

Influencing Canadian Seal Hunt Policy With a Consumer Boycott of Canadian Seafood

prepared for

The Directors of
Animal Alliance of Canada
& Environment Voters

Prepared By

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Why Canadian Seafood?	4
The Efficacy of Consumer Boycotts.....	6
Economics of a Consumer Boycott	8
The Susceptibility of Canadian Seal Hunt Policy to a Consumer Boycott	9
The Susceptibility of the Canadian Fishing Industry to a Consumer Boycott	12
Anticipated Effect of a Canadian Seafood Boycott on Canadian Sealing Policy and the Sealing Industry.....	14
Avoiding the Canadian Seafood Boycott	20
The Canadian Seafood to Boycott.....	22
Where to Implement the Boycott.....	23
Marketing the Canadian Seafood Boycott.....	26
Human, Ethical, and Political Considerations of a Canadian Seafood Boycott	28
Strategy Overview	31
Moving Forward	37
Concluding Remarks	38
Appendix 1: Power to the people	39
Appendix 2: Seafood to Get Country of Origin Labels	42

Introduction

. . . one never finds any issue that is clear cut and not open to question.

Niccolò Machiavelli

THE DISCOURSES

This analysis reaches the conclusion that a consumer boycott of Canadian seafood, called to persuade the Canadian government to phase out the commercial harp seal hunt, and implemented primarily in the United States, the largest market for Canadian seafood, will likely succeed.

The Canadian seal hunt persists for three reasons: culture, politics, and economics. Culturally, many Atlantic Canadians enjoy the idea, and a small minority the practice—often with family and friends—of the centuries-old, sealing tradition.^{1,2} Politically, federal, provincial, and municipal politicians promote the seal hunt to help them get elected. In Atlantic Canada, a politician who publicly questioned the seal hunt or who failed to wholeheartedly endorse it would have faint hope of election. And, economically, people augment their incomes by slaughtering seals; selling seal pelts, oil, and meat; or servicing the sealing industry.

History and experience tell us that “people from away” can do little to change the minds of those who cherish and enjoy the cultural aspects of sealing. However, the past has also taught us that animal welfare and environmental protection advocates can reduce, eliminate, or turn into liabilities the political and economic benefits of sealing. Shorn of its political and economic value, it is unlikely that the Canadian seal hunt would continue at its present Total Allowable Catch (TAC)—975,000 animals over the period from 2003-2005—or the TAC of 186,000 to 275,000 TAC set in recent years. All that would likely remain would be a small local, “cultural” hunt of about 20,000 animals: the level to which sealing declined after the imposition of the 1983 European Seal Import Ban. Ending cultural seal hunting would prove extremely difficult, and presents a triage dilemma: monies and human resources expended to end the cultural seal hunt might protect more animals and ecosystems if used for other issues.

¹ Wright, Guy. “Sons and Seals.” St. John’s: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1984. pp. 88-100.

² “Canadian Attitudes Towards the Seal Hunt” in *Understanding Seals & Sealing in Canada*. Ottawa: Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 2000.

http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/seal-phoque/reports-rapports/study-etude/study-etude_e.htm

Moreover, the cultural seal hunt will likely decline on its own as older sealers retire, and as younger people find easier, more fruitful activities.

With its Environment Voters initiatives, Animal Alliance of Canada (AAC) is attacking the seal hunt's political benefits, and is considering various means to negate the net economic value of the seal hunt. There are two obvious means to reduce the economic value of sealing. One is to diminish the international markets for Canadian seal products, as was done successfully, under the leadership of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), with the 1983 European Seal Import Ban. The other is based on the fact that sealing is a small sub-component of the larger Atlantic Canadian fishing industry. Most individuals and businesses that benefit from sealing are economically dependent on the larger fishing industry. Therefore, a successful consumer boycott directed at Canadian seafood would eliminate any net economic benefit they derive from sealing.

The AAC lacks the resources and organizational structure to mount a campaign to diminish the major international markets for finished harp seal products, which are still the countries of the European Union despite the continuing ban on products from "whitecoats," the youngest harp seal pups.³ AAC could, however, implement, at an economically significant level, a boycott of Canadian seafood. The purpose of this preliminary analysis, therefore, is three-fold:

1. to assess the strategic potential and the feasibility of a Canadian seafood boycott;
2. to begin identifying the communication, organizing, financial, and implementation requirements that a successful boycott will demand; and
3. to help AAC as it seeks the support of other animal and environmental protection organizations as either partners in the Canadian seafood boycott, or by organizing their own independent consumer activism.

³ To circumvent the European seal product ban, the Canadian government redefined the term "whitecoat" to narrowly mean harp seal pups of about 13 days of age or less. It then banned the taking of whitecoats. In doing so, it not only circumvented the European seal product ban, which allowed seal product exports to increase to their highest levels in the last 50 years, but also gained a valuable propaganda edge by being able to assert that sealers were no longer slaughtering "baby" seals.

It is implicit in this analysis that significant planning, far beyond the detail here, will be required to implement a successful Canadian seafood boycott.

Throughout this analysis two stipulated definitions are assumed. The first is a definition of the word “boycott,” as it is generally used in this analysis. Boycotts are ubiquitous. Organizations call them routinely and often frivolously, and then do little to implement them. This analysis assumes that the “boycott” under discussion in this analysis is well-conceived, adequately-funded, properly managed and staffed, and robust, meaning the organizers have the determination and political will to maintain it until either their objectives are achieved or it is apparent they cannot be achieved. The second definition concerns the term “seal hunt.” For the most part, the “seal hunt” under discussion in this analysis is the commercial seal hunt, not the indigenous hunt conducted by Inuit and other aboriginal peoples.

AAC has always encouraged and welcomed partnerships and coalitions with other organizations. Continuing, and even enhancing, this policy will help increase the efficacy of the Canadian seafood boycott. The effect of an international coalition—whether *ad hoc* and/or formal—of animal and environmental protection organizations advocating a boycott of Canadian seafood—in the United States, the European Union, Canada and elsewhere—in order to end the seal hunt cannot be overestimated. However, as broader animal and environmental protection movement’s participation cannot be predicted and for the sole purpose of simplifying this analysis, it is assumed here that AAC will be acting alone to implement a Canadian seafood boycott.

Why Canadian Seafood?

Always remember the first rule of power tactics: Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have.

The second rule is: Never go outside the experience of your people.

The third rule is: Wherever possible go outside the experience of the enemy.

Saul D. Alinsky
RULES FOR RADICALS

The United States and Canada are each others most important trading partners: one billion dollars per day in trade. Of all the goods and services that Canada provides the United States, the most appropriate to target for a consumer boycott with the political objective of ending the Canadian seal hunt is Canadian seafood.

For consumer activism, targeting Canadian seafood has a number of advantages over other goods and services. First, and most important, the sealers themselves and the sealing industry are components of the larger Canadian fishing industry. By boycotting Canadian seafood, a consumer is directly affecting those who go to the ice to profit from the slaughter of seals. The same cannot be said for other goods and services.

Without exception, the Canadian fishing industry, and its various trade unions and trade organizations, are strong proponents of sealing. Pressure from the Canadian fishing industry as a whole, and not just the demands of the tiny minority who are sealers, was a major factor in the government's decision to increase the TAC to almost one million seals over three years. The Canadian fishing industry, rejecting independent scientific consensus, holds the belief that seals and other marine mammals adversely affect fish stocks and impede the recovery of cod.

Geographically and politically, there is an almost perfect overlap between the sealing areas and the fishing areas. This overlap extends to the Pacific coast where fishers are also pressuring the federal government to implement a cull of seals and sea lions to protect fish farms.⁴ Consequently, the adverse economic

⁴ "IFAW launches campaign against west coast seal hunt in Canada" 27 June 2003
<http://www.ifaw.org/ifaw/general/default.aspx?oid=41494>

effects of a Canadian seafood boycott would focus on those provinces and in those communities with strong support for sealing and the culling of seals and sea lions, rather than where there is opposition to the seal hunt.

Seafood has other advantages over other goods and services when it comes to the marketing and management of a boycott. They include:

1. Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) in the United States makes Canadian seafood readily identifiable by the consumer.
2. Prices paid for seafood at the wholesale level are publicly available; therefore, the effects of a boycott on the price of Canadian seafood can be monitored.
3. The loss of northwest Atlantic cod and other fish stocks has been well publicized. If these failure are presented as being a result of past Canadian fishery policy (as is, indeed, the case) a boycott of Canadian seafood could appeal to conservationists and environmentalists not otherwise moved to concern about the sealing industry.
4. And lastly, the Canadian government, the fishing industry, and the sealing industry would have enormous difficulty countering a Canadian seafood boycott. The reasons are numerous. Negative publicity—as a Canadian seafood boycott would be—usually attracts much more earned media than efforts to counter it. As in all boycotts, the targeted industry has the impossible task of finding and communicating convincingly to sufficient numbers of those consumers who are responding to the boycott call. And, lastly, every effort to counter a boycott not only adds, for the targeted industry, to the costs exacted by the boycott, but also tends to remind consumers about the boycott and the reasons it was called.

The Efficacy of Consumer Boycotts⁵

A political environment hostile to progressive change has succeeded in putting many social change activists on the defensive, and the need for proactive planning—what I call “tactical activism”—has never been clearer.

Randy Shaw

THE ACTIVISTS HANDBOOK

There is ample evidence that a properly conceived, well-implemented, and adequately funded consumer boycott can influence economic activities and, consequently, public policy.

