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Dear Members of the Scottish Parliament and MEPs for Scotland,

Please find below a link which will take you to the record of an exchange earlier today between Mark Ruskell MEP and Roseanna Cunningham, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform. It concerns the total ban on all imports of fish and fish products from Scotland to the USA which became law on 1st January 2017 and comes into force on the 1st of January 2022.

Save Our Seals Fund was heavily involved in the campaign to persuade the USA to use their Marine Mammal Protection Act to create this ban. Indeed, last September, when the American Government announced the ban, our correspondence was specifically mentioned. Please note that we took this action due to the refusal over three decades of Governments at Westminster and then Holyrood to make it illegal for fishery interests to shoot seals and insist that salmon farms install and maintain proper predator exclusion nets.

Our Government has continually refused to accept or understand the situation and appears to be under the very mistaken belief that so long as they do not apply for and use a Scottish Government License to shoot seals then individual fishery and aquaculture companies will still be able to export to the USA. This is not the case.

Last September, when the ban was announced, John Henderschedt, Director of the US Government National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Office of International Affairs and Seafood Inspection, said; "This rule requires harvesting nations to demonstrate that they prohibit the intentional mortality or serious injury of marine mammals in the course of commercial fishing operations," He went on to say that countries must have "procedures to reliably certify that exports of fish and fish products to the United States are not associated with a fishery in which intentional killing or serious injury of a marine mammal is allowed,".

I do not think the situation could be any clearer. Unless the Scottish Government passes a law making it totally illegal to kill marine mammals in Scottish waters, from 1st January 2022 it will be illegal to take as much as a jar of Scottish pickled herring into the USA.

I suggest that instead of entering into years of pointless discussion at Westminster and Brussels the Scottish Government pass two new laws. One to ban the killing of seals and other marine mammals and another to make it compulsory for marine salmon farms to install and maintain properly tensioned predator exclusion nets which keep seals and other marine mammals well away from the salmon in their net cages.

As the Government has constantly refused to back such a law perhaps one of you could start the ball rolling with a Private Members Bill or the equivalent?

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,
Secretary to Save Our Seals Fund

Link to the exchange of earlier today (Wednesday):

<http://donstaniford.typepad.com/my-blog/2017/04/seal-killing-salmon-farms-caught-in-cross-hairs-of-scottish-parliament-.html>