# Trade in seal products

2008/0160(COD) - 23/07/2008 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to establish harmonised rules concerning the placing on the market and the import in, transit through, or export from, the European Community of seal products.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

CONTENT: seal products are imported in the Community and being traded within it. The evidence available suggests that most of these products originate from third countries, even though some production exists within the Community as seals are killed and skinned in Finland and Sweden, while seal products are produced in other Member States, such as the United Kingdom (Scotland), using seal fur skins coming from other countries. Within the Community, seals are killed and skinned in Sweden, Finland and the United Kingdom (Scotland) with a view to obtain products derived from seals, or for pest control reasons. Outside the Community, seals are killed and skinned to the same effect in Canada, Greenland, Namibia, Norway and Russia.

The Community has adopted appropriate legislation seeking to ensure that hunting within and outside the Community would not lead to endanger the conservation status of several seal species.

The Commission proposal seeks to address the concerns expressed by the European Parliament and the general public that seals are being killed and skinned using practices that unnecessarily inflict pain and suffering. European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) scientific opinion indicates that seals can be killed rapidly and effectively by a number of methods without causing avoidable pain, distress and suffering, but evidence shows that effective killing does not always happen in practice.

This proposal is intended to ban the placing on the market and the import in, transit through, and the export from the Community of seal products. Trade in seal products would be allowed only where guarantees can be provided that hunting techniques consistent with high animal-welfare-standards were used and that the animals did not suffer unnecessarily. In countries where seal hunting continues a certification scheme would be established, coupled, if necessary, with a distinctive label or marking, which will ensure that seal products traded are clearly certified as coming from a country meeting strict conditions

The bans are intended to replace the varied measures adopted, or whose adoption is planned, by certain Member States (e.g. Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany) to prohibit the import, production and distribution, as the case may be, of products derived from seals, so that harmonised conditions govern the trade in those products within the Community. The provisions of the draft Regulation also aim at ensuring that seal products produced outside the Community cannot be imported into it, transit through it, or be exported from the Community.