

Seal ban does not address welfare and disregards international trade rules

The ban voted by the European Parliament on 5th May does nothing to improve the welfare of hunted seals - but sets a dangerous precedent by ignoring World Trade Organisation rules, says the International Fur Trade Federation, (IFTF) which represents 42 member trade organisations in 35 countries.

WWF (Worldwide Fund for Nature) Canada and the EU's own Council of Ministers say that there are no conservation grounds for ending the seal hunt, with populations at a record high of over 5 million Harp seals. The European Commission's own study by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) concluded that seals can be hunted humanely with methods recognized to kill rapidly and effectively.

MEPs are aware that seals will continue to be hunted, because seal populations have to be managed. But they have deliberately chosen to reject constructive amendments that would actively encourage improving welfare standards. They are unconcerned that their ban will have no effect whatsoever on how humane or inhumane future seal hunts will be.

The exemption provided under the ban for Inuit or non-commercial hunts is meaningless: "This exemption is nothing but a ruse that at most will aid the proponents of the ban and will not help the Inuit", says Daniel Shewchuck, Minister of the Environment from Nunavut in the Canadian Arctic. With an outright ban on commercial trade, the price of skins will collapse, and with it one of the few ways in which the Inuit people are able to bring cash into their communities.

Andreas Lenhart, Chairman of the IFTF, voices the frustration felt by many: "MEPs have rushed through bad legislation in their eagerness to garner what they think will be public appeal just before they are up for re-election. Instead of closing the market completely, they could have created an economic incentive to improve welfare standards, and helped to safeguard the viability of many diverse rural livelihoods. But by approving this unjustified and disproportionate ban, MEPs have not just missed these unique opportunities: they also have disregarded the trade-friendly principles of the WTO. We are all the losers if world trade agreements can be so easily put aside, not just the sealers and seals."

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Seal Ban refers to the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning trade in seals products (COD/2008/0160)

About IFTF

International Fur Trade Federation is a federation of 42 national fur trade associations and organisations from 35 countries. Through its work and the activities of its members, the IFTF seeks to protect fur trade interests and to promote innovation, high standards, in addition to a positive and factual image of the fur industry internationally.

The International Fur Trade Federation (IFTF) and its member associations around the world promote the strict codes of practice that meet or exceed established and accepted animal welfare standards for wild and farmed fur. The fur trade deplores and works against cruelty to animals. The IFTF has long been a supporter of and works with CITES, the legitimate fur trade does not trade in endangered species.

IFTF website: www.iff.com

About Origin Assured (OA™):

Developed voluntarily in 2006 by the International Fur Trade Federation (IFTF) in collaboration with leading auction houses: American Legend Cooperative, Finnish Fur Sales/Saga Fur, Copenhagen Fur and North American Fur Auctions , the Origin Assured (OA™) label gives consumers confidence about the provenance of the fur they are buying. It is an assurance that the fur comes from a country where national or local welfare regulations or standards governing fur production are in force.

It is also a reflection of the fur trade's commitment to openness and honesty with their customers.

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