

# Fact sheet: Fishery with passive fishing gear

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## General

Passive fishing gear is the umbrella term for all fishing methods with static fishing gear in the water. There are different types of passive fishing gear, the most common being a static net. Other common types of passive fishing gear are fyke nets, lobster pots, and seine nets.

## Principle

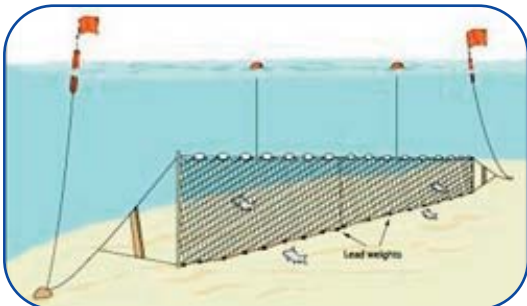
Fishery with passive fishing gear is based on the principle that fish are caught because they get tangled up in the net.

## Target Species

In the North Sea and the Wadden Sea, static-net fishermen mainly fish for cod, sole, hake, turbot, anglerfish, grey mullet, seabass and plaice. Fyke nets are used in fresh water and sea water to catch eel, pike, pike-perch and smelt. The lobster pot is intended to catch lobsters. A seine net is used to catch pike or perch and is also used to sample fish stocks.

## Description

**Static net** – consists of a single or a multi-panelled net between a so-called headrope and a ground rope. The nets are kept on the seabed with anchors and lead cords and stand up vertically because of the floats at the top of the net. The buoys are for marking purposes. When the area runs dry, the net lies flat on the seabed. Nets are often tied together in a row and may take up many kilometres. As of 1 January 2010, a maximum of 25 kilometres has been imposed. Different rules apply in some special coastal areas.



## Where

In the Netherlands, static-net fishery is mainly practised in the coastal areas of the North Sea and the Wadden Sea and in inland waters. Countries where static nets are used frequently include the United Kingdom, France, Denmark and Norway.

## When

Generally, static-net fishery takes place all year round. The larger part of the Dutch static-net fishermen only fish for sole from April to November. These fishermen use the winter for maintenance of the nets. No more than 15 vessels fish for cod during the winter months, whilst a small number of vessels fish purely for seabass and grey mullet during the summer.

## Fleet

In the Netherlands, static-net fishery is a small-scale and traditional form of fishery. It comprises a fleet of approximately 70 small vessels, spread along the entire Dutch coast. It mainly concerns the use of anchored seabed nets that lie flat on the seabed most of the time, and that only stand up when the tide turns, enabling the catch of seabed fish, such as sole and cod. The larger part of the static-net fishermen fish for sole in the coastal strip. Static-net fishery mainly concerns small vessels.

## Social Debate

Fishery with gill nets is extremely selective. Fish that are too small simply swim through the mesh and fish that are too large do not get stuck. By setting out nets in exactly the right place and at the right depth, the fishermen can pretty much target the species that are caught. This means there is little or no bycatch of undersized fish. Static-net fishery is often linked to the bycatch of harbour porpoise. Over the past few years, there has been an increase in the number of stranded harbour porpoise on the Dutch coast. It is often difficult to determine the cause of death of the harbour porpoise, and estimates of bycatch as a cause of death run from 7 to 70%. It is often not clear where the fish died and because of which type of fishery, and therefore it is difficult to quantify the role Dutch static-net fishery plays in this particular problem. It is also not clear whether bycatch as a cause of death plays a significant role in relation to population levels, because the number of harbour porpoise in the North Sea is difficult to count. A number of different bodies are carrying out research in order to clarify this debate. They are also considering the possibility of pingers - devices that produce sound which would encourage harbour porpoise to stay away from static-net fishery.

## MSC

In 2009, part of the static-net fishery for sole in the North Sea acquired the MSC Certificate. This means that the fishery is (1) carried out on healthy stocks, (2) has a minimum effect on the ecosystem, and (3) is carried out as part of a good management plan. Certification is issued by an independent third party.

## Other types of passive fishing gear

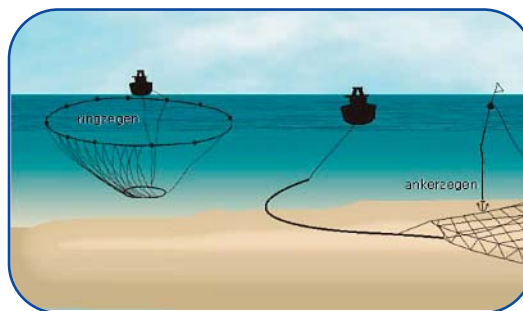
### Fyke nets

A fyke net is a net that is tensioned around hoops or a framework; it is fitted with one or more funnel shaped nets on the inside that prevent the fish from swimming back out (throats). On the front, fyke nets may have one or more wings. Fyke nets are fixed to stakes in the ground.



### Lobster pot

A basket, consisting of a frame around which a net or other material has been knotted, with one or more openings with a throat. The basket is anchored to the seabed and can be baited or not.



### Seine net

A seine net is fishing gear that consists of a top line (headrope) with floats and a weighted ground rope, with a net tensioned in between. Sometimes the net has a throat. The seine may only be anchored to the seabed on one side. The seine is pulled through the water which means someone is always active with or near the fishing gear.

### References

1. Beleidsbesluit Vaste Vistuigen Vast en Zeker! (Policy decree passive fishing gear, sure!) December 2002.
2. Press release 'Secretary of State Verburg imposes limits on static-net fishery' of 24-08-2009, Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Safety.
3. Report "Onderzoek naar bijvangst bruinvissen in de Nederlandse visserij" April 2009, IMARES Wageningen (Research into the bycatch of harbour porpoise in Dutch fishery)
4. Report 'Bestaande vistuigen als mogelijke alternatief voor de boomkor' (Existing fishing gear as a possible alternative to the beam trawl) RIKZ, 2001
5. [www.vissersbond.nl](http://www.vissersbond.nl)
6. [www.msc.org](http://www.msc.org)
7. [www.pvis.nl](http://www.pvis.nl)

**For more information about the fish species, see the fish facts on [www.pvis.nl](http://www.pvis.nl)**

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