Any discussion about organizing a consumer boycott to pressure the Canadian government and the Canadian sealing industry to phase out the seal hunt can be helped by a brief look at how consumer boycotts fare generally. Do environmental or animal welfare consumer boycotts achieve their objectives? The answer is a qualified yes. Consumer boycotts that are properly targeted, and well conceived, funded, and managed can achieve, at least, some of their objectives. Vague, generalized boycotts like those aimed at “Japan” or “Norway” to end commercial whaling, or those aimed at “China” over animal cruelty, have not worked. Conversely, the consumer action in the United States to protect Atlantic swordfish launched in 1998 by the Natural Resources Defense Council⁶ and SeaWeb⁷ was effective: “The economic impact of the boycott helped to establish an international recovery plan that should help swordfish populations to recover, although their populations may not rebound until around 2010.”⁸ Also, Greenpeace’s consumer action in the United States and the European Union directed at British Columbia forest practices did cause the BC government and the BC forest industry to change policies and practices.^{9,10}

⁵ See Appendix 1: Power to the People

⁶ See <http://nrdc.org>

⁷ See <http://www.seaweb.org>

⁸ Zimmerman, Julie. “Swordfish.” University of Minnesota, College of Natural Resources. 2001. <http://www.fw.umn.edu/fw5601/classproj01/swordfish/swordfish.htm>

⁹ Stanbury, W.T. “Environmental Groups and the International Conflict Over the Forests of British Columbia, 1990 to 2000.” Vancouver: SFU-UBC Centre for the Study of Government and Business, 2000.

¹⁰ Birch, Simon. “Saving the Spirit Bears: efforts to preserve the west coast Great Bear Rainforest” in *E: The Environmental Magazine*, Sept. 2001.

http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1594/is_5_12/ai_77749300

Consumer boycotts can impact certain issues at certain times, *if* they are properly conceived, funded, and managed. Moreover, strategic lessons can be learned from those campaigns that succeeded, and those that failed. Greenpeace's British Columbia forest products boycott is informative. It showed that "The effectiveness of the boycott weapon depends on a number of factors: First, there is the overall demand/supply balance, for the forest product in question. Strong demand makes it harder for [environmental] groups to organize customer boycotts and easier for BC suppliers to find other buyers at very little or no extra cost. Second, there is the closeness of coordination and assistance of [environmental] groups in the countries where BC firms market their output. Their help can be invaluable, particularly in markets that are more sensitive to demands for better protection of the environment. Third, is the ability of the [environmental] groups to isolate more vulnerable customers to create a precedent to leverage other customers (e.g., "knocking off" Home Depot made it easier to persuade its rivals to go along). Customers are most vulnerable if they operate in highly competitive markets and if they have a strong brand name or reputation that is dependent on favorable public opinion. By threatening to influence public opinion, the [environmental] group can exert leverage over the customer of BC forest companies."¹¹ Many factors that resulted in the success of Greenpeace's BC forest products boycott are applicable to a Canadian seafood boycott.

One final lesson is that while consumer boycotts may at times be extremely effective tactically, they are not a panacea. Notwithstanding successful consumer boycotts, the Atlantic swordfish and British Columbia's old growth forests are still under threat from other than direct harvest. They have not yet been "saved." There is more work to be done—particularly in the political arena where final decisions are ultimately made—if they and other wildlife and ecosystems are to be truly saved.

It is worth ending this discussion on the efficacy of boycotts with an irony. The Canadian government is itself an effective user of boycotts. Under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, Canada joined with other nations to boycott and ban the importation of products from South Africa in order to force an end to apartheid.

¹¹ Stanbury, W.T. p. 303

Economics of a Consumer Boycott¹²

The market price of every particular commodity is regulated by the proportion between the quantity that is actually brought to market, and the demand of those who are willing to pay the natural price of the commodity . . .

Adam Smith

THE WEALTH OF NATIONS

Economic theory postulates that the price of goods with normal elasticity—Canadian seafood sold in the United States, for example—decreases as demand decreases. The corollary is that as the price decreases, the product becomes more attractive to consumers, and demand increases in response. Consumer boycotts tend to decrease the demand for a product which results in a price drop, as the price drops more of the product is purchased. This means that in a market influenced by a boycott, the amount of the boycotted product sold tends to remain fairly stable, albeit at a much reduced price. For the producer, nothing could be worse: the cost of production remains constant while the gross income is lower which, of course, means profits decline or become losses.

Further exacerbating the producers' situation is the fact that wholesale buyers tend to use the boycott as a negotiating tool. "I would like to pay your asking price because you'll lose money if I don't," the wholesale buyer tells the seller, "but the boycott, which is an awful and unfair and detestable thing, makes that impossible because my retail customers won't pay the usual price. I can only pay you half what I paid last month."

In the marketplace, as the price declines, non-traditional buyers begin to evaluate and buy the boycotted products. The Canadian fishing industry selling into a boycott market can expect a decline in sales to buyers who service the grocery or restaurant markets that sell directly to consumers subjected to boycott messaging. The country of origin of the product is less of an issue for institutions: prisons, hospitals, educational institutions, government agencies, industrial caterers, etc. Consequently, the Canadian fishing industry can expect that institutional buyers will buy more of their products, taking advantage of the lower price. When the boycott is suspended, the fishing industry will have to

¹² Based on the experience gained during the 1984-1985 IFAW seafood boycott in the United Kingdom and the United States

make a special (and expensive) effort to regain their traditional, more lucrative, and more discretionary retail customer base.

The Susceptibility of Canadian Seal Hunt Policy to a Consumer Boycott

Some of the elements of the anti-seal hunt movement will continue to seek out areas of Canadian vulnerability and will mount campaigns to exploit these until the harp seal hunt is abolished.

“SEALS AND SEALING IN CANADA” VOL. 2, P. 96
REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION (1986)

Experience and history have shown that Canadian seal hunt policy can be influenced by a consumer boycott of Canadian seafood .

Consumer actions to pressure the Canadian government and the sealing industry to end the harp seal hunt date back to the early 1970s. Seal hunt related boycotts have been tried in many nations, and they continue to this day. In 2004, for example, there are, at least, four such boycotts underway. Paul Watson and the Sea Shepherd Society are urging sports enthusiasts to boycott the 2010 Olympic Winter Games to be held in Vancouver-Whistler. The Humane Society of the United States¹³ has placed full page newspaper advertisements urging Americans not to travel to Canada and to boycott Canadian products in general. The British organization, Respect for Animals, has a dedicated web site, www.boycott-canada.com, that recommends “boycotting Canada while ever the cruel seal hunt continues.” The organizers at www.harpseals.org are planning a boycott, “GET INVOLVED IN THE BOYCOTT: In the coming months, [harpseals.org](http://www.harpseals.org) will be organizing and implementing a MAJOR BOYCOTT of Eastern Canadian products and companies involved in related fisheries industries. Our goal will be to affect the economy of the eastern seaboard of Canada in such a way that the people in the area and perpetrators of the hunt will not be able to look away from this embarrassing and shameful cultural phenomenon. Details on the boycott coming soon ...” However, with only one exception, all of the consumer initiatives to save the seals failed to convince the Government of Canada to change its seal hunt policies. The one exception was in 1984-1985 when the International Fund for Animal Welfare implemented a boycott of Canadian seafood first in the United Kingdom and then in the United States.

¹³ See <http://hsus.org>

In 1984, the IFAW budgeted one million dollars towards a boycott of Canadian seafood in the United Kingdom, and—like the swordfish and BC lumber action discussed above—it achieved most of its stated objectives: an end to the large, ship-based seal hunt and government seal hunt subsidies. One observer characterized the IFAW boycott as “the best-organized boycott ever mounted by an animal welfare group.”¹⁴ As the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) reported at the time:



“The IFAW boycott campaign in Britain began immediately after the European Commission ban was extended in October 1983. On Feb. 6, 1984, the supermarket chain Tesco, with 465 stores, said it would no longer stock Canadian fish products

until the seal hunt was ended. Safeway, with 105 stores, soon followed.

“In 1984, due to the EEC export ban and British fish boycott, there was no vessel-based commercial seal hunt; only landsmen went out.

“Fish products manufacturers, fearful the fish boycott would spread to the United States, urged an end to the seal hunt. Even the fisheries ministers of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia agreed the danger of losing the U.S. market would justify a ban.

“Other groups, including the Fisheries Council of Canada, the Canadian Sealers' Association and the federal Progressive Conservatives (then the Opposition in Ottawa), supported a moratorium on hunting whitecoat seal pups.”¹⁵

Not long after the 1984-1985 seafood boycott was introduced in the United States to further increase pressure on Canada, the IFAW suspended it, believing that

¹⁴ Mowat, Farley. “Sea of Slaughter.” Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984. p. 395.

¹⁵ “U.K. boycott threatens Canadian fishery.” *The Journal*, television program. Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 3 April 1984.

http://archives.cbc.ca/IDC-1-73-986-5606/politics_economy/seal_hunt/clip7

having achieved a ban on the large, ship-base hunt and an end to seal hunt subsidies, the sealing industry—deprived of its major economic actors, its traditional markets, and government subsidies—would wind down of its own accord. Arguably, to some extent, this is what occurred, until 1995.

Another factor persuaded the IFAW to prematurely end the boycott, and not force the Government of Canada to end the seal hunt officially for all time—an achievement that was, then, in the IFAW's reach. The factor was compassion. The boycott was so successful, having attracted overwhelming, international public support, that the trustees of the IFAW became deeply concerned about the devastating economic effect on fishers, their families, and their communities. Indeed, one of the trustees, Fred Beairisto, a resident of New Brunswick, a province dependent in part on the fishing industry, resigned on a matter of principle because of the boycott. In 1985, the IFAW's trustees, in order to minimize the harm to sealers and fishers, suspended the boycott before the seal hunt was ended, and before they had actually achieved a ban on the killing of all seals under one year of age.¹⁶ This was a fatal strategic mistake because at the time, as consequence of the IFAW's seafood boycott, the Government of Canada, according to Deputy Prime Minister Allan MacEachen, was considering ending the commercial seal hunt.¹⁷

The trustees' compassionate decision—laudable and understandable as it may have been at the time—has had long-term political consequence for the IFAW and for the anti-seal hunt movement as a whole. Having demonstrated the limits of its willingness to exert legitimate coercive power, the IFAW lost most of its influence over the Canadian government's seal hunt policy, and has never regained it. The IFAW's loss of influence and resulting lack of political credibility gave Brian Tobin, Canada's Minister of Fisheries and Oceans from 1993 to 1996, the confidence to expand and subsidize the seal hunt in 1995, and to herald in an era of the largest seal hunts for the last 50 years. The fact that in 2004 the Canadian seal hunt is bigger, bloodier, and crueler than at any time since the 1950s—and remains the world's largest slaughter of marine mammals—is a testament to the quality of Tobin's political and strategic astuteness.

