

Thank you for your interest in Iceland's policy on whaling.

As you may know Iceland is a consistent advocate of the principle of sustainable use of natural resources. This is reflected in Iceland's whaling activities, which have never involved any of the endangered whale species, killed on a large scale by other whaling nations in the past.

Several countries catch whales, most of them on a much bigger scale than Iceland. The biggest whaling countries among the members of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) are the United States, Russia, Norway, Japan and Greenland. The whaling operations practiced by all those countries, as well as Iceland, are sustainable and legal and in accordance with the rules of the IWC.

Iceland fully appreciates the need for careful conservation of marine resources. Our economy depends on those resources. Iceland was among the first countries in the world to extend its fishery limits to 200 nautical miles in the year 1975, in order to put an end to the uncontrolled fishing around Iceland by trawlers from other countries.

Iceland was also one of the first countries in the world to take a conservationist approach to whaling. As signs of overexploitation of whales by other nations emerged early in the last century, Iceland declared a ban on whaling for large whales around Iceland in 1915. Whaling was not resumed until 1948, except for limited catches 1935-1939. Strict rules and limitations were applied to whaling in Iceland from 1948 to 1985 when commercial whaling was halted again following a decision by the IWC.

Iceland believes that the whaling issue should not be handled as an exception from the principle of sustainable use of natural resources. A research plan on common minke whales was implemented 2003 - 2007 involving the take of a total 200 animals in order to gain better understanding of the role of common minke whales in the ecosystem. Important material was collected, which is now studied by scientists in order to increase our knowledge on the position of common minke whales in the food chain and how they prey on other species in their habitat affecting their abundance.

Commercial whaling was resumed in 2006 with 7 fin whales and one common minke whale caught commercially in that year, in addition to 60 common minke whales caught in accordance with the research plan. The following year a total of 44 common minke whales were caught in Iceland, including catches from both commercial whaling operations and the

conclusion of the scientific whaling program. A commercial quota of 40 common minke whales is set for the year 2008. The scientific program is no longer operated. No quota for fin whales has been issued this year.

The abundance of both common minke whales and fin whales has been confirmed by the Scientific Committees of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and the North-Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO), as as can be seen from their websites www.iwcoffice.org and www.nammco.no.

Iceland is an advocate of international cooperation in ensuring sustainable use of living marine resources, including whales. This has been the position taken by Iceland within the IWC, based on the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling from 1946. The stated role of the IWC, according to its founding Convention, is to provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry?.

I hope that this information will be useful to you in understanding Iceland's position on sustainable whaling. You may rest assured, that the desire to ensure the conservation of the whale stocks as well as other marine species is fully shared by the Icelandic Government.

Sincerely yours,

Ragnar Baldursson
Department of Natural Resources and Environment
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For information on the governance of Iceland's living marine resources on the web, please refer to, www.fisheries.is For information on various scientific research projects on whales and other marine mammals in the North Atlantic please refer to the web site of the Marine Research Institute: www.hafro.is as well as the North Atlantic Mammal Commission: www.nammco.no

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