



# Media Release

**Date: 27th October 2008**

## **Seals protest outside Sainsbury's demanding an end to shooting**

Sainsbury's head office in London will be the target of activists dressed as seals this Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> October, protesting against the shooting of seals by Scottish salmon producers.

The protestors, led by the Seal Protection Action Group and British Divers Marine Life Rescue, will be handing out shopping carrier bags featuring the slogan 'Save our Seals Sainsbury's' and encouraging customers to boycott all Scottish salmon products.

Sainsbury's, along with many other high street retailers that sell Scottish salmon, are being targeted by campaigners because they purchase salmon from Scottish farms that shoot seals. The campaigners estimate that up to 5,000 seals are shot by Scottish salmon interests each year.

Last week scientists from the Sea Mammal Research Unit revealed what they described as a 'frightening' decline in the number of common seals around the UK coast. Under present outdated legislation – The Conservation of Seals Act (1970) - salmon farmers can shoot seals, even during the breeding season, to prevent 'damage' to equipment or stock.

Campaigners believe that salmon farmers can deter seals and other predators by using properly maintained, tensioned nets and other devices, without resorting to lethal methods. Unfortunately, the bullet is all too often seen as the easiest and cheapest option.

The Protect our Seals Coalition has written to all High Street retailers calling on them to insist that their suppliers of Scottish salmon stop seal shooting, and to stipulate this in their supply contracts. The news of the massive decline in our seal population has prompted more urgent action by taking the campaign to major retailers of Scottish salmon, that like Sainsbury's, buy Scottish salmon at the expense of seals.

"Scientific evidence supports our view that this culture of killing seals must stop" said Andy Ottaway of the Seal protection Action Group "We are calling on Sainsbury's and other major retailers to use their considerable purchasing power to persuade Scottish salmon producers to stop shooting our seals"

"We are calling on the public to avoid Scottish salmon unless they can be assured that no seals have been killed. Our seals are disappearing and we must act now before it is too late."

For further details about our campaign please visit [www.sealaction.org](http://www.sealaction.org)

**-ENDS-**

**P.T.O**

## **Interviews**

For interviews, further information or photographs, please contact Andy Ottaway of the Seal Protection Action Group on 01273 471403.

## **Editors Notes**

- The Seal Protection Action Group (SPAG) registered charity (SC017447) is dedicated to the protection of seals and their environment worldwide [www.sealaction.org](http://www.sealaction.org)
- SPAG is a founder-member of the Seal Protection Groups coalition: [www.protectourseals.org.uk](http://www.protectourseals.org.uk)
- The new research on seal populations was conducted by the Sea Mammals Research Unit (SMRU) at St Andrews University and the latest figures show that last year common seal numbers fell from 4,256 to 3,379 in Orkney, from 1,056 to 800 along the eastern coast of the northern Highlands, from 113 to 102 in the north-east, in Grampian, and from 6,702 to 4,732 on the west coast from Oban to the Mull of Kintyre. There was also a fall, from 445 to 215, in Fife, and by nearly half in the smaller populations around Lothian and Dumfries and Galloway. This was reported in The Guardian Newspaper on Oct 20th. [www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/oct/20/conservation-wildlife-seals-marine-endangered](http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/oct/20/conservation-wildlife-seals-marine-endangered)
- Scotland is home to globally important populations of grey and common (harbour) seals. About 39% of the world population of grey seals is found in Britain (estimated at 120,000) and over 90% of these breed in Scotland. In addition, it is estimated that 35,000 of a world population of about 500,000 common (harbour) seals are in British waters, with 86% of these in Scotland.
- Sainsbury's have recently signed a multi-million pound supply contract with Marine Harvest, a Norwegian company that operates many salmon farms in Scotland, to supply 12,000 tonnes of fish each year: 'Sainsbury's will today pledge to source all of its farmed salmon from sustainable stocks in Scotland which meet high animal welfare standards. The supermarket, which accounts for 27 per cent of UK salmon sales, has signed the contract with Marine Harvest Scotland, which will supply around 12,000 tonnes of fish each year'. <http://business.scotsman.com/fooddrinkagriculture/Sainsbury39s-to-sell-only-sustainable.4171597.jp>
- Marine Harvest has been implicated in several incidents involving the shooting of seals, most recently reported in the Independent on Sunday on May 25th 2008 <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/nature/tough-new-rules-brought-in-to-curb-scottish-seal-killings-834035.html>

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**Scottish Reg. Charity No: SC017447**

**The Seal Protection Action Group is dedicated to protecting seals and their environment worldwide.**