



The EU seal regime

1 The EU seal regime – what is it about?

The EU seal regime is a legislative framework, put in place in 2009, which introduced a general ban on the placing of seal products on the EU market in response to public moral concerns about animal welfare aspects of seal hunt. It also contains two exceptions to the ban, the so-called “Inuit and other indigenous communities” and the “Travellers” exceptions. The EU seal regime consists of two pieces of legislation¹: Regulation on trade in seal products, amended in 2015, and a Regulation on the attestation system for those seal products that can still be placed on the EU market.

2 Are some seal products still allowed on the EU market? Why?

Yes. The placing on the EU market is allowed for seal products that qualify under the Inuit and other indigenous communities exception. This is because seal hunts traditionally conducted by the Inuit and other indigenous communities contribute to the subsistence of these communities and as such do not raise the same public moral concerns as seal hunts conducted primarily for commercial reasons.

3 What is the Inuit and other indigenous communities exception?

It is an exception to the general ban introduced in order to acknowledge the important role that the seal hunt has for the socio-economy, nutrition, culture and identity of the Inuit and other indigenous communities. Seal hunt contributes to their subsistence and development, provides food and income to support the life and sustainable livelihood of the community, as well as preserves and continues the traditional existence of the community.

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¹ Regulation (EC) No 1007/2009 on trade in seal products, as amended, and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/1850 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1007/2009



Seal products qualify under this exception:

- 1) if they result from hunt traditionally conducted by the Inuit or other indigenous communities;
- 2) if the hunt is conducted for and contributes to the subsistence of the community, including in order to provide food and income to support life and sustainable livelihood, and is not conducted primarily for commercial reasons;
- 3) if the hunt is conducted in a manner which has due regard to animal welfare, taking into consideration the way of life of the community and the subsistence purpose of the hunt.

4 What about animal welfare concerns? Are they addressed in the Inuit and other indigenous communities exception?

Yes. Only products deriving from hunts conducted in a manner which has due regard to animal welfare, taking into consideration the way of life of the community and the subsistence purpose of the hunt can be placed on the EU market.

5 How do I know if a seal product on the EU market is legal?

When a seal product is being introduced on the EU market under the Inuit and other indigenous communities exception, it must be accompanied by an original attesting document confirming that the conditions for this exception have been met. All subsequent invoices related to this seal product must contain a reference to the number of the attesting document.

6 How does the attestation system work?

Attesting documents are issued by recognised bodies authorised for that purpose by the Commission. Upon request by an applicant, a recognised body must first assess if the seal product for which the attestation is sought satisfies all the conditions for the Inuit and

other indigenous communities exception. If so, the recognised body will then issue an attesting document. The original attesting document must follow the seal product for which it was issued at the time of placing on the EU market.

7 Where can I find the list of recognised bodies that are allowed to issue attesting documents under the Inuit and other indigenous communities exception?

Only those bodies that are authorised by the Commission can issue the relevant attesting documents. The list of recognised bodies is managed by the Commission and published here:

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

8 Can I import seal products for personal use to the EU?

Yes, import for personal use of travellers and their families is allowed under the Travellers' exception if at least one of the following requirements is met:

- 1) the seal products are either worn by the travellers, or carried or contained in their personal luggage;
- 2) the seal products are contained in the personal property of a person transferring his normal place of residence from a non-EU country to the EU; or
- 3) the seal products are acquired on site in a non-EU country by travellers and imported by those travellers at a later date, provided that, upon arrival in the EU territory, those travellers present to the customs authorities of the Member State concerned a written notification of import and a supporting document showing that the products were acquired in the non-EU country concerned. Both of these documents will be checked by the customs authorities and returned to the travellers. On import, the notification and the supporting document have to be presented to the customs authorities together with the customs declaration for the products concerned.