

**4 February 2022**

**STATEMENT BY THE PELAGIC FREEZER-TRAWLER ASSOCIATION (PFA)**

Yesterday, images of dead fish in the Bay of Biscay were shared by Sea Shepherd, coinciding with fishing activities by - among others - PFA members' vessels. The PFA fully understands the emotions such images can bring.

We would like to clarify that around 5.50am on 3 February 2022, an amount of blue whiting was involuntarily released into the sea from the Margiris vessel, due to a rupture in the cod-end part of its net. Such an accident is a rare occurrence and in this case was caused by the unexpectedly large size of the fish caught. In line with EU law, the incident and the quantities lost have been recorded in the vessel's log book and reported to the authorities of the vessel's flag state, Lithuania.

Blue whiting is a target species which is of great value to our members. Moreover, it is a quota species and as such the lost fish will be deducted from the vessel's quota. It is not in our members' interest to lose any fish they take on board and we regret that this fish will now not be available for human consumption. The Margiris has implemented drastic measures to prevent similar accidents in the future. The trawls have been adapted so that they are able to deal with the exceptional size of the fish currently in the area concerned.

The PFA and its members remain committed to responsible and sustainable fisheries and will continue to work closely together with the public authorities and all stakeholders.

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