In conclusion, for over 30 years the history of consumer actions initiated to pressure Canada to end the seal hunt suggests that the Canadian seal hunt is

¹⁶ "Seals and Sealing in Canada: Report of the Royal Commission." Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1986. Vol. 2, p. 69.

¹⁷ Mowat. 397.

susceptible to certain consumer actions, and that such actions can result in the Government of Canada reconsidering its sealing policy. However, not all seal hunt consumer actions resonate with the public and decision makers. Adequately funded and properly conceived and implemented actions that target seafood have proven to be effective, likely because they directly affect those who are responsible for, support, and economically benefit from slaughtering seals. Conversely, consumer actions that target Canada in general or Canadians not even associated with the sealing industry, who may even tacitly or actively oppose the seal hunt, have yet to demonstrate the necessary widespread consumer support, likely because no pressure—and this is understood by the consumer—is put directly on the sealers, the sealing industry, or any other individuals or industries associated with or supporting these groups.

The Susceptibility of the Canadian Fishing Industry to a Consumer Boycott

If it had been the purpose of human activity on earth to bring the planet to the edge of ruin, no more efficient mechanism could have been invented than the market economy.

Jeremy Seabrook

THE MYTH OF THE MARKET: PROMISES AND ILLUSIONS

The Canadian fishing industry is more susceptible to a consumer boycott today than at any time in its history because of a convergence in the fall of 2004 of Country-of-Origin labeling legislation^{18,19} in the United States, and the traditional export trade patterns of Canadian seafood .

This is from a story earlier this year in the San Francisco Chronicle:

“Seafood sold in U.S. supermarkets—everything from wild salmon to bagged frozen shrimp to Mrs. Paul's fish sticks—will carry new labels this fall stating where it was caught, where it was processed and whether it is wild or farmed. The new labeling requirement is the result of a little noticed provision of a federal spending bill that recently passed Congress. It singles out the seafood industry as the

¹⁸ See Appendix 2

¹⁹ See <http://www.countryoforiginlabel.org/seafood.htm>

first to conform to a 'country of origin' food labeling law that the beef and pork industries have vigorously opposed."²⁰

And from the Agriculture and Agr-Food Canada website:

"Canada exports over 80% of its fish and seafood production to more than 80 countries. In 2003, exports (630,427 tonnes) were valued at \$4.5 billion. The United States is Canada's largest export market (70% of Canada's seafood trade is with the U.S.), followed by Japan and the European Union."²¹

Canada's fishing industry is highly vulnerable to a boycott because its products are now readily identifiable by consumers in its largest export market.

The fishing industry is particularly vulnerable in the seal hunting provinces targeted by any consumer boycott. The bulk of seafood from Canada comes from the seal hunting provinces of Newfoundland, Quebec, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia: the "Atlantic fishery accounted for 82% of total landings with top production in herring (harvested primarily for its roe), shrimp, snow crab, scallops, lobster and mackerel. Value leaders were lobster, crab, shrimp and scallops. Lobster continues to be Canada's most valuable seafood product, worth almost \$600 million in 2002."²²

Atlantic Canada Fish Product Exports by Country and Year in \$CDN²³
Fish, Crustaceans, Molluscs and Other Aquatic Invertebrates

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
United States	1,572,653,293	1,773,705,993	1,803,610,539	1,894,213,069	1,787,401,621
Japan	264,293,321	245,211,116	198,021,842	316,464,746	276,966,268
China	73,210,474	80,470,257	93,726,887	186,800,404	221,565,406
Denmark	44,093,933	40,082,542	46,564,443	76,502,461	66,639,730
France	31,694,734	28,436,755	54,463,607	49,887,589	62,533,730

²⁰ Kay, Jane. "Seafood to get country of origin label" in *San Francisco Chronicle*. February 4, 2004

²¹ "Industry Overview: All About Canada's Fish and Seafood Industry." *Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada*. 2004

<http://atn-riac.agr.ca/seafood/industry-e.htm>

²² See footnote 10.

²³ Trade Data Online. *strategis.gc.ca*. 2004.

http://strategis.gc.ca/sc_mrkti/tdst/engdoc/tr_homep.html

Atlantic Canada Fish Product Exports by Country and Year in \$CDN (cont'd)
Fish, Crustaceans, Molluscs and Other Aquatic Invertebrates

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Korea, South	7,906,867	10,350,511	19,344,674	38,117,703	35,807,408
United Kingdom	36,894,045	34,116,592	39,041,436	29,485,447	31,723,903
Belgium	33,786,510	28,625,422	24,663,843	30,361,480	30,385,754
Thailand	23,448,789	23,018,492	22,996,695	36,267,632	29,605,825
Germany	30,540,824	26,274,478	31,231,224	23,735,508	25,843,077

The IFAW seafood boycott in 1984-1985 demonstrated not only the susceptibility of the Canadian fishing industry to a consumer boycott, but also that the fishing industry, at all levels, was concerned enough—and economically affected enough—to call for an end to sealing.²⁴ Twenty years later, the Canadian fishing industry, as result of new U.S. Country-of-Origin Labeling regulations, is even more vulnerable to consumer activism than it was in 1984 and 1985.

**Anticipated Effect of a Canadian Seafood Boycott
on Canadian Sealing Policy and the Sealing Industry**

Protest, like cars and Coca-Cola, is going global. Dissidents in any democracy always want their views heard, their rights regarded and transparency in . . . decision-making. This is reasonable in our society and must become reasonable on our planet. . . . Opposition is becoming multinational. Critics are empowered, as is Big Business and the media, to organize globally.

Diane Francis

FINANCIAL POST, 5 FEBRUARY 2000

Public opinion, international trade, and regulatory conditions are such that a properly managed and adequately funded consumer boycott of Canadian seafood will adversely effect the economic value of Canadian seafood exports, and will cause economic hardship. However, the question remains: Will a successful Canadian seafood boycott hasten the end of the Canadian seal hunt? A definitive answer cannot be given, because the opposition's response to a Canadian seafood boycott cannot be predicted with certainty. Nonetheless, it can be stated with considerable confidence that,

²⁴ Mowat. pp. 395-398

the Canadian government and the Canadian sealing and fishing industries will phase out the seal hunt, if they are convinced that there will be no relief otherwise from the mounting economic losses caused by a Canadian seafood boycott.

The justification for this answer is in a number of strategic elements, learned from previous successful boycotts including a Canadian seafood boycott. The strategic elements include:

1. The economic gains of the seal hunt compared to the economic losses exacted by a Canadian seafood boycott.
2. The political power of the fishing industry stakeholders who would pressure the government to end the seal hunt, compared to the power of those who would demand the government resist the seafood boycott.
3. The Government of Canada's response and the response of individual politicians to the principle and precedent of giving in to economic 'blackmail.'
4. The determination—real and perceived—of the organizers of and partners in the Canadian seafood boycott to stay the course.

Economics overwhelms all discussions about ending the seal hunt in response to a consumer boycott. Despite the noisy rhetoric in favor of sealing, few of even the most bombastic seal hunt proponents are prepared to lose many dollars to insure its continuation. Pride pays few bills. Industry Canada trade statistics report that the export value of the seal hunt is about \$6 million. Most of the profits from sealing are derived from export rather than local markets.

**Canadian Seal Hunt: Fur, Meat, and Oil Exports
by Country and Year in CDN\$²⁵**

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Norway	2,010,555	380,017	0	2,873,144	6,001,055
China	1,550,331	1,129,017	0	28,510	207,933
India	0	0	0	0	49,294
Korea, South	0	27,500	0	38,543	42,731
Japan	0	0	14,188	10,928	12,927

²⁵ Trade Data Online.

**Canadian Seal Hunt: Fur, Meat, and Oil Exports
by Country and Year in CDN\$ (cont'd)**

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Taiwan (Taipei)	0	0	0	0	7,137
Netherlands	0	0	0	0	5,330
Denmark	0	0	563,339	273,537	0
Estonia	0	0	0	245,737	0
Poland	0	0	0	236,866	0
SUB-TOTAL	\$3,560,886	\$1,536,534	\$577,527	\$3,707,265	\$6,326,407
OTHERS	0	14,238	112,760	25,392	0
TOTAL (ALL COUNTRIES)	\$3,560,886	\$1,550,772	\$690,287	\$3,732,657	\$6,326,407

Contrary to the above table, according to the Canadian government agency that manages and markets the seal hunt, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the landed value of the seal hunt in 2002 “was more than \$20 million.”²⁶ The value of the seal hunt ought to be easy to determine. However, even a panel convened by the Canadian government in 2000, the Eminent Panel on Seal Management, could not determine a precise value of the seal hunt: from its report, “The Panel has attempted to obtain reliable information on the value of the sealing industry but has found that such data are somewhat imprecise and sometimes lacking in consistency.”²⁷ Whether the correct value of sealing is \$6 million or \$20 million it matters little when the value of sealing is compared to the anticipated economic impact of a Canadian seafood boycott.

