

Seals and sealing

In many countries, including; Canada, Greenland, Namibia, Norway, Russia, South Africa and Uruguay, sealing provides essential food supplies and a rare opportunity to earn cash income for Aboriginal and coastal communities.

Harp seals are the most populous species of seals in the Northern Hemisphere. They are found in the waters of, and are harvested by, a number of countries. From 2000 to 2004, Canada took, on average, 68% of the Harp seals landed; Greenland took 21%, Russia 9% and Norway 2%.

IUCN, the World Conservation Union, the world's largest and most respected conservation organization, passed a resolution at its 2004 Congress urging its member governments NOT to impose any new trade restrictions on seal products coming from abundant populations.

In the early 1980's, the North Atlantic Harp seal population was estimated to be 1.8 million (in Canadian and Greenlandic waters). In 2006, the population (in Canadian and Greenlandic waters) is estimated to be almost 6 million. These numbers do not include the populations of Harp seals found in Northern European waters.

According to the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the landed value of Harp seal pelts from the 2006 season, for both Quebec and Newfoundland-Labrador fisherman totalled \$29.2 million, compared to \$17.5 in 2005. These figures do not include revenue data from Northern/Inuit communities, whose harvest is principally Ringed seal.

Inuit and Greenlandic communities were hardest hit by the 1983 seal import ban imposed by the European Economic Community and the resulting global collapse in seal prices. Losing one of their few economic options, these communities suffered economic, social and political disintegration.

Representatives of the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association observed the Canadian Harp seal hunt in 2002 and concluded that, of the animals studied, 98% were killed in an acceptably humane manner, which compared very favourably to the animal welfare standard required in abattoirs in North America and the European Union.

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal coastal communities share the same values in their approach to sealing: sustainable use, respectful killing techniques and full utilization.

Sealing, an excellent example of a renewable resource industry, produces a range of natural products: pelts for clothing, meat for both human and animal consumption, and seal oil, rich in Omega-3 fatty acid and used in recent years in capsules, as a supplement which reduces blood pressure and risk of heart disease.

For more information, please visit:

[http://www.iftf.com/publctns/SealsSealingFactsheet\[1\].pdf](http://www.iftf.com/publctns/SealsSealingFactsheet[1].pdf)

About BFTA:

The BFTA (British Fur Trade Association) represents the fur sector in the UK, promotes high standards and champions fur fashion.

BFTA is a member of the International Fur Trade Federation (IFTF). The IFTF promotes strict codes of practice that meet or exceed established and accepted animal welfare standards for wild and farmed fur. The BFTA and the IFTF strongly condemn cruelty to animals and their members do not trade in endangered species.

www.britishfur.co.uk