

To the Demersal WG Tuesday 8th March 2022

Trade in seal products - Agenda point 7

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The Commission produced in 2019 and adopted on 10th January 2020 the first Commission Report to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the Regulation by the EU Member States. It was not a fully-fledged evaluation of Regulation (EC) 1007/2009¹ on trade in seal products, as amended by Regulation (EU) 2015/1775.²

The Commission Report also included a section on the implementation of the "Inuit or other indigenous communities" exception by the three Bodies in Canada and Greenland which have been recognised by the EU for delivering certificates to accompany the seal products for placing them on the EU market.

The Report and all the information regarding the Regulation on Trade in Seal Products can be found on the webpage on EUROPA [Trade in seal products - Environment - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/europea/Trade_in_seal_products_Environment_-_European_Commission_europa.eu).³

When submitting their national reports, some Member States and the Recognised Bodies expressed concerns about the Regulation and asked for a meeting with the Commission. Such an Expert Group meeting was organised on 21st January 2020, after the adoption of the Commission Report.

Four EU Member States (Denmark, Estonia, Finland and Sweden) were given the floor to express their concerns with the increasing seal population on their territory and the damages these were causing to local fisheries. They also expressed their regrets for the fact that their seal products could not be placed on the EU market, further to the WTO ruling and the subsequent amendment of the Regulation.

The conclusion in the meeting was that the Commission noted the limitations of the Regulation, which was conceived to prohibit the placing on the EU market of products linked to hunting practices that were felt by the European Parliament, the Council and public opinion not to be in line with European values.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009R1007&from=EN>

² https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_2015.262.01.0001.01.ENG

³ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/biodiversity/animal_welfare/seals/seal_hunting.htm

However, at the time, there was clear recognition that there should be an exception for Inuit or other indigenous communities. The Commission acknowledged the considerations put forward by the Member States as regards the Regulation's place in the broader spectrum of legislation and policies in the EU that affect wildlife, wildlife management and the use of resources. However, it pointed out that the Regulation was clear and that a change was unlikely to be accepted, be it by the Council or the European Parliament.

In conclusion, there was no amendment to the Regulation on trade in seal products and the products from seals hunted inside the EU can still not be placed on the EU market.