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A baby seal takes it easy on a Pictou Island beach in Nova Scotia.

Jimmy Buffett joins boycott protesting seal hunt

Updated Wed. Dec. 20 2006 9:44 PM ET

CTV.ca News Staff

There will be no Canadian fishburgers in the paradise of Jimmy Buffett.

The Florida musician (*Cheeseburger in Paradise* and *Margaritaville* are two of his songs) and restaurant owner has joined a boycott of Canadian seafood, one aimed to force an end to the seal hunt in this country.

"I do not look at this as one nation telling another how to best manage its affairs," Buffet said. "I view it as an effort to make humans more humane."

One of the organizers of this effort is the Humane Society of the United States. That group's assets of two years ago were estimated to be US\$125 million, making it one of the richest such groups in America.

"It's having a significant impact more and more restaurants are joining every day," John Grandy, a spokesperson for the society, said of the boycott.

However, the Canadian seafood industry said the boycott isn't hurting its sales.

Celebrity chef Jamie Kennedy was one of those listed as a boycotter. However, Kennedy told CTV he buys Canadian seafood all the time -- although he wouldn't say so on camera, saying he didn't want the publicity.

Grandy's response? "Jamie Kennedy's restaurant withdrew this morning."

A survey last March of boycotting restaurants found about three-quarters of them were either continuing to serve Canadian seafood or else it was never on the menu at all.



Paul McCartney and his wife Heather pose with a seal pup as part of a high-profile publicity stunt - even though seal pups are not part of the seal hunt and it is illegal to target them. (CP / Tom Hanson)

Don't g



VIDEO

CTV News: Joy Malbon covers the seal hunt hype 2:29

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A Washington restaurant owner who added her name to the boycott admits she hadn't heard Canada's side.

"It's hopefully getting people asking questions and get the Canadian government to step up to the plate," said Ellen Gray of Equinox Restaurant.

An emotional topic

The society sends observers to the seal hunt every year, recording images of the harvest. It usually releases some graphic video.

"This hunt is very humane and in many cases better than what happens in abattoirs and slaughter houses," said Phil Jenkins of the federal Fisheries and Oceans dept.

"Now the difference is that it's out in the open it makes for very emotional pictures."

Some of the images are misleading, say officials.

For example, celebrities like Paul McCartney and his estranged wife Heather Mills posed this spring with whitecoat seal pups, but those haven't been harvested for almost 20 years.

While some hunters use a spiked club called a hakapik, about 90 per cent of all seals are shot.

The government defends the harvest as sustainable, generating \$20 million annually in economic activity and employing up to 10,000 people during the hunt period in the early spring.

With a report from CTV's Joy Malbon

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