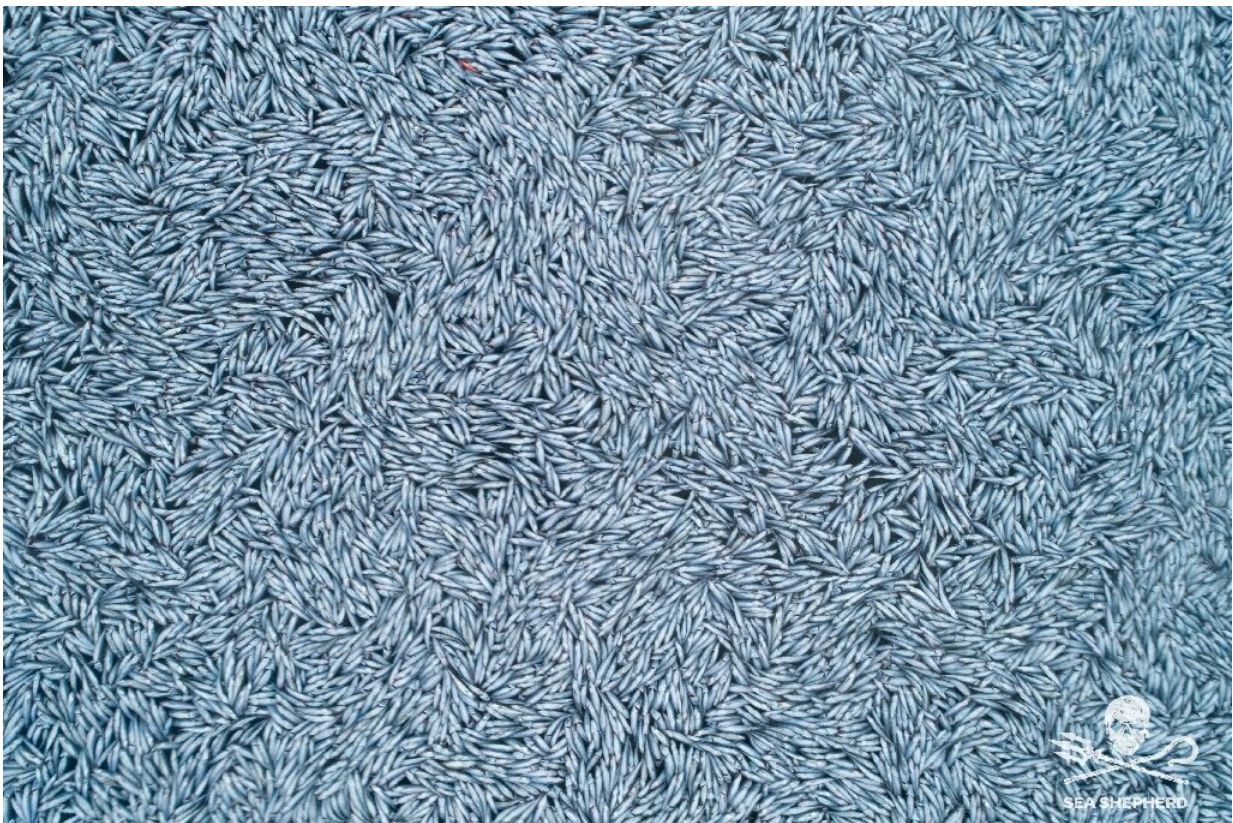


# NGO files complaint over dead fish deluge off French coast

February 8 2022

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An estimated 100,000 dead fish were found floating off the French coast.

Environmental organisation Sea Shepherd on Tuesday filed a legal complaint against the owners of a large fishing vessel after tens of thousands of dead fish were spotted off France's Atlantic coast.

The NGO last week published footage of what it said were more than 100,000 dead [fish](#) floating in the sea some 300 kilometres (186 miles) off the southwestern port city of La Rochelle in the Bay of Biscay.

The fish, of the cod species blue whiting, had been caught by the Margiris, one of the world's biggest fishing trawlers at 143 metres (470 feet) long.

On Thursday, the Margiris logged a "fishing incident" with the freezer-trawler association PFA, saying its net had ruptured, causing the involuntary release of the fish into the sea.

The PFA said the breakage, "a rare occurrence" had been due to "the unexpectedly large size of the fish caught".

The incident had also been reported to the vessel's flag state, Lithuania, it said.

But Sea Shepherd said it suspected the blue whiting, an [abundant species](#) in the northeast Atlantic, might have been discarded deliberately.

"Some vessels, when they catch a great number of fish of low commercial value like blue whiting, discard them to make room for higher-value fish," said Lamya Essemlali, president of Sea Shepherd France.



Blue whiting is very common in this part of the Atlantic.

This practice, she told AFP, "is completely illegal".

Sea Shepherd's case was based on the Margiris's failure to bring the fish it caught to shore in accordance with fishing rules, she said. The organisation had backed up its claim "with various elements of what we found at the site", she added.

France's maritime minister, Annick Girardin, said on Friday there would be an inquiry into the incident, and that the [dead fish](#) would be subtracted from the Margiris's fishing quota.

"This was a non-authorized discarding of fish," a spokesperson at her ministry said.

The EU's commissioner for oceans and fisheries Virginijus Sinkevicius—himself a Lithuanian national—said the European Commission would also look into the matter.

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