The significant public opposition to the Canadian seal hunt in the United States, Canada’s largest seafood product market, and in other markets particularly in the European Union, and the United States’ COOL regulations indicate that an adequately funded and properly managed Canadian seafood boycott would significantly affect the value of Canada’s seafood exports. There is a precedent to support this assertion. In the 1984 IFAW seafood boycott, the wholesale price of British Columbia salmon paid in the United Kingdom dropped by 50% at the Billingsgate Fish Market in London,²⁸ the UK’s largest wholesale seafood market. Conservative estimates suggest that a 2004 Canadian seafood boycott in the United States would result in a wholesale price decline of 10% to 25%, or \$178 million to \$446 million. Even if Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s most optimistic

²⁶ “Understanding Seals & Sealing in Canada: facts about seals 2004-2005.” Ottawa: Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 2001.

http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/seal-phoque/facts-faits/facts-faits2004_e.htm

²⁷ “Report of the Eminent Panel on Seal Management.” Ottawa: Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 2004. http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/seal-phoque/reports-rapports/expert/repsm-rgegp_e.htm

²⁸ Best, Stephen. Personal observation.

seal hunt value is used, the out-of-pocket costs to sealers and the Canadian fishing industry of a United States Canadian seafood boycott would be 9 to 22 times the value of the seal hunt.

What these cost figures fail to make explicit is that they represent much more than just a decline in gross economic value. More importantly, they show a decline in profit. In a boycott, costs tend to stay fixed; it is the profit that is reduced, eliminated, or turned into a loss. The \$178 million to \$446 million figures, as conservative as they are, would render the Atlantic Canada fishing industry unprofitable for most, if not all, of its participants. Consequently, if the only strategic element influencing the response of the Government of Canada and sealing industry to a Canadian seafood boycott was the balance sheet, the seal hunt would be ended very quickly. The economic losses suffered for continuing to seal would be too onerous, and unjustifiable.

Notwithstanding their paramount importance, macro economics alone will not shape seal hunt policies if a boycott is implemented. Various flavors of politics and emotive issues, petty and otherwise, will also play their respective parts. Competing economic sectors will be one of those factors. In the 1984 IFAW seafood boycott, the people directly affected economically fell into two camps: one group urged the government to end the seal hunt, the other demanded the government maintain the seal hunt. The former—despite initially urging the government to maintain the seal hunt—included most fishing organizations, fishing companies, and fishers unions;²⁹ the latter: the Canadian Sealers Association³⁰ and native groups, such as the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia.³¹ The economic actors since 1984 have not significantly changed; a 2004 Canadian seafood boycott will likely cause a similar split in the fishing industry. The Canadian Sealers Association, which appears to have greatly reduced its activities, and similar groups, despite token opposition, will not likely put much pressure on policy makers, primarily because they no longer enjoy government funding and most, if not all, of their members participate in the larger fishing industry. Native groups—whose indigenous seal hunts have not been the target of the environmental and animal welfare movements—will be a greater concern for boycott organizers, not because they wield significant political power, but rather because of the propaganda value of their relationship to fishing and sealing, and the chilling effect native peoples will have on the

²⁹ Mowat. p. 398.

³⁰ See <http://www.sealers.nf.ca/aboutus.html>

³¹ Herscovici, Alan. "Second Nature: the animal rights controversy." Toronto: CBC, 1985. p. 107.

participation of animal welfare and environmental groups in a boycott. The aboriginal component will likely be fully exploited for its propaganda value by the government and others who can be expected to oppose a Canadian seafood boycott.

The influence of individual politicians on government policy should not be underestimated. A determined cabinet minister can, to some extent, bully and embarrass his or her colleagues in cabinet into a policy that is “wooden-headed.”³² The recently elected Liberal federal government has one member, the Hon. R. John Efford—Member of Parliament for the Newfoundland electoral district of Avalon and Minister of Natural Resources—who can be expected to launch an irrational, hysterical, and vicious attack on not only the boycott and those who support it, but also on any of his colleagues who either “appease” or “collaborate” with the “evil enemy.” Efford can be expected to have some effect on government decision-making if other factors—particularly the perceived determination of boycott organizers—suggest that the government might weather, politically, a Canadian seafood boycott.

A third factor in the government’s sealing policy deliberations will be the longer-term political and strategic implications for the government of giving in to a boycott. Many in the government and the bureaucracy will argue, cogently and correctly, that acquiescing to a boycott will encourage advocates to use the boycott strategy in future issues. The argument will be that if the government “surrenders to blackmailers and liars”³³ over this issue, there will be no end to the demands—better to fight now, rather than later. Also consideration will be given to the electoral effects of seeming to appear weak, and surrendering to the “animal rights movement.” Members of Parliament in opposition to the government can be expected to exploit this line of propaganda, even to the extent of associating “animal rights” with activism identified by CSIS and the FBI as “terrorism.” However, governments and industry tend to be pragmatic when the issue is money and will find it difficult to resist acquiescing to the boycott for purely long-term strategic considerations, for the simple reason that the economic costs—and eventually the resulting political costs—will be too high to justify continued resistance.

³² Tuchman, Barbara.W. “The March of Folly: from Troy to Vietnam.” New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1984

³³ Mowat. p. 397.

The last, and most important, factor that will shape government sealing policy is psychology: the perception that policy makers have of AAC's, and other boycott partners', determination. If the policy makers judge that the organizers lack the political will to stay the course, it is unlikely that they will change their seal hunt policies. Conversely, if the politicians conclude that the boycott's organizers have the political will—the sheer bloody-mindedness—to stay the course, that perception will influence how the government and industry evaluate all the other factors.

A Canadian seafood boycott that depresses the wholesale price in export markets will result in the Canadian government and industry reconsidering seal hunt policies. The decision they make will depend primarily on two factors:

1. the actual economic effects of the boycott and
2. the decision-makers' perception of the determination of the boycott organizers and partners.

The latter is the most important. A Canadian seafood boycott will, in fact, depress seafood product prices. Therefore, perceptions of the determination of the environmental and animal welfare groups promoting the boycott will, for the most part, decide the government's and industry's response. A determined environmental and animal protection community can prevail—will prevail—for the pragmatic reason that the most powerful economic actors in the fishing industry—those most affected by the boycott—will not and cannot suffer sustained losses for the commercial seal hunt; they will compel the Canadian government to end it.

Complicating predicating how the Canadian government will respond from fishing industry pressure to end the seal hunt is the fact that politics in Canada is not "business as usual." Politically, we live in interesting times which creates not only uncertainty but also dangers and opportunities. Currently, Canada has a minority Liberal government, which is politically unstable. This fact must be taken into account as the boycott organizers develop the overall strategy and their communication campaigns.

Lastly, the Canadian sealing industry—although it is under Canadian jurisdiction—is, for the most part, not a Canadian industry at all, but rather a Norwegian industry. Canadians kill the seals, but the real profits are earned by the Norwegian company, G.C. Reiber & Co., that buys most of the pelts through

its Canadian subsidiary Carino Ltd. Norway, which prosecutes its own harp seal slaughter is as vulnerable to a seafood boycott as Canada. There is also a Greenland hunt, which may be susceptible to a seafood boycott as well, as Greenland is a possession of Denmark.

Avoiding the Canadian Seafood Boycott

[The] aim is not so much to seek battle as to seek a strategic situation so advantageous that if it does not of itself produce the decision, its continuation by a battle is sure to achieve this. In other words, dislocation is the aim of strategy.

Sir Basil H. Liddel-Hart

STRATEGY

It is strategically and ethically important that the partners in a proposed Canadian seafood boycott do all they can to avoid actually having to call for its implementation.

A successful Canadian seafood boycott would have a devastating economic effect on the people and families who participate in the Canadian sealing and fishing industries. Also, the boycott will require Animal Alliance of Canada and, possibly, others who might support the boycott, to make considerable investments in economic and human resources. Therefore it is important to make every effort to avoid actually calling for a boycott. Moreover, should it prove necessary to finally implement a boycott, the fact that every effort was made to avoid it will improve press and supporter relations, will demonstrate the reasonableness of the boycott organizers, and will allow much of the blame for the boycott and its effects to be placed plausibly on government and industry.

It may be possible to avoid calling a boycott, and to achieve a commitment to phase out the seal hunt over a limited period of time, by informing the federal and provincial governments and the affected industries of the intention to call the boycott, and by giving them a finite period in which to respond positively. However, merely informing those who can change seal hunt policies about an impending boycott will probably not be enough. Like the parents of the boy who cried wolf, the Canadian government has learned not to take boycott cries seriously. What will be required is an impressive presentation that not only outlines the nature and anticipated effect of the boycott, but also provides

samples of the advertising materials—radio spots, television ads, print ads, web site etc.—that will be used to promote the boycott. Also persuasive will be a comprehensive analysis of the market that the boycott will affect in order to demonstrate a clear understanding of the economic factors in play and to underscore the competency of the organizers to implement the boycott.

The objective of the presentations would be to leave governments and industry with the clear and correct impression that everything is in place to fully implement the boycott the moment it is called, that the elements would likely achieve their objectives, and that the boycott partners are serious and determined.

One suggested date for informing government and industry about the proposed boycott is Monday, September 27, 2004. Also, a number of dates have been suggested to announce the boycott should the Canadian federal government and industry refuse to agree to phase out the seal hunt. They include Monday, November 15, 2004 because it is after the U.S. presidential elections and avoids the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday. And it has been suggested that the calling of the boycott should wait until February/March 2005 to coincide with, and take advantage of, the start of the 2005 sealing season when earned media would be easier to attract. Either schedule provides sufficient time for AAC and its partners to prepare initial boycott materials and to seek the participation of other organizations, as well as sufficient time for government and industry to determine their response to the boycott before it would be called. No doubt the February/March 2005 allows for the boycott preparations to be more complete.

AAC has prepared a preliminary list of the parties who should receive notification of the boycott along with a request to consider viewing a presentation or receiving a delegation. The presentations can be done either in person or through a password protected web site,³⁴ depending on responses to the boycott from the individual parties.

Notwithstanding the strategic value of making every effort to avoid calling the boycott, it is unlikely that the government will acquiesce to the demand to phase out of the seal hunt on the strength of the boycott warning alone. The government will likely hear advice recommending that they allow the boycott to be called, and then appear to respond to demands from the fishing and sealing

³⁴ Animal Alliance of Canada has registered the name and established <http://BoycottCanadianSeafood.net> and similar web site names

industries and other interests in Atlantic Canada to end the seal hunt. The government will not want to be perceived giving into the demands of the “animal rights movement” directly.

