

GREENPEACE

The Netherlands - a pirate fishers' paradise ***Why the international cod mafia is doing business in Dutch ports*** **Executive Summary**

Last year thousands of tonnes of illegally caught cod was landed in the Netherlands. Research by Greenpeace between January and June, 2006, has shown that, each month, frozen catch from the Barents Sea has been landed in the Dutch ports of Eemshaven and Velsen by transport vessels that have been involved in a number of illegal, unregulated and unreported activities. These activities have included exceeding legal fishing quotas, illegally fishing without a quota, unregulated fishing, illegal transfers of fish or attempts to evade inspection by the Norwegian coast guard. These are all compelling reasons why the Dutch Fisheries Inspectorate should be carrying out thorough investigations, verifying catch data with the relevant flag state authorities. However, no verification of the legality of the catch is being conducted, and subsequently the supply chain of cod from ship to shop is completely lacking in transparency. Once landed, illegal, unregulated and unreported fish is effectively whitewashed.

The most important findings of Greenpeace's research are that, during this period:

- At least 16 of the 22 vessels offloading fish at Sealane Coldstorage BV (refrigerated warehouse) in Eemshaven had previously been involved in illegal, unregulated and unreported activities.
- 22% of the total amount of cod landed originated from Flag of Convenience (FoC) vessels, which had transferred their load from Russian trawlers, an activity that has been illegal since January 2005.
- Of the 15 Russian transport vessels landing cod in Eemshaven, two are on the Norwegian black list and seven others offloaded cod originating from trawlers also on the Norwegian black list.
- Russian vessels offloading their cargo at Sealane Coldstorage BV, including the Verkhovina and the Mumrinskiy, had made extensive detours, circumventing the Norwegian Economic Exclusive Zone, thus evading Norwegian inspectors.
- Norwegian inspectors were denied access to the dock area owned by Sealane Coldstorage BV.
- In total, at least 3,000 tonnes of cod is suspected to be from illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing. This is almost 45% of the total landed cod during this period.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is seriously threatening the world's last remaining cod stocks. Around Canada, cod has been effectively wiped out as a result of overfishing, and North Sea and Baltic Sea cod stocks are on the brink of collapse. The last remaining relatively healthy population of Atlantic cod is to be found in the Barents Sea, where the pirate fishing industry is enjoying huge profits made possible by loopholes in legislation and insufficient controls. Essentially, these pirates operate outside international agreements on fishing quotas, and continue to fill their holds. In 2005, 25% of the cod originating from the Barents Sea is estimated to have been caught illegally.

Following international research, investigations in the Netherlands during offloading and with the help of the Dutch Freedom of Information Act, Greenpeace has been able to determine that the 16 suspected vessels have been able to offload a collective cargo of thousands of tonnes of cod, accounting for almost half of the total landings during the period of investigation. Dutch fishery inspectors only record how much fish is offloaded, with no verification being done with the relevant flag states in order to confirm whether the fish has been caught legally. Dutch ports, therefore, effectively become highly attractive to criminal interests wanting to violate international fishing and conservation regulations.

As a primary requirement to combat over-fishing and ensure sustainable fisheries, illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing must be brought to an end. Only when pirate fishers are

unable to find a safe harbour for their illegal catch and dealers can no longer sell illegal cod, can regulators manage their fisheries according to sustainable and ecological principles, providing a long-term sustainable basis for the industry.

A crime-file published by Greenpeace Netherlands, reporting on illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing of Barents Sea cod, clearly demonstrates how this lack of adequate port regulations in the Netherlands is contributing to the unfair and unsustainable ravaging of our seas. Greenpeace demands that the Dutch government immediately translates international agreements into national legislation and takes immediate action to combat pirate fishing; no more illegal and unreported catches offloading in Dutch ports or being sold in Dutch markets, and improved transparency in the supply chain, both within the European Union and beyond. The measures needed are simple and the laws enabling them are already in place; it requires only political will to enforce them. The Netherlands simply cannot let this daylight robbery of the Barents Sea continue, with not only the future of one of the last remaining big white-fish fisheries being at stake, but also the livelihoods of the legitimate fishers depending on this valuable resource.

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