



A Call to ACTION for IMCO MEPs

VOTE **YES** to a strong prohibition on trade in seal products, as proposed in amendments by **IMCO chair**, Arlene McCarthy MEP.

VOTE **NO** to a toothless labelling scheme, as proposed by Rapporteur and IMCO **substitute member**, Diana Wallis MEP.

The **EUROPEAN POSITION**:

- In September 2006, 425 Members of the European Parliament signed a Written Declaration, which called for a strong EU prohibition on trade in seal products, with due deference paid to subsistence Inuit seal hunting.
- In October 2006, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on its Animal Welfare Action Plan, calling for an EU prohibition on seal derived products.
- In November 2006, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe called upon its member countries (including all 27 EU Member States) to promote initiatives aimed at prohibiting the trade in seal products.
- In recent years, nine EU Member States have either prohibited seal product trade or announced their intentions to do so (Czech Republic, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Slovenia, Luxembourg).
- The UK, Belgium, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Austria, Cyprus and Slovenia have already expressed their national positions, all calling for an unconditional prohibition on trade in seal products.

The **IMCO MANDATE**:

- IMCO is responsible for **advising Parliament in its role as co-decider of EU** legislation in the sphere of the internal market and for adopting measures aimed at identifying and removing obstacles to its smooth functioning.
- IMCO will produce the lead Opinion on the proposed prohibition on seal product trade because the legal basis for the ban is harmonization of the internal market. An EU Regulation is needed because nine European Union Member States have prohibited trade in seal products or announced their intentions to do so.
- No Member State has adopted such a labelling scheme in response to its citizens' concerns. This is just one important reason why the European Commission **dismissed labelling** as a legislative option.
- Diana Wallis' amendments introducing new proposals, such as labelling, stray so far from the Commission's original text and from existing and proposed member state legislation, **they will undermine the intent of national laws**.

The **ANIMAL WELFARE POSITION**:

- More than 50 animal protection groups in the European Union, representing tens of millions of members who live in your constituencies, are calling for an unconditional prohibition on seal product trade (with a limited exemption for Inuit subsistence hunting)—not a toothless labelling scheme that would deceive consumers and actually promote trade in the products of cruel seal slaughters.
- As the European elections approach, our members, your constituents, are counting on IMCO to do the right thing and we will be reporting it in detail.

We sincerely hope your conscience and the views of your own constituents, rather than misleading and self-interested lobbying by foreign governments and industry groups, will determine your vote.

VOTE **NO** to a **DECEPTIVE LABELLING SCHEME**

(Amendments proposed by Diana Wallis, MEP, substitute on the IMCO Committee)

A labelling scheme is a direct betrayal of the 425 MEPs who signed a Written Declaration calling for a ban, of the position of all the Member States that have or are in the process of taking national action and, above all, of European voters have made it clear they want the EU to end its trade in seal products.

A labelling scheme (“Produced without causing avoidable pain, distress or suffering to animals”) would directly mislead consumers.

- There is irrefutable evidence of widespread unacceptable cruelty every year in commercial seal kills. Veterinarians confirm non-compliance with existing regulations is **standard operating procedure** in commercial seal slaughters, and that the vast majority of seal slaughter:
 - **CANNOT** respect humane slaughter standards in practice because of the extreme environments/weather conditions and the speed at which the killing must occur;
 - **CANNOT** be monitored by authorities because of the remote, inaccessible environments in which they occur, the vast areas over which they operate, and the speed at which the killing must happen.
- A labelling scheme would therefore need to rely on the written content of regulations—not evidence of how the killing actually occurs—and the self-serving declarations of sealers. It is easy to guess what will happen...
- The EU should not introduce legislation opening the way to its own citizens being misled. Consumers are protected from misleading advertising and labelling throughout the European Union. It would be absurd if the EU itself facilitated such misleading practices, however unintentionally, and deeply embarrassing if its institutions were criticised by the European Court of Justice.

VOTE **YES** to a **STRONG PROHIBITION** on **SEAL PRODUCT TRADE**

(Amendments proposed by Arlene McCarthy, MEP, Chair of the IMCO Committee)

A prohibition on seal product trade, with an exception for Inuit subsistence hunting, meets the expectations of Europeans, MEPs, and EU Member States—who agree the only way to stop the cruelty is to end the trade.

- A strong prohibition on seal product trade **IS** WTO compliant, according to leading EU lawyers. A strong prohibition on seal product trade **WILL** improve intra-community circulation of other products, including leather (seal leather cannot be distinguished from other leathers), marine oil (seal oil is often labelled as “marine oil” which also includes fish oil) and fur (seal fur is often processed in ways that make it indistinguishable from other furs).
- A strong EU prohibition on seal product trade **DOES NOT** prevent any European from killing seals for population management purposes, or from personally using the products from those kills.
- A strong EU prohibition on seal product trade **DOES NOT** seek to regulate killing methods in foreign nations, but rather to meet the moral concerns of European citizens who do not want the products of inherently cruel seal slaughters to be traded here.
- An EU prohibition on seal product trade **WILL** stop the EU commercial trade in products of industrial scale commercial seal slaughters, and save millions of seals from a horrible fate.

You have before you an historic opportunity to meet the expectations of EU citizens **including your own constituents** and save millions of seals from inherently inhumane slaughter. The world is watching, and your vote is critical.

Please do not be fooled by deceptive proposals for labelling schemes that would promote the cruel trade in seal products and do nothing for animal welfare or consumer choice.

Please vote for a strong prohibition on seal product trade!