

Ár n-oileán Resources Ltd. is a seal processing company in Newfoundland, Canada specializing in high quality omega-3 oil, but utilizing almost the entirety of the seal including skins, meat and organs. The company's processing plants are located in rural communities and its shareholders include some of the largest seal harvesters in Canada.

The economic value of the seal industry is felt very deeply by those fish harvesters that rely on sealing during the winter and spring months, the plant workers employed and the supporting businesses in these communities and across Newfoundland. These Newfoundlanders are extremely proud of the sealing industry and the incredible products that are produced from seals.

Each seal provides a bounty of valuable products;

- the skins are used not just for its fur, but its leather, which has the second highest tensile strength of any leather in the world, and it can be processed for protein and collagen.
- The adipose tissue is rendered into extremely valuable omega-3 oil, high in not just EPA and DHA omega-3s but also DPA making it far superior to fish and krill oils.
- Heme iron is derived from the seal's blood and meat.
- And a variety of foods from ribs, jerky, charcuteries, hors d'oeuvres and pet food to name a few are made from seal meat.
  - The nutritional values of seal meat are in a league all of their own when compared to traditional meats.

## Nutritional Quality of Seal Meat as Compared with other Meats

(Shahid & Synowieki, 1996)

CONSTITUENTS IN 100g MEAT	Unit	SEAL	BEEF	PORK	CHICKEN	COD
Total Protein	g	22.3	22.0	22.0	14.6	17.8
Calcium	mg	591.0	3.5	3.2	78.4	24.0
Iron	mg	64.0	1.9	1.0	1.8	0.4
Magnesium	mg	34.0	21.0	27.0	17.0	25
Vitamin B12	mg	7.7	5.0	5.0	0.8	0.5

At a time when food scarcity is a very real fear it is absolutely heartbreaking to not only allow such a resource to go unused but to also watch it destroy other food resources.

For an ecosystem to be healthy, all components must be in balance. Currently Canada's Atlantic waters are decidedly out of balance. The Harp Seal Herds have grown to more than 4 million and Canada's Grey seal herd has increased more than seven-fold in recent years.

The Grey seals are having a devastating effect on fish stocks in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the ecosystem as a whole. Lobster predation has increased dramatically, cod recovery has been significantly impacted and the Grey seals have annually removed at least twice the commercial landings of mackerel.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/federal-government-expected-to-extend-the-moratorium-on-commercial-mackerel-fishing-1.7182878>.

With the population growing so quickly, it makes the herd susceptible to pathogens such as viruses, bacteria outbreaks and parasites. *Phocanema Decipiens*, commonly known as seal worm, is a parasite infecting large numbers of Grey seals, who in turn infect the cod stocks in the Gulf. The presence of worms in the cod makes them commercially unviable. The herd now numbers more than 350,000 animals and has outgrown its natural habitat pushing the seals further and further east, up over Newfoundland's Northern Peninsula, south again past the Horse Islands heading towards the Grand Banks.

It is here in Newfoundland's north / east waters that the Grey seal herd is increasing its interactions with the far larger Harp seal herds, who's own over populated numbers are comprised of millions of animals. The more interactions between these species the more likelihood that the seal worm will be spread into this colossal carrier. If these herds become host, then there is a very real danger to commercial fish stocks from Baffin Island to the Grand Banks, and repercussions of such could very well be fishery collapse.

Clearly steps will be taken by Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans before this can happen, seals will be removed to control their numbers and bring balance to the ecosystem, protecting fish stocks and the fishing industry. The question is, will all of the resources of the seal, the omega-3 oil, the heme iron, the nutritionally rich meats and valuable pelts be sold in global markets or simply destroyed and needlessly wasted.

As Newfoundlanders and as Canadians, we are strongly advocating for the European Commission to open European markets to Canadian seal products, from a highly monitored seal harvest, that hold the industry to the highest standards of animal welfare and environmental sustainability.

The seal industry has been referred to as the most bullied industry in the world. Organizations with their own agendas deliberately ignore the facts and distribute misinformation, attempting to malign the harvest and paint its participants as barbarians, indiscriminately killing baby seals and skinning them alive.

In fact, so called animal rights groups have been caught paying people to harm animals on film to create outrage. In 1964 hunter Gustave Poirer, testified under oath to just that, for a film that sparked the first anti-sealing campaign. And despite photos these groups continue to distribute, the hunting of white coats and blue backs have been banned in Canada since 1987.

The center piece of agenda-based misinformation is that the seals are not hunted humanely and are frequently skinned alive. These sorts of emotional based lies seem to be more and more common in today's world due to their effectiveness when left unchecked. The truth is however, the three-step process for humane harvesting of seals, listed within the Marine Mammal Regulations, was developed by a panel of international veterinary experts at the behest of the World Wildlife Fund. And the process was evaluated by the European Food Safety Authority in 2007. These regulations are strictly enforced by Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

It is important to recognize not only those that come with agendas, but those too that are unwittingly influenced by the aforementioned agenda-based misinformation.

In conclusion we are asking the Commission to reopen the seal trade between Canada and the European Union, and to recognize that Canada's seal harvest is not only ethical, sustainable and humane, but absolutely necessary to restore balance to the ecosystem

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