

What are Values of Sustainable Seal Hunting?

At Issue: Animal-rights extremists want the public to think that seal hunting is both unnecessary and wasteful. They imply sealing is unimportant to coastal people, just an “off-season profit venture”, and a hunt “only for fur”. These anti-sealing campaigns grossly misrepresent the economic, social and ecological contexts of seal hunting. For a fuller perspective on value, consider the following:

Economic Value for Rural Canada

- Between 2006-2008, sealing activity yielded \$53 million (CAD) in direct “landed value” to sealers based in the provinces of Quebec (QC) and Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). This seasonal source of revenue can account for up to 35% of a sealer’s annual income, and is available during a time of year when other rural employment opportunities are virtually non-existent. In recent years, between 5,000 and 6,000 sealers were active.
- Between 2006-2008 the value to the economies of QC and NL in product production and trade was over \$120 million. These numbers do not include economic benefits from supporting and “spin-off” activities from sealing, such as transportation and gear outfitting.
- In Canada’s northern Territory of Nunavut, traditional hunting by Inuit produces sealskins as by-products, which are sold commercially. The yearly revenue of approximately \$1 million serves to sustain hunting activities, while the food obtained from hunting takes the place of southern imports, which typically would cost five times the value of yearly revenue.

All-Natural Product Value

- Seal hides, or “pelts” are handled locally in Canada, where they are tanned into high-quality materials. Best grades go to full garment manufacturing, where sealskin is prized as a naturally beautiful and long-lasting material. Other sealskin products include boots, gloves, hats, and high-quality leather products.
- Seal meat is a local staple food in rural Newfoundland, Labrador, Quebec, and Nunavut, where seal hunting occurs. This nutritious protein has supported

European settlers for centuries, and indigenous people for millennia along the now-Canadian coasts. When sold outside Canadian regions, seal meat is processed for export under strict federal inspection standards.

Health and Medical Value

- Seal oil, rendered from fat, provides a superior Omega-3 essential fatty acid (EFA) source for human consumption. This “blubber” is fully utilized, representing over half the useable weight of most animals hunted.
- Dr. Andreas Agathos, a Greek cardiovascular surgeon, has spent more than 10 years developing a process for seal heart-valve replacement – a breakthrough medical procedure for replacing defective human heart valves with those from harp seals. Research and initial trials suggest harp seal heart valves are far superior to those commonly from pigs and cows. Dr. Agathos is conducting similar research for the use of harp seal trachea.

Environmental, Renewable Resource Value

- Sourced from abundant and well-conserved seal populations, products derived from seals provide consumers with a unique opportunity to appreciate clothing that is *not* made of petrochemicals, and food that is *not* dependent on typically centralized, industrial-scale means of production.
- The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) recognize the sustainable use of wild animal populations to be a cornerstone of conservation and community health.

Bottom line: Despite what extremists say, in the 21st Century, seal hunting remains a highly valuable, relevant and necessary activity. Sealing contributes to diversity of both human life and the environment in rural places where lifestyle demands it. To attack this or other similar rural livelihoods is both misguided and ecologically irresponsible.

For further information visit:
www.sealsandsealing.net

References available upon request.