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**NEW RULES ENHANCE U.S. ABILITY TO MONITOR
CHILEAN SEA BASS IMPORTS**

Change Comes on Heels of New Action Against Poachers in Australia, Seychelles

Seafood Dealers wishing to import Chilean sea bass into the U.S. are now required to get pre-approval by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) before certain shipments enter the country. This and other new regulations will impede poachers' ability to import illegal fish, thereby increasing consumer confidence that Chilean sea bass on the U.S. market is sustainably harvested and managed. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is an agency of the Department of Commerce.

"The U.S. has taken this further step to prevent and discourage unlawful harvest and trade in the species," said Bill Hogarth, director of NOAA Fisheries. "We continue our work with international partners to reward law abiding fishermen and dealers with continued business and trade while minimizing the ability of others to profit from illegal fish."

In May of 2000, the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources set annual catch limits and implemented a document system (the *Catch Document Scheme*) to track Chilean sea bass catches. NOAA regulations do not allow Chilean sea bass imports without this document and a valid dealer permit issued by NOAA.

The new regulations, most of which become effective May 31, serve to refine the Catch Document Scheme and implement other measures intended to conserve Chilean sea bass under international agreements.

The U.S. is a leading partner in efforts to manage the Chilean sea bass fishery at a sustainable level as part of the 24-member-nation Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.

As the U.S. strengthens domestic ability to enforce conservation laws for Chilean sea bass, international partners are taking steps to remove poachers from the fishery. Australian authorities are in the process of sinking the South Tomi, a longline vessel apprehended last month with 100 tons of illegal fish on board. Also last month, the Republic of Seychelles revoked Chilean sea bass fishing licenses for three vessels flagged to that nation over concerns of illegal fishing practices.

Chilean sea bass is a deep-water species, also known as *toothfish*, caught in southern ocean waters near and around Antarctica. Though no U.S. vessels participate in the fishery, Americans account for a third of the world consumption of Chilean sea bass, importing approximately 10,000 tons per year.

Highlights of the new regulations include:

- A ban on U.S. imports from Food and Agriculture Organization-designated zones 51 and 57 (effective June 15), which are on the high seas outside the Commission's management area. This ban should curb a significant amount of poaching from the Commission's management area by fishