

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party
for the South East of England

The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP
Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
DEFRA
Eastbury House
30 - 34 Albert Embankment
London
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October 21st 2008

Dear Secretary of State,

As you will be aware, the European Commission is proposing an EU wide ban on the import of seal products, in part due to a written declaration I co-sponsored in the European Parliament in 2006 that attracted record support from my MEP colleagues.

I am writing to enquire whether the UK plans to support these proposals at the Council of Europe.

I also wish to know whether the UK plans to support closing an enormous loophole in the proposals as they stand, namely the exemption of products from seals that are slaughtered 'humanely'.

Over the past five years, about 1.5 million harp seals have been slaughtered in Canada; clubbed or shot primarily for their fur. This year, sealers have reportedly killed 206,721 harp seals to date. The nature of the hunts, including unpredictable conditions and time pressure, makes it impossible to monitor or enforce specific criteria. Moreover, I and millions of EU citizens argue that the slaughter is neither necessary nor can it ever be 'humane'.

The current derogation for so called 'humane' slaughter will make a mockery of the proposed legislation and lead to countless legal battles over the definition of 'humane'. Only a complete ban, with no loopholes, can prevent seal products entering the European markets and I hope the UK will support such a position.

I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.

cc Gareth Thomas MP, BERR.