

**Iceland and Trade in Whale Products**  
2nd December 2010<sup>1</sup>

**Briefing by the Iceland Nature Conservation Association and The International Fund for Animal Welfare**

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<sup>1</sup> This is an updated version of a document released 12<sup>th</sup> October.

In 1982 the International Whaling Commission (IWC) adopted a moratorium on commercial whaling. The following year, The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) banned international trade in whale products from all those species that were not already protected. Both decisions came into effect in 1985/86.

The IWC moratorium has not been respected by Norway, Iceland and Japan, which have continued whaling for commercial purposes, either under objection/reservation to the moratorium decision or 'scientific whaling'. However, during the same period the CITES trade ban has largely been respected and there has been very limited international trade in whale products.

The USA has had a long-standing foreign policy of opposition to international trade in whale products. Most recently, this opposition was apparent in the insertion by the USA in 2010 into the IWC Chairs' proposal for a compromise deal, which would have allowed only domestic use of whale products in the relevant country or territory. Earlier examples of the same USA policy are known from the early 90s Gore-Brundtland deal regarding Norwegian whaling. There was agreement from Norway that it would not trade internationally in whale products.

Within the IWC, there is also resistance to international trade in whale products. At the 1986 IWC meeting there was a long debate regarding the export of products from Iceland's then 'scientific whaling'. The result was a resolution which states that the products from such whaling should be utilised primarily for local consumption. This was later interpreted by the USA to mean that 51% of the products obtained from Iceland's whaling should be used within Iceland. Icelanders, however, do not eat fin or sei whale meat.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to this year's IWC meeting in Agadir, Morocco, Iceland expressed its concern that the proposal for a consensus decision on the future of the IWC, "... contains a paragraph, which had been proposed by some anti-whaling countries, on the domestic use of whale products that would in effect mean a ban on international trade and have the biggest negative effect on the interests of small countries with small domestic markets."<sup>3</sup> The USA policy of opposition to international trade in whale products received the support of the EU bloc and became a part of the EU Common position at the IWC.

An additional obstacle has been concern regarding contamination. Thus, on 7 December 2004, Norwegian media reported that Japan would not allow import of minke whale meat from Norway. The Norwegian fisheries journal, *Fiskaren*, cited levels of contamination of toxic substances such as PCBs and dioxin, as the reason why Japan would not buy whale products from Norway.

It is unclear whether Japan is deliberately trying to limit further imports of whale meat as its market is already saturated by the products from Japan's 'scientific whaling'

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<sup>2</sup> During the period 1986 – 1989, Iceland caught fin and sei whales in accordance with its programme for scientific whaling. Minke whaling was skipped.

<sup>3</sup> See: <http://eng.sjavarutvegsraduneyti.is/news-and-articles/nr/10045>

and there are large stockpiles of whale meat already in Japan. However, the fact is that little Icelandic whale meat has been imported into Japan. Much remains, at considerable cost, within Japan awaiting customs clearance, still more within Iceland.

## **Facts and Figures<sup>4</sup> – Iceland’s Fin Whaling 2009 and 2010**

### **Headline Figures – Whaling versus Whale watching**

Actual value of meat imported into Japan in 2010	US\$ 0.8 million
Percentage of 2009 - 2010 catch imported into Japan (as of 1 September 2010)	1.7%
Number of whale watchers in 2008 (latest year for which figures are available)	114,500
Total expenditure of whale watchers in Iceland (2008 figures - includes direct and indirect expenditure)	US\$ 16.7 million

### **Detailed Analysis**

Total catch for 2009	1500 Tonnes
Total catch for 2010 (estimate)	1776 Tonnes
Total harvest 2009 and 2010	3276 Tonnes
Whale products exported to Japan in 2009	0 Tonnes
Whale products exported to Japan in 2010	764 Tonnes
Percentage of total catch exported to Japan 2009 - 2010	23%
Imports of whale products into Japan for 2010	164.1 Tonnes
Percentage of total catch imported into Japan	5%
Fisheries minister estimate of the annual export value of whale products <sup>5</sup> per annum.	US\$ 41.0 million
Actual value of exported meat 2009 <sup>6</sup> and 2010	US\$ 7.0 million
Actual value of exported meat per year	US\$ 3.5 million
Actual value of meat imported into Japan in 2010 <sup>7</sup>	US\$ 1.9 million

<sup>4</sup> Export statistics are from Statistics Iceland. Import data are from Trade Statistics of Japan, latest statistics was for September data, released at the end of October.

<sup>5</sup> Explaining his decision of 27 January 2009 to grant quotas for commercial whaling just hours before leaving office, the minister of fisheries, Einar K. Gudfinnsson, stated to the The Icelandic National Broadcasting Service that the annual export value of whale products would be US\$ 41 million.

<sup>6</sup> Nothing was exported in 2009

<sup>7</sup> That is the value of the 164.1 tons which have been declared for customs. The remaining quantity, 466,9 tonnes, were still in customs as of 31 October 2010.