The Canadian Seafood to Boycott

KISS—Keep It Simple, Stupid

ANONYMOUS

The Country of Origin Labeling that comes into effect September 2004 in the United States removes much of the concern about which Canadian seafood to boycott. Some Canadian seafood exports, such as lobster, compete directly with locally harvested species. It would be unfair and poor strategy if the proposed Canadian seafood boycott adversely affected local United States fishers, creating a local and sympathetic opponent to the boycott. COOL diminishes this concern. It is unlikely that United States fishing interests would publicly endorse a Canadian seafood boycott. Indeed, officially they would probably oppose it. However, given that many producers (Maine lobster and Alaska salmon producers, for example) would in fact benefit from the Canadian seafood boycott, local U.S. fishers opposition can be expected to be minimal and muted, or non-existent.

Three reasons have been given for only targeting crab and lobster in a Canadian seafood boycott. They are worth considering. The first reason is that crab and lobster are the major seafood exports to the United States from the sealing areas of Canada. The second reason is that crab and lobster are the most profitable Canadian seafood exports to the United States, ironically because Canada’s fisheries management has been so poor that few species are left for export. Of the 1.8 billion dollars worth of seafood exported to the United States in 2003, over three quarters—1.35 billion dollars—was accounted for by crab and lobster: \$523 million and \$828 million respectively.³⁵ And thirdly, targeting crab and lobster as “bottom feeders” from “the bottom of the food chain” as essentially all that is left of a once vast sea fishery, following decades of bad management by the very government agencies that now claim there are “too many” seals, and that TACs are “sustainable” may influence potential U.S. customers for Canadian fish who might be moved by the conservation argument, and by the narrowness of the choices involved. Fish may be an integral part of most consumer’s eating habits,

³⁵ Trade Data Online

but crab/lobster are essentially a luxury, and available from other than Canadian sources.

However, targeting crab and lobster complicates the marketing of the boycott. In marketing, it is axiomatic that simpler is better. "Help save the seals. Boycott Canadian seafood" is a simpler message than "Help save the seals. Boycott Canadian crab and lobster." Also, politically in Canada, the general Canadian seafood boycott may have more effect, because it will pull into the seal hunt controversy the Canadian Pacific coast fisheries. Canada's Pacific coast fishers and fish farm operators are not entirely blameless when it comes to marine mammal issues, having publicly supported the Atlantic seal hunt and having called for culls of marine mammals on the Pacific coast in order, in their view, to protect fish stocks and fish farms from marine mammal predation.

Clearly, more research and discussion is required, but on balance a general rather than species specific boycott of Canadian seafood may be preferable to a more focused boycott against Canadian crab and lobster.

Where to Implement the Boycott

. . . there are more large businesses that are highly vulnerable to public opinion because they operate in highly competitive markets and where consumer choice is increasingly made on the basis of images which include a large political component . . . any good or service can be politicized, i. e., a significant fraction of consumers can be persuaded to make their choice based on perceived political characteristics.

W. T. Stanbury

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS AND THE INTERNATIONAL
CONFLICT OVER THE FORESTS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, 1990 TO 2000

The Animal Alliance of Canada is an enthusiastic proponent of coalitions and cooperation with other members of the environmental and animal protection community. Strong, broad coalitions are often the key to successfully helping animals and protecting the environment. The Canadian seafood boycott is no exception; its success and duration will to a large extent be decided by the organizations who support and promote the campaign. However, to simplify this analysis and because the participation of other groups is not predictable this early in the campaign, this review assumes that the Canadian seafood boycott

will be managed and funded solely by the AAC. Given that assumption, the optimum area for the AAC to implement the Canadian seafood boycott is in the New England and New York / New Jersey regions of the United States.

One of the keys to a successful boycott is, of course, effective consumer marketing. It is beyond the economic wherewithal of AAC to conduct a national boycott in the United States; the U.S. market is too vast. Consequently, the AAC must consider targeting its advertising in those regions where its advertising budget can be used most efficiently and where its message will be heard with sympathy.

The following table shows the value of the U.S. markets by state for Canadian seafood . Only the twelve most economically important states are shown.

Atlantic Canada U.S. Seafood Exports by State in CDN\$³⁶

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
MASSACHUSETTS	1,266,943,514	1,454,250,076	1,387,743,658	1,413,346,098	1,414,389,317
MAINE	261,022,645	295,505,713	323,353,724	325,478,702	348,892,854
New HAMPSHIRE	108,060,561	128,672,164	131,791,068	167,386,721	134,533,489
New YORK	94,635,176	115,401,973	121,177,591	123,817,671	107,535,957
RHODE Island	45,216,491	60,932,554	56,888,452	103,429,492	104,440,344
CONNECTICUT	38,513,253	48,700,517	59,497,500	78,658,432	81,445,452
FLORIDA	61,490,221	77,089,298	74,788,029	96,996,101	72,719,235
New JERSEY	59,596,646	60,555,395	60,700,814	60,862,759	59,514,036
CALIFORNIA	50,249,056	57,727,983	80,794,178	76,770,768	48,341,823
KENTUCKY	203,385	14,278,418	20,797,250	23,413,993	23,210,682
WASHINGTON	33,304,685	40,444,762	23,693,429	14,254,777	16,135,547
INDIANA	15,733,283	26,269,914	37,891,022	30,496,217	15,857,768

The New England states, particularly Massachusetts, account for most of Canada's exports. It is important to note, however, that the table is for wholesale not retail and consumer sales. The Massachusetts figure is for sales at wholesale auctions in Boston, New Bedford, and Gloucester. (The people of Massachusetts are not consuming 1.4 billion dollars worth of Canadian seafood, nor are consumers in Maine eating 350 million dollars worth.)

The New England states offer the AAC a very efficient market in which to promote a Canadian seafood boycott, and one in which it has the economic wherewithal to operate effectively. New England accounts for most of the wholesale market in the United States, and therefore most of the U.S. wholesale

³⁶ Trade Data Online

buyers of Canadian seafood. New England can also be recommended for the following reasons. New England,

1. is a major consumer market of Canadian seafood at the grocery and restaurant levels;
2. is a major U.S. media market;
3. has a population that is generally supportive of environmental and wildlife protection issues;
4. is home to a significant number of local, state, and national U.S. animal and environmental protection organizations;
5. is well positioned to provide a “seal-safe,” locally harvested, “Made in America” alternative to Canadian seafood, as the United States has the world’s best marine mammal protection legislation, and some of the best fisheries management based on an operational precautionary approach; and
6. geographically, the Northeast U.S. is easily accessible to AAC’s Toronto headquarters.

As economically and politically efficient as the New England and New York / New Jersey regions are for marketing a Canadian seafood boycott, other population areas of the United States and other countries are attractive marketing areas as well. In the U.S., the Pacific coast, the Chicago area, and Florida are particularly interesting. And, as the table below shows, some of the countries of the European Union offer opportunities.

Atlantic Canada U.S. Seafood Exports by Country in CDN\$³⁷

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Japan	264,293,321	245,211,116	198,021,842	316,464,746	276,966,268
China	73,210,474	80,470,257	93,726,887	186,800,404	221,565,406
Denmark	44,093,933	40,082,542	46,564,443	76,502,461	66,639,730
France	31,694,734	28,436,755	54,463,607	49,887,589	62,533,730
Korea, South	7,906,867	10,350,511	19,344,674	38,117,703	35,807,408

³⁷ Trade Data Online

Atlantic Canada U.S. Seafood Exports by Country in CDN\$ (cont'd)

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
United Kingdom	36,894,045	34,116,592	39,041,436	29,485,447	31,723,903
Belgium	33,786,510	28,625,422	24,663,843	30,361,480	30,385,754
Thailand	23,448,789	23,018,492	22,996,695	36,267,632	29,605,825
Germany	30,540,824	26,274,478	31,231,224	23,735,508	25,843,077

N.B. Countries in **bold** belong to the European Union and account for 28% of Canada's non-U.S. exports—\$217 million in 2003.

There is a particularly high level of concern in Europe for the protection of seals and other marine mammals. For example, Belgium and Luxembourg have banned the importation seal skins—the exception being those seal skins coming from Inuit and other indigenous groups. All of these markets offer similar advantages to the preferred region in the north-eastern United States. Moreover, they are where most Canadian seafood is sold at the grocery and restaurant level.

Marketing the Canadian Seafood Boycott

. . . no work promises to be easily popular where the marking is not definite and the choice clear. But that is not enough. The audience must have something to do, and the contemplation of the true, the good and the beautiful is not something to do.

Walter Lippman
PUBLIC OPINION

To achieve maximum effect, the Canadian seafood boycott should be marketed not only to seafood consumers and the general public, but also to:

1. Canadian sealing and fishing industry stakeholders;
2. industries that service the Canadian sealing and fishing industries;
3. United States restaurant and grocery store chains and other retailers of Canadian seafood that are sensitive to consumers' wishes;
4. elected and non-elected government officials at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels in Canada;
5. the Canadian and U.S. media; and
6. environmental and animal protection non-governmental organizations in the United States, Canada, and the European Union.

It is apparent from the list above that the word “marketing” envisions a broad communications strategy that includes the lobbying of government and industry in both the United States and Canada. It is also apparent that each of the above target audiences will require its own communications strategy. While it is important in a boycott to encourage the consumer not to buy a particular product, it is just as important to ensure that those directly and indirectly affected by the boycott are kept continually informed about the boycott and its progress. The reason is that during a boycott policy makers are influenced not only by the public or the consumer but also by the internal discord among, and pressure from, those adversely affected by the boycott. It is beyond the scope of this analysis to provide a comprehensive communications strategy for each of the above audiences. It is sufficient to note that readily accessible media and proven, routine contact methods are available to reach key persons in each of the target audiences.

