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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Šefčovič
on behalf of the European Commission
(4.11.2024)

The initial Regulation on Trade in Seal Products¹ allowed, as an exception, the placing on the EU market of seal products from hunts regulated by national law and conducted for the sole purpose of the sustainable management of marine resources.

The Regulation was amended in 2015², removing that exception, to reflect the outcomes of World Trade Organization rulings in the EU-Seal products case³.

The Fitness Check of the EU Regulation on Trade in Seal Products and of the EU Seal Pups Directive⁴ has been launched to assess their functioning, effectiveness and impact against their objectives, and whether they remain fit for purpose. Such evaluations are common practice in the lifespan of any piece of EU legislation.

A report of the Fitness Check performed by external contractors on behalf of the Commission, which is expected in January 2025, will integrate the results of the public consultation and the call for evidence, a factual summary of which is already available on the Have Your Say portal⁵, and of targeted consultations with key stakeholders, as well as own literature review/research to fill possible knowledge gaps.

The report will serve as input to a Commission Staff Working Document to be published in the first quarter of 2025.

On the basis of the Fitness Check findings, the Commission will consider whether further measures are needed.

¹ Regulation (EC) No 1007/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 September 2009 on trade in seal products, OJ L 286, 31.10.2009, p. 36–39.

² Regulation (EU) 2015/1775 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 October 2015 amending Regulation (EC) No 1007/2009 on trade in seal products and repealing Commission Regulation (EU) No 737/2010, OJ L 262, 7.10.2015, p. 1–6.

³ https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/enforcement-and-protection/dispute-settlement/wto-dispute-settlement/wto-disputes-cases-involving-eu_en?f%5B0%5D=landing_page_title%3Aseal

⁴ Council Directive 89/370/EEC of 8 June 1989 amending Directive 83/129/EEC concerning the importation into Member States of skins of certain seal pups and products derived therefrom, OJ L 163, 14.6.1989, p. 37–37.

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14031-Trade-in-seal-products-fitness-check-of-EU-rules/public-consultation_en