



9.1.2020

To DG Mare

Virginijus Sinkevičius  
Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries  
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200  
B-1049 BRUSSELS  
BELGIUM

### **Re: Climate Change Impacts on Finnish Winter Seining Fishery**

*Dear mr. Sinkevičius*

Best of greetings from Snowchange Cooperative, a Finnish fishing cooperative representing the Kesälahti winter seiners and other fishing communities in North Karelia (Selkie, Jukajoki, Pielisjoki). We are a 20-year-old cooperative representing and consisting of professional fishermen mainly working on the North Karelian side of lake Puruvesi. We are members of Low Impact Fishermen of Europe.

Puruvesi produces annually up to 450 tonnes of vendace (*coregonus albula*), a salmonid schooling fish. Our fishery is mostly a winter ice-based seining. In the summer we use traps and seining. Many fishermen earn most of their yearly wages or a large part of them on the winter seining which is very sustainable and takes care of the northern lakes and addresses even eutrophication issues. Our fishery was first recorded in 1300 AD in written sources and is currently on the list of Finnish intangible national culture (with Santa Claus and sauna) because of our oral histories and traditional knowledge.

Snowchange Cooperative and our fishermen have worked on their own to register our vendace to have a EU Geographical Indicator for the way we fish and the unique ecological characteristics of our fish. You are welcome to see our fishery in a short film in <https://vimeo.com/174303297>

We re writing to you kindly to inform you about the on-going catastrophe that has met with our fishery. The extremely warm weather, which has now become a new normal, has hit our community and fishery very hard. According to our traditional knowledge and harvest diaries in 1968 our winter seining could be started on 8<sup>th</sup> November. In 2012 the first seining happened on 6<sup>th</sup> February. We are heading again to that date – we have not been able to begin our harvest in 2020 so far at all. There is no ice, and warm weather destroys our possibilities for the winter-based fishery. Our fishermen gather daily at the Kesälahti fish base to repair gear and plan, and look at the Puruvesi lake which is not having the ice we need for our fishery. The same phenomenon is also affecting the extremely endangered ringed Saimaa seal which is living on these waters. In the spring ice melts earlier, it used to last until mid-May – often we have to end the season at the end of March now.

In order for you to appreciate the impacts to the daily life, let me illustrate the loss that we incur daily with this problem. Now we have lost 6-7 weeks of the season, including the Xmas season. If our daily catch would average as normal around 300 kgs of vendace, at 3,5 € / kg as a source of

income, this would imply a loss for this ongoing winter: 42 days x 300 kgs x 3,5 € = 44100 € net loss. This is just for the Snowchange seining crew of three people. There are no insurance or loss coverage domestically.

**We call on you to mobilize the necessary assistance, for example through establishing a relief fund for our fishery to cover for the dramatic climate change impacts as a matter of urgency.**

We can discuss this more in detail at your convenience. You can see more of the climate impacts at <http://www.snowchange.org/pages/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Snowchange-Discussion-Paper-7.pdf>

*With Kind Regards,*

  
Tero Mustonen

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Copy to: Mr Bernard Friess, Acting DG, DG Mare; Daniel Calleja Crespo, Director General, DG Env.

