



# PRESS RELEASE

FACE: EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS FOR HUNTING & CONSERVATION

## NEW SEAL TRADE PROPOSAL BLOCKS SUSTAINABLE USE AND OBLIGES WASTE OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE EU

### PRESS RELEASE

**Brussels, 10 February 2015 – The European Commission has presented a proposal to ban trade in products from seals taken in EU waters. In the very same proposal the Commission seeks to make it easier for seal products from Inuit hunts in Canada to be imported into the EU market. This proposal sets a dangerous precedent for sustainability and environmental ethics. It encourages the hunt of seals in EU waters, while at the same time restricting the use of what is being hunted - thus encouraging waste of the Union's natural resources. The proposal also risks having a negative impact on EU fish stocks. The Commission proposal is part of a package to conform to a report in May 2014 by the World Trade Organization (WTO).**

*“The WTO ruling does in no way force the EU to adopt this ban. On the contrary, the WTO favours trade as long as it does not unjustifiably discriminate against other countries. Today’s decision constitutes an unprecedented and unjust discrimination against the EU’s own citizens. The Commission wants us to accept that, while Inuit-caught seals from Canada and Greenland be shipped across the globe to be sold in markets across the Member States, seals hunted by EU hunters and fishermen just outside our own coastline will be banned from the very same markets.”<sup>1</sup>, says Johan Svalby, Director of Legal and Public Affairs at FACE. “We do indeed support the right of indigenous and other peoples to utilise their natural resources, including by means of trade with the EU, as long as it is sustainable. All we are asking however is that the EU grants its own citizens the same right, at least in their own Member States. This proposal - which, on the one hand encourages the hunt, while on the other restricts the use of what is being hunted - risks turning the seal from a valuable resource to discarded waste. As hunters we can never accept this flagrant breach of the principles of sustainable and customary use, to which the EU is bound under the Convention on Biological Diversity. Such nonsense must be stopped!”*

In the EU, seals are hunted as part of the sustainable management of marine resources, notably to protect against damages to fisheries.<sup>2</sup> In 2012, a European Parliament resolution<sup>3</sup> “*urge[d] the Commission to take measures to reduce the negative effects of seals on fish stocks*”. Fishermen report that, where passive gears such as hooks and nets are being used, up to 90-95 % of the catch is taken by seals.<sup>4</sup> Against this background, record-high hunting quotas for seals have been set this year by the Member States where seals are hunted.

The Commission proposal explicitly recognises the importance of this hunt. However, in an act of remarkable contradiction, it removes one of the strongest incentives for hunters to participate, namely to be able to trade the excess of fur, fat and meat from this abundant natural resource. “*Instead of facilitating*

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<sup>1</sup> The WTO report can be read here: [http://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/dispu\\_e/400\\_401abr\\_e.pdf](http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/400_401abr_e.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> In the EU, the Grey Seal (*Halichoerus Grypos*), the Harbour Seal (*Phoca Vitulina*) and the Baltic Ringed Seal (*Phoca hispida bottnica*) are abundant and huntable under the EU Habitats Directive, 92/43/EEC

<sup>3</sup> European Parliament resolution of 12 September 2012 on reporting obligations under Regulation (EC) No 2371/2002

<sup>4</sup> <http://svenskjakt.se/Start/Nyheter/2015/02/hard-kritik-mot-eu-for-forslag-om-salar/>

*consumers' increasing demand for sustainable local products, in this case local fish and seal products, the Commission seems to favour products being shipped from other parts of the world', says Johan Svalby.*

In 2009 when the European Parliament and Council of the EU adopted Regulation (EC) No 1007/2009 on trade in seal products, the idea of a blanket ban was explicitly rejected by both institutions, mainly with the situation in the EU Member States around the Baltic Sea in mind. Some of the arguments used in favour of continued trade were the non-commercial character of the hunt, tradition, the need for managing marine resources, to protect fisheries and the principle of sustainable use and non-wastage of a natural resource (which was in focus in the EU-financed project "Seal as our common resource"<sup>5</sup>).

**FACE is now urging the European Parliament and the Member States in the Council to have the Commission rethink its proposal to better take account of the fundamental ethical and environmental principles that form the backbone of the EU treaties.**

**\*\*\*ENDS\*\*\***

The Commission proposal can be read here:

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/biodiversity/animal\\_welfare/seals/pdf/proposal.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/biodiversity/animal_welfare/seals/pdf/proposal.pdf)

## **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

**FACE** is the European Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation. Established in 1977, FACE represents the interests of Europe's 7 million hunters as an international non-profit-making nongovernmental organisation (NGO). FACE is made up of national hunters' associations from 36 European countries including the EU-28. FACE also has 4 Associate Members and is based in Brussels. FACE upholds the principle of sustainable use, has been a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) since 1987, and more recently of Wetlands International. FACE works with its partners on a range of hunting-related issues, from international conservation agreements to local implementations with the aim of sustaining hunting across Europe. [www.face.eu](http://www.face.eu)

## **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, INTERVIEWS, QUOTES, PHOTOS, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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<sup>5</sup> Finland, Norway and Sweden participated in this project which formed part of the Interreg IIIA (2000-06) cross-border programme Kvarken-MittSkandia and was co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

