom trawling in European waters, a practice that is wiping out deep sea ecosystems the size of London every day.

A vote to ban the practice will take place in the European Parliament on the 10th December, and is presently being blocked by the French government.

Deep sea trawling uses giant nets which drag along the seabed, destroying everything in its path. The practice has been condemned by scientists and campaigners as being one of the most destructive form of fishing in history.

"What is really shocking is that deep sea fishing is wholly dependent on taxpayer's money for its survival. The practice is not only environmentally but also economically unsustainable," says Nicholas Röhl, who founded the Fishlove campaign with the actress Greta Scacchi.

"Public money is being used to destroy the marine habitat for the gain of a tiny number of (predominantly French) fishermen," he says.

The majority of deep sea bottom trawling is conducted by less than a dozen French vessels, six of which belong to the fleet of the French retail giant Intermarché.

All eyes are on whether the French government will continue to obstruct any moves to eliminate the most destructive deep-sea fishing gear in the lead up to the crucial vote on the 10th December.

President Hollande's administration is seen by campaigners as having caved in to intense pressure from the lobbyists representing Intermarché and the powerful French fishing industry.

What is less clear is why the UK government is not doing more to oppose the French position.

"The UK has no benefit in this fishery, and furthermore is losing invaluable ecosystems because of the activity of the French vessels," says Claire Nouvian from the French non-profit organization BLOOM, which has set up a petition

(<http://petition.bloomassociation.org/stop-the-destruction-of-deep-sea/>) to end the practice.

“It doesn’t make any sense that the UK government is effectively supporting French industrial fishers over and above the interests of UK citizens,” she says.

“Despite receiving millions of euros in subsidies, these industrial vessels are in chronic deficit. Bottom trawling is a financial black hole that would not exist without our tax money,” Nouvian adds.

“Deep-sea ecosystems are the greatest unexplored habitat in the world. An overwhelming body of scientific opinion suggests that we should be doing everything to protect them. Why, then, do we allow economically unprofitable practices that cause them significant long-term damage?” says Steven Devlin, economist at the New Economics Foundation.

In campaigning for the end of deep sea fishing, Fishlove is hoping to build on its success in influencing various votes that have taken place this year.

“We’ve helped turn the tide on years of mismanagement of European fisheries this year by putting the issue on the front covers and pages of the world’s media,” says Greta Scacchi, co-founder of the campaign.

In recognition of its instrumental role in the campaign, Fishlove was recently asked by Maria Damanaki (European Commissioner in charge of Fisheries and Marine Conservation), to hold an exhibition of the Fishlove portraits within the European Commission building in Brussels.

Earlier this year, the European Parliament voted to end over-fishing through the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, to restrict subsidies for boat construction and to ban shark finning on board vessels of the European Union.

“The European Parliament just needs to vote for the elimination of the most destructive deep sea fishing methods to leave a solid legacy behind,” says Scacchi.

Further facts and quotes:

The New Economic Foundation calculates the costs of deep sea trawling as between €388 and €494 per tax payer for every tonne of fish caught by deep-sea bottom trawling.

Campaigners argue that trawling is bad for jobs: trawling sustains six times fewer jobs per tonne of fish compared to other fishing methods, such as long lining. (Source: New Economic Foundation)

Deep Sea trawling is costly in financial terms (not profitable without subsidies) in environmental terms (damages valuable marine habitat and species) and in social terms (it supports fewer jobs than more environmentally friendly activities like long-lining).

UK citizens (and EU citizens as a whole) are also paying in terms of damage done to valuable ecosystems in their waters. Even if they will never see them with their own eyes. Those habitats and species have intrinsic value.

“The continuation of bottom trawling for deep-sea species simply doesn’t make sense. The evidence suggests that it is unprofitable even on simple financial terms. When you start to consider the other environmental and social costs that come with it, the case is quite clear – deep-sea bottom trawling costs us money, jobs and damages our environment. It’s essential that the European Parliament does what is best for EU society as a whole and imposes limits on this costly practice, providing relief to those of us that bear the costs but don’t share in the limited benefits.” Stephen Devlin (New Economics Foundation)

Please note that European Commissioner Maria Damanaki is available for interview on this issue.

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