While a detailed communications strategy is beyond the scope of this analysis, it can be recommended that the foundation medium for all of the communications strategy be a comprehensive, high quality web site. A web site can be recommended for this purpose because the Internet is now ubiquitous enough that all of the industry, government, and non-government stakeholders interested in the boycott and a majority of individuals in the demographic group that would respond to the boycott have Internet access. Indeed, the efficacy of using the Internet to organize politically is well proven. The Multilateral Agreement on Investment was effectively killed because organizers had the communication reach—and therefore organizing power—of the Internet available to them. Unlike any other media, a web site can provide, on demand, relevant information and analyses in a compelling format to people in each of the target audiences and, just as importantly, establish a marketing “look” and presence easily accessible by any person interested in the seal hunt issue and the

It's the seals' world, too



Please, help end Canada's seal hunt: the largest marine mammal slaughter in the world.

Boycott Canadian Seafood

www.BoycottCanadianSeafood.net

Canadian seafood boycott. Also, as demonstrated by the political web sites MoveOn.org and www.DemocracyForAmerica.com (the evolution of the Howard Dean for President campaign), the Canadian seafood boycott web site—BoycottCanadianSeafood.net—can serve as a central organizing and fund raising site that can assist and help recruit supportive individuals and organizations around the world. A further advantage of using a web site as the foundation medium is that it can reduce the cost of other media, by allowing television and radio advertising to carry very simple messages, as can print ads. The use of 30 second rather than 60 second advertisements on radio and television and, in some cases, 15 second spots, and smaller ads in print will permit an increase in the frequency and reach of the ads, thereby increasing the marketing effect of the paid advertising component of the communications strategy. Also a well-executed web site can enhance earned media by making readily available not only accurate information about the seal hunt, the Canadian seafood boycott, and the boycott partners, but also print materials and advertising and stock video, photographic, and audio files in broadcast formats usable by news outlets.

The first—and what could be the most important use of the web site—will be to help convince the sealing and fishing industries and the Canadian government to agree to phase out the Canadian seal hunt and avoid the necessity of actually implementing the boycott. For this reason alone, significant resources should be invested in an extremely well-executed Canadian seafood boycott web presence. To those who can end the Canadian seal hunt, the quality of the Canadian seafood boycott web site will be a key signifier of the determination of the boycott partners.

Human, Ethical, and Political Considerations of a Canadian Seafood Boycott

... it is to no purpose, it is even against one's own interest, to turn away from the consideration of the real nature of an affair because the horror of its elements excites repugnance.

Carl von Clausewitz
ON WAR

The human cost of an effective boycott can be considerable and often tragic. A Canadian seafood boycott raises ethical concerns about the triaging of one group of animals (seals) for others (fish, shellfish, and molluscs). The residual political

effects of a successful boycott can enhance the effectiveness of participating non-governmental organizations and positively influence other and future animal and environmental protection issues. All of these issues, positive and negative, interact and conflict with each other, making a Canadian seafood boycott much more than a simple protest. Therefore, it is advisable that the Animal Alliance of Canada and others participating in the Canadian seafood boycott understand and be sensitive to all of the consequences and effects of their strategic actions. There should be no doubt: these issues and perhaps others will be raised by both friend and foe during the course of the boycott.

Like AAC's electoral campaigns, a Canadian seafood boycott is a departure from the usual campaign practices of animal welfare organizations which tend to focus on protest, research, and education. A consumer boycott is not a protest, but rather the application of coercive power. Coercive power is the capacity to exact a cost and/or provide a benefit. With few exceptions, public policy is negotiated and decided among interests who have acquired coercive power and have demonstrated a willingness to use it. Protest, research, and education campaigns are persuasive, not coercive, despite the vocal and intense outrage in some protests. The implied assumption in all such campaigns is that the target communities will eventually see the error of their ways and act voluntarily to curb the behaviors that are destroying animals or the environment. As a result, rarely are animal welfare and environmental groups required to take into consideration the effects or the ethical implications of their campaigns. However, when groups acquire and apply coercive power, or unleash the enormous latent coercive power in their supporter bases to compel a change in economic or cultural behaviors, then moral considerations do come into play for both ethical and practical reasons. The importance of these issues for the success of a boycott cannot be overstated. A boycott can fail when its full economic enormity becomes apparent to organizers and supporters who are unprepared for the human and community consequences of their actions.

A boycott of Canadian seafood is particularly sensitive to ethical issues. The people who will bear the brunt of the boycott are some of the most economically disadvantaged people in Canada. Moreover, unlike the image portrayed—and even believed—by some anti-seal hunt organizations, sealers and fishers are not brutal, blood-thirsty, immoral barbarians bent on torturing baby seals. The demonization of opponents is a classic propaganda tactic (and, sadly, too many people believe their own propaganda) because many activists find it difficult, even impossible, to pressure people or groups—no matter how important the cause—whom they come to understand or for whom they have a natural

compassion. For the most part, sealers are decent people who are trying to make a living and provide support and opportunities for themselves and their families. True, their view of how people, animals, and the environment should relate differs from that of people who govern, manage, and support animal and environmental protection organizations. Sealers' and fishers' activities are often cruel and environmentally damaging. Nevertheless, they are not 'evil' people, and they warrant compassion and understanding and every effort to ameliorate the adverse effects of a boycott—for the most part, by giving fair warning and by strategically conducting the boycott such that it will be over as quickly as possible. Even more troubling, few sealers and fishers have economic options other than sealing and fishing. They will suffer under a Canadian seafood boycott and, depending on the recalcitrance of the federal government and other decision makers, the suffering could be considerable. Some may even lose their livelihoods as they miss payments on vessel loans or fail to meet other economic obligations.

At the heart of the moral dilemma is a conflict of values and what each of the competing value-holders is prepared to do to have their values prevail. There is also the dilemma for the animal and environmental protection community that coercive strategies based on the judicious application of power, such as election campaigns and economic activism, tend to be more effective at achieving public policy objectives than persuasive campaigns. Indeed, many issues—the Canadian seal hunt is one of them—have proven to be wholly resistant to persuasive techniques.

It is beyond the competence of this author to address fully the animal rights concerns about boycotting seafood which, in effect, sets one animal (seals) above another (fish, shellfish, molluscs). The same moral issue overlaid the tuna/dolphin issue. Why do dolphins deserve more of our compassion than tuna? These are important questions of a religious and philosophical nature, matters of faith or personal values that are not susceptible to secular arguments.

As important as it is to consider the negative implications of a Canadian seafood products boycott, it is equally important to consider the positive implications. A successful Canadian seafood products boycott will have residual political effect that will influence not only future Canadian government public policy, but also the public policies of other governments. Unfortunate though it may be, the reality is that public policy is usually decided not by what is right, but rather by negotiations between government and political actors who wield some form of coercive power. An animal and environmental protection community that uses

to its fullest extent the considerable power latent in its supporter base will have more future success at the public policy negotiating table than an interest community that does not. Public policy makers can ignore protest, research, and education campaigns; they cannot, will not, and do not ignore the application of coercive power. By demonstrating its considerable power with a Canadian seafood products boycott, the animal and environmental protection community will be able to deal more effectively with other issues, thereby saving the lives of countless animals and helping to protect and rehabilitate environmental integrity.

No attempt will be made here to reconcile the human, ethical, and political considerations raised above; they can be resolved only by individuals and organizations giving them due consideration. Each individual and each organization is different. It is unlikely that one resolution will satisfy all. It is sufficient for this analysis to suggest the importance of considering them, given the nature and expected effects of a Canadian seafood products boycott and the end of the Canadian seal hunt. Therefore, in order to insure that they are comfortable with the use of their considerable coercive power, and that as the full consequences of the boycott become apparent they will stay the course, members of the animal and environmental protection community should consider fully and discuss the moral dilemmas that a Canadian seafood products boycott poses *before* they embark upon it.

Strategy Overview

... you should leave [your opponent] a line of retreat as the quickest way of loosening his resistance. It should, equally, be a principle of policy, especially in war, to provide your opponent with a ladder by which he can climb down.

Sir Basil H. Liddel-Hart

STRATEGY

Any discussion of strategy should begin with a *caveat*. Strategy development is not a predictor of future events. It is a planning tool. Strategy development is crucial to a successful campaign because it anticipates and plans for various scenarios. Consequently, advocates are better prepared for unpredictable events and unique responses and counter-strategies by opponents.

The initial strategy development of the Canadian seafood products boycott is based on a two stage approach. Stage I entails best efforts to avoid a boycott by persuading the Canadian government and industry decision makers to phase out the seal hunt over a short period of time. Stage II is the boycott itself, to be implemented if Stage I fails. The two stages are discussed more fully below. The discussion here does not include a full development of the tactical elements, each of which will require its own detailed planning conducted in association with boycott partners.

Stage I. (Time frame: immediate until boycott announcement date)

Strategic objective: to persuade Canadian government and industry decision makers to agree to phase out the Canadian seal hunt over a timely period.

The tactical elements of Stage I include:

1. full development of all communications elements: marketing 'look & feel' including logo, color mood, copy concepts, etc.; web site; radio and television advertisements; print advertisements; campaign materials such as bumper stickers, decals, T-shirts, etc. Preparations of the communications elements will convince government and decision makers that the call for a Canadian seafood boycott is a serious campaign and that the boycott can be implemented, as promised, on the date set.
2. development of a scientifically plausible and politically palatable rationale for the government to end the seal hunt. The government will not want to be seen to be acquiescing to threats from the animal and environmental protection community. A scientifically sound environmental protection rationale based on the precautionary approach for ending the seal hunt and protecting all top predators can be made, and would help decision makers agree to end the seal hunt.
3. preparation of presentation for government and industry that will include the communications elements of the boycott and an economic and political analyses of the boycott's effect—short and long term—on the fishing industry and the political environment. The presentations will begin on 27 September 2004 and will include a deadline. They can be done either in person by representatives of the boycott partners, which is

preferred, or through a secure, password-protected web site made accessible to government and industry representatives.

4. development of a media communications strategy. Despite the best efforts of the boycott partners to maintain the confidentiality of the boycott so that government and industry decision makers can consider the demand to phase out the seal hunt without press and public scrutiny, it is likely that the press will become aware of the boycott during Stage I. This eventuality can be used to some advantage to further pressure government and industry without compromising the overall two-part strategy and without appearing to prematurely announce the boycott. A media communications strategy should be developed that takes into account these two tactical objectives.
5. confidential outreach to interested animal and environmental protection organizations. As discussed above, the “effect of an international coalition—*ad hoc* and/or formal—of animal and environmental protection organizations advocating a boycott of Canadian seafood in order to end the seal hunt cannot be overestimated.” A broad, international partnership of organizations would make it possible for the Canadian seafood boycott to expand far beyond the New England area of the United States, and would, therefore, make it more likely that the Canadian government—with pressure from the Canadian fishing industry and its dependent communities fearing their economic viability—would agree to phase out the seal hunt.

Stage II. (Time frame: boycott announcement date until demands are met)

Strategic objective: the launching of a Canadian seafood products boycott in, at least, the New England region of the United States that will exact an economic cost that far exceeds the net value of the Canadian seal hunt from those that are involved in sealing directly, indirectly, and peripherally. The boycott will be maintained and expanded until the Canadian government-of-the-day ends the commercial Canadian seal hunt, leaving only the indigenous hunt.

If it becomes necessary to launch Stage II of the Canadian seafood boycott, which is expected, it will likely be a result of non-economic passion overwhelming economic concerns in the decision making process (see “Anticipated Effect of a Canadian Seafood Boycott on Canadian Sealing Policy and the Sealing Industry”

above). These non-economic factors are irrational and emotional, and are, consequently, transitory. They will exert their greatest influence over decision making at the beginning of the boycott, and will lose their potency and cogency as the boycott progresses. This natural and inevitable cooling of the passions will be coincident with profit declines, loss increases, and bankruptcies in the fishing industry which will adversely affect individuals, industries that service the fishing industry, and fishing communities. As passions cool, and economic hardship mounts, it can be expected that pragmatic economic concerns will take precedence over irrational emotions. The process of passions cooling and pragmatism assuming precedence is a natural political evolution. To produce maximum strategic effect, it should be exploited fully in the Stage II strategy implementation and tactical development.

The tactical elements of Stage II, some of which are currently being developed and which will need to be fully developed prior to the launch of the boycott, include:

1. appointment of staff dedicated to the boycott. Due to the effort the boycott will demand, it will benefit from its own staffing. However, while the amount of work may appear daunting, it will be manageable with a modest staff supported by contracted services. The boycott work takes place over an extended period, and the various tasks will be implemented incrementally. A large staff will not be necessary to maintain and enhance the boycott and implement tactical and communications elements. The 1984-1985 IFAW seafood boycott, for example, was managed by only two full time and one part time staff.
2. development and implementation of a research capacity to acquire samples of Canadian seafood products in various markets, monitor the effects of the boycott on auction prices of Canadian seafood, track the efforts of the boycott partners, monitor boycott and related news items in the popular and industry press, and maintain opposition research files on significant actors associated with the sealing and fishing industries.
3. a public and media presentation on the boycott implementation date in Boston, attended by as many boycott partners as practicable, to announce officially the start of the Canadian seafood boycott to end the Canadian seal hunt.

4. a comprehensive, on-going communications strategy with elements tactically tailored to the various audiences for the boycott including: federal, provincial, and municipal politicians; fishing industry stakeholders; sealing industry stakeholders; wholesale Canadian seafood buyers; seafood restaurants; grocery store and fast food chains; consumers; media; non-governmental organizations; etc. Each element of the communications strategy will have its own objective. For example, communications to the fishing industry stakeholders would include tactical elements that would help undermine the credibility and irrationality of those politicians who—at no cost to themselves—would sacrifice the economic wherewithal of the fishing industry in favor of their own political hubris.
5. the development of procedures, strategies, and communications protocols to deal with the reactions and counteractions of the Canadian government and fishing and sealing industry stakeholders. It can be expected that the pro-seal hunt community will develop quality propaganda to undermine the credibility and integrity of the boycott partners, to appeal to the sympathy of the press and consumers by featuring native peoples and poorer families associated with sealing and fishing, and to emphasize the ‘sound and humane management’ of marine resources. For a preview of such arguments, see the Fisheries and Oceans Canada Environics Research Group survey “Canadian Attitudes Toward the Seal Hunt.”³⁸ It will also be critically important to maintain cordial communications with government officials, in order to insure that should the government decide to end the seal hunt, the boycott organizers can help facilitate the new policy in a politically astute manner.
6. implementation by Animal Alliance of Canada and partners of a fund raising component in the boycott. To insure that the boycott can be maintained over the long-term, timely consideration must be given to its funding. It is likely that a Canadians seafood products boycott can elicit the necessary financial support given its perceived efficacy by supporters. A fund raising component also has a strategic value: it informs the political and industry targets of the boycott that the boycott organizers are planning for an extended campaign.

³⁸ “Canadian Attitudes Towards the Seal Hunt”

7. planning and implementation of a paid media program, including radio, television, and print advertising. The messaging should be as simple as possible, encouraging people to avoid Canadian seafood to put pressure on those who slaughter seals, and asking for help by requesting that people visit the BoycottCanadianSeafood.net web site. The paid advertising will also serve to keep the seal hunt decision makers and those who will influence them aware of the extent of the boycott. Seal hunt stakeholders, as part of the communications strategy, should be given copies or dubs of the paid advertising.
8. planning and implementation of an earned media campaign. The Canadian seafood products boycott may attract some earned media from larger news outlets in the U.S. It will definitely be covered by the regional press in Atlantic and Pacific Canada and, perhaps, by the Canadian national press. However, consumer boycotts gain more benefit from earned local media. Fortunately, media coverage at the local level is often easier to attract than national coverage. Significant local media can be gained by local groups conducting demonstrations and leaflet distributions in front of grocery stores and in malls. Even modest demonstrations of just a few individuals are often newsworthy at the community level. The effect of modest, local demonstrations on seafood sales cannot be overstated. A majority of shoppers use the local press for grocery store and other local shopping information, which is the reason grocery store chains rarely advertise in major national newspapers. The shoppers whom the boycott organizers hope will avoid Canadian seafood read the local press. Local earned media also allows smaller, local animal and environmental protection groups to play a significant—even critical—role in helping to end the Canadian seal hunt.
9. development of a boycott implementation schedule. For example, it may be useful to discuss a punctuated boycott: that is a boycott heavily publicized only during the sealing season from February to June.

The Stage I and State II strategy overview is meant to be a planning tool. As various actors interested in the Canadian seafood boycott respond to the AAC initiative, certainly tactical elements and possibly strategic elements will change. Moreover, as the AAC does not have—nor does it wish to have—a proprietary control over the concept of a Canadian seafood boycott, much of the timing suggested above may become moot as other organizations pursue their own boycott initiatives. Nonetheless, the basic and major elements, the tactical tools

necessary to successfully implement and coordinate a boycott—regardless of the environment in which the boycott takes place and the response of the pro-seal hunt community—are included in the strategy overview above.

Moving Forward

Whatever your fight, don't be ladylike.

Mary Harris “Mother” Jones
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MOTHER JONES

Animal Alliance of Canada has already completed the initial research into the Canadian fishing industry and has identified the significant political and industry stakeholders. The AAC has also compiled a list of non-governmental organizations which may consider partnering with the AAC, or organizing their own boycott campaign. To facilitate this progress, it is suggested that the AAC complete the BoycottCanadianSeafood.net web site as soon as possible and begin contacting non-governmental organizations and inviting them to participate. The Massachusetts-based International Wildlife Coalition has agreed to participate. And, the Humane Society of the United States has expressed its interest in participating and, hopefully, will play a leading role. The web site can brief groups that are considering participating in the Canadian seafood boycott.

As an early next step, the AAC along with its partners should develop—as soon as possible—a campaign schedule, coordination protocols, an assignment of responsibilities, and a budget, which would include financial and/or in-kind contributions from partners, for the implementation of those elements discussed above, taking into account the opportunities and obstacles that the inevitable unpredictable events will present.

Concluding Remarks

American environmentalists have never used their numbers to full advantage.

Mark Dowie

LOSING GROUND: AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTALISM
AT THE CLOSE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Concluding this analysis with an historical perspective may be informative. In the first half of the 1980s, the Canadian commercial seal hunt was effectively ended by an international, *ad hoc* coalition of environmental and animal welfare groups led informally—and often funded—by the International Fund for Animal Welfare. Most of the world’s major animal protection groups played significant roles in the successful effort. The number of seals killed dropped from over 180,000 per year to about 20,000. The two campaigns that led to the end of the seal hunt were the European seal product import ban and the Canadian seafood boycott. Tragically, however, the seal hunt returned, worse than ever. It is important, for all our sakes, that those who would protect the seals, other animals, and the environment consider why initial success declined into failure.

Today, not only do the political and economic conditions that made it possible to end the seal hunt in the early 1980s still exist, they have evolved so that what was accomplished 20 years ago is, in fact, easier to achieve today. Moreover, the sophisticated communications systems that are taken for granted today and have proven so successful for political organizing did not exist in the 1980s. Telex machines are no match for the Internet. The animal and environmental protection community, which is larger than it was in the early 1980s, has all of the necessary latent coercive power, organizing tools, public support, and financial wherewithal that it needs to end the Canadian seal hunt and, in fact, successfully address most environmental and animal welfare issues. All that is required is the acceptance that it is possible, and the will and determination to make it so.

