



STATEMENT FROM CAVIAR EMPTOR: ROMANIA BANS STURGEON FISHING FOR 10 YEARS

(June 1, 2006) Romania, a top five exporter of beluga caviar, has announced a ban on all commercial sturgeon fishing for the next 10 years, citing concerns about continued declines in sturgeon populations. Environmentalists and scientists with the Caviar Emptor campaign applaud the decision and encourage other Caspian and Black sea nations to do the same, especially for the endangered beluga sturgeon.

An official publication released in May by Romania's Ministry of Environment and Water Management and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Rural Development said the ban was ordered after considering the worrying decline of registered sturgeon catches in Romania since 2000 and the extinction of other sturgeon species in Europe during the last century.

Even though the UN's Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species earlier this spring banned most of the 2006 global trade in wild caviar, Romania was granted a small export quota. This new decision by Romania means that for the next 10 years, the nation will not commercially fish for sturgeon, will not ask for CITES to grant future export quotas and will not produce caviar for the domestic market. Romania says it hopes the ban achieves "conservation and rehabilitation of sturgeon populations... through [the] temporary prohibition on commercial fishing."

Wild sturgeon populations around the world have suffered from overfishing, illegal trade, habitat loss and pollution, making it one of the most endangered fishes on the planet. "It is too bad that it takes a crisis to motivate countries to take drastic steps in conservation, but we hope that Romania's action will encourage other nations that produce wild caviar to act now to save the sturgeon. So much time has been wasted, and these remarkable fish desperately need a break from all fishing," said the Caviar Emptor coalition of SeaWeb, Pew Institute for Ocean Science and Natural Resources Defense Council.

Signed by Caviar Emptor partners:

Dr. Ellen Pikitch, Executive Director, Pew Institute for Ocean Science, New York

Dawn Martin, Executive Director, SeaWeb, Washington, DC

Lisa Speer, Senior Policy Analyst, Natural Resources Defense Council, New York

Note to Editors:

For more than five years, the Caviar Emptor coalition of SeaWeb, Pew Institute for Ocean Science, and the Natural Resources Defense Council has called for a halt to the international trade in beluga caviar and has supported the long-term reduction of export quotas for other endangered wild sturgeon. We have encouraged international funding for improved management and enforcement, and have helped start scientific research programs in the Caspian region. Caviar Emptor successfully petitioned the U.S. government to list beluga sturgeon under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, resulting in the U.S. ban on beluga caviar that has been in place since Fall 2005. Caviar Emptor has pointed consumers toward environmentally friendly, farmed caviars as a better choice than eating the eggs of an endangered species.

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