

## European Union Bans Marketing of Seal Products

**BRUSSELS, Belgium**, July 27, 2009 (ENS) - In response to concerns about the animal welfare aspects of seal hunting practices, the European Council of Ministers today approved a new regulation that forbids the marketing of seal products in the European Union.

The regulation covers products derived from all species of seals and includes fur skins, organs, meat, oil and blubber, which can for instance be used in cosmetics and medicine.



**Toy seals made of sealskin for sale in a Montreal shop** (Photo by [Behind Dark Eyes](#))

The only exception will be products that result from hunts traditionally conducted by indigenous peoples of the Inuit homeland in Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Russia to ensure their subsistence, and those may only be marketed on a not-for-profit basis.

Import of seal products is allowed, provided it is of an occasional nature and consists exclusively of goods for the personal use of travellers.

The Council took this decision without discussion at today's General Affairs Council. The Danish, Romanian and Austrian delegations abstained.

In its announcement of the new regulation, the Council said that several EU member states have adopted or intend to adopt legislation prohibiting trade in seal products, and the regulation "will harmonize rules concerning the marketing of seal products so as to avoid fragmentation and distortion of the internal market."

The new act will come into force 20 days after its publication in the Official Journal of the EU. The harmonized rules will become effective nine months later, giving the European Commission and the member states time to put in place the necessary implementing measures.

The proposal for the regulation, in considerably different form, was submitted by the Commission in July 2008. The regulation was adopted at first reading under the codecision procedure, with the European Parliament having voted on May 5, 2009.

Conservationists were pleased with the new regulation, but the Government of Canada, which conducts the world's largest seal hunt, threatened action before the World Trade Organization.

Canada's International Trade Minister Stockwell Day and Fisheries Minister Gail Shea called on the European Union "to reconsider" the ban. They said it "will serve no purpose other than to damage the livelihood of coastal and northern Canadians and their families."

"Canada's seal hunt is lawful, sustainable and humane, and the Government of Canada has worked hard to defend Canada's position internationally over the last few years," the ministers said in a joint statement on Sunday. "The issue has been raised at every opportunity at the highest levels, including by the Prime Minister.

"Canada will defend its rights and interests under the relevant World Trade Organization agreements," the ministers said.

While the Canadian government calls the seal hunt humane, animal welfare groups and conservationists have campaigned for years to



**Tiffany Omboli wears a sealskin coat by Rannva Designs.** (Photo by [Ed Maruyama](#))

end what they view as a cruel, unethical and unsustainable practice.



**Seals killed in the 2009 Canadian seal hunt.** (Photo by [Amber Kost](#))

Canada-EU trade deal to increase trade by €26 billion.

The seal hunt is practiced in five countries - Canada, where most of the world's seal hunting takes place, as well as Namibia, Greenland, Norway, and Russia. Canada's largest market for seals is Norway, which is not a member of the European Union and so is unaffected by the new regulation.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare called the ban "a significant victory in IFAW's 40 year campaign to end Canada's commercial seal hunt."

"There is a wonderful sense of accomplishment today after years of hard work," said Lesley O'Donnell, director of IFAW EU. "Already this year we've seen how the prospect of the ban dampened the seal hunt and saved the lives of thousands of seals. We will closely monitor the implementation process until the ban comes into enforcement which should be during the summer of 2010.

"We expect the commercial seal hunt to continue its inevitable decline until it is wiped out once and for all," said O'Donnell.

IFAW says, "The minute financial contribution of the seal hunt in Canada is more than offset by the indirect subsidies required and the costs incurred by the hunt."

The Canadian government placed the value of the 2009 commercial seal hunt at less than €1 million. By contrast, the Canadian government expects a

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