Appendix 1: Power to the people



Power to the people

Nestle's decision to call in a £3.7m debt from famine-hit Ethiopia may not go down well with shoppers. But do product boycotts ever work? Libby Brooks investigates

The Guardian: Friday December 20, 2002

The outrage generated by yesterday's revelation that Nestlé is demanding a £3.7m payment from famine- and debt-ridden Ethiopia has doubtless already been translated into a more palpable force, as shoppers hesitate before opting for their usual Kit Kats, Perrier or Shredded Wheat. This would not, of course, apply to those consumers already boycotting the company as part of the 24-year-old Baby Milk Action campaign, which began in protest at Nestlé's much-criticised marketing of breast milk substitute to the third world.

The question of boycotts, their lifespan and effectiveness, is endlessly debated within the activist community. There have been notable successes. When Greenpeace called for a lightning boycott of Shell in June 1995 over the company's decision to dump the Brent Spar oil platform at the bottom of the Atlantic, sales plummeted by 70% in some countries, prompting a dramatic change of heart within days.

During the 80s, growing international horror at the injustices of apartheid prompted a proliferation of boycott campaigns. Following an intensive push from the NUS, for example, Barclays' share of the student market dropped 10% within two years.

The anti-apartheid movement was uncompromising in its insistence that a consumer buying South African oranges or wine was as culpable as a multinational investor, and became the first campaign to succeed in encouraging individuals to connect their purchasing power with international politics. Such international ostracism had a powerful effect on the ruling government, but elsewhere some campaigners began to voice concern that organisations were

being unsophisticated in their activism, opting for a knee-jerk boycott in every instance and risking the public's goodwill.

Boycotts need to have a very clear outcome and a moral premise to be effective, argues comedian and activist Mark Thomas, who has made two television programmes about Nestlé's trading practices. "An individual has to both feel that they will be making a difference by not buying or joining something, but also have a sense that they would actually think less of themselves if they did," he says.

"You can't ever underestimate the ability of consumers to annoy companies. No brand is invincible, and it does seriously effect their image to be seen to be in conflict."

He points out that it is only two days since McDonald's, bete noire of the anti-globalisation movement, issued a profits warning, its seventh in the past two years. "If you think of boycotts in isolation they are often not as effective as you might want them to be," says Thomas. "But if you can raise the issues, bring the company out to debate them, and provide the consumer with an alternative, then you stand a really good chance of making a difference."

The rise of ethical consumerism has been a significant factor in how the tactics of campaigners have changed, he adds. "We have come quite a long way from saying, 'Don't buy that,' to saying, 'Here's a fairly-traded alternative.' "

Campaigners are becoming far more sophisticated, agrees Scott Clouder, research manager of Ethical Consumer magazine. "Groups campaigning against sweatshops, for example, are extremely equivocal about asking consumers to boycott the likes of Gap or Nike. They would rather encourage the companies to improve conditions for their workers than simply withdraw from the area and create more unemployment."

The Burma Campaign UK recently staged an extraordinarily successful boycott of the underwear company Triumph, forcing it to reverse its position and withdraw from the country within eight weeks. "Triumph had a factory in Burma which it was renting from the military regime," says campaigns coordinator Mark Farmaner. "We thought hard about whether to call a boycott, but we'd already had success with other clothing retailers. We were confident that we would get the support, and that the company would get upset. They are not like Nestlé, which is used to being campaigned against."

Its posters of a woman wearing a barbed-wire bra, reading "Support breasts not dictators" found their way into the newspapers, and Triumph was inundated with complaints. "The fact that it was about bras helped," he admits. "We knew that would appeal to the media."

The Stop Esso campaign, organised by a coalition of Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and People & Planet, might have appeared to be an overly ambitious boycott. But it emerged as a result of the public desire for an outlet for their anger and frustration at George Bush's decision to pull out of the Kyoto Protocol process, says climate campaigner Nick Rau.

"We identified Esso as the most active anti-Kyoto company behind Bush. It's hard to hit the company in this country unless you target consumers." By June this year, a Mori poll found that the campaign had effected a 7% drop in the number of regular petrol buyers who said that they used Esso, while 47% claimed they would join the boycott if they were asked to by environmental groups.

"The logic is that you don't need to have 100% success. Levels as low as 5% can have an effect on a company's profits. We are always hearing about public apathy, but the experience of our campaigners at the pumps is that there is a high level of awareness and support, and that people do welcome the opportunity to express themselves."

It is important to have an endpoint, Rau adds, to prevent a boycott dragging on. "We're happy with the progress so far," he says, "but we have a timeline in mind. An extended boycott can dissipate support and effectiveness."

Twenty years on, however, Patti Ruell, policy director of Baby Milk Action, is adamant that their boycott remains relevant. "This latest news [about Ethiopia] shows the powerful forces we are up against and how difficult it is to get a company to change its practices.

"Nestlé has been trying to reposition themselves as a force for good, and say that the baby milk issue is a thing of the past, but our consistent independent monitoring shows that there is still a real problem. A boycott is a marvellous way for consumers to show companies what they will and will not tolerate. Now it's in Nestlé's hands. It always has been."

Appendix 2: Seafood to Get Country of Origin Labels



Seafood to Get Country of Origin Labels

The fish you buy to carry a label this fall.
You'll know its origin and whether it's wild or farmed.

Jane Kay, Chronicle Environment Writer

Wednesday, February 4, 2004

San Francisco Chronicle

URL: <http://www.organicconsumers.org/foodsafety/seafood020504.cfm>

Seafood sold in U.S. supermarkets—everything from wild salmon to bagged frozen shrimp to Mrs. Paul's fish sticks—will carry new labels this fall stating where it was caught, where it was processed and whether it is wild or farmed.

The new labeling requirement is the result of a little noticed provision of a federal spending bill that recently passed Congress. It singles out the seafood industry as the first to conform to a "country of origin" food labeling law that the beef and pork industries have vigorously opposed.

Consumer and environmental groups are big advocates of labeling, saying it gives consumers choices that they didn't have before. They cite recent studies, for example, showing that farmed salmon is higher in PCBs and other contaminants than wild salmon and may pose problems for the environment.

Some fishing industry groups also welcomed the requirement, saying it is away to promote U.S.-caught wild fish.

"A lot of people would like to buy American seafood products and support American jobs and American fishermen. Our seafood products are the best in the world in terms of quality and how they're handled," said Glen Spain, a regional director of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations in Seattle.

But most of the seafood industry criticizes the provision as onerous, expensive and unnecessary. Fish will be categorized according to the nationality of the boat

that catches them, and keeping boatloads of fish separate as they go through processing will be a logistical nightmare, they say.

"Seafood is going to be the guinea pig for the food industry," said Linda Candler, spokeswoman for the National Fisheries Institute, the leading trade group for the fish and seafood industry. Candler said that of all food products, fish is the only wild-caught food and therefore the hardest to categorize by nationality.

The 2002 farm bill included a "country of origin" labeling requirement for all food commodities, but the requirement was never funded. The new omnibus spending bill, passed Jan. 23, provided money only for the seafood labeling program and delayed the regulations for other commodities until September 2006.

Lobbyists say the mandatory labeling provision for fish got through because of Sen. Ted Stevens, the powerful Republican from Alaska who chairs the Appropriations Committee. Stevens supported the labeling as a way to promote his state's wild fish industry.

Commercial fishermen caught more than 99 percent of the salmon consumed worldwide in 1980, according to a Stanford University study. Today salmon farms supply about 40 percent of the salmon sold.

Beef and pork were left out of the mandatory labeling program as a result of heavy lobbying by trade groups. But in the wake of concerns over "mad cow disease" and pesticide residues on produce, some consumer groups say it's only a matter of time before other U.S. industries will be pressured to join other nations in labeling.

"There's no justification for keeping the public in the dark about where the rest of their food comes from," said Jonathan Kaplan, a spokesman for the Natural Resources Defense Council. "A label gives consumers an opportunity to buy locally grown foods."

Beef, pork and produce lobbyists won exemptions to the labeling law earlier this month with arguments that they lacked the infrastructure to make it work.

"Fish producers didn't share the same concern (over the labeling law), that ranchers did," said Bryan Dierlam, director of legislative affairs for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. "Ranchers stepped out and said there ought to be a better way. They were joined by pork producers. Many fruit and vegetable producers spoke out as well," Dierlam said.

Some in the beef industry thought labeling would help assuage consumer fears over BSE, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy, because the United States has improved practices over the last years.

But his influential group supported the delay until 2006, arguing that the law doesn't give the Agricultural Department enough flexibility in writing regulations.

"The law declares that you affirmatively identify the origin on each piece of meat. The infrastructure of our industry does not exist to do that. Our hope is we can work with Congress and come up with a more workable approach," Dierlam said. "Absolutely, we'll be watching to see what happens with seafood."

Provisions of the seafood labeling law:

-- The term "wild" fish means naturally born or hatchery-raised fish and shellfish harvested in the wild, including a fillet, steak, nugget and any other flesh from wild fish or shellfish.

To bear the United States "country of origin" label, wild fish and shellfish must be caught in U.S. waters or by a U.S.-flagged vessel and processed in the United States or aboard a U.S.-flagged vessel. If the fish is processed elsewhere, the country also must be put on the label.

-- The term "farm-raised" means fillets, steaks, nuggets and any other flesh from a farm-raised fish or shellfish.

To carry the U.S. country of origin label, farmed fish and shellfish must be derived exclusively from fish or shellfish hatched, raised and processed in the United States.

-- Food markets that carry a full range of grocery products are subject to the law. Specialty fish markets and butcher stores are exempt. The labeling requirement doesn't pertain to fish sold in restaurants.

Also exempt are fish and shellfish that have been substantially altered in processing. Pollack in fish sticks and nuggets must be labeled; but pollack made into "surimi," a paste, need not.

If the seafood is mixed, such as bagged shrimp, the countries of origin would be listed alphabetically.

-- The information must be conveyed by a label, stamp, mark, placard or other clear and visible sign on the fish or on the package, or displayed at the final point of sale to consumers.

Violators may be fined a maximum of \$10,000 for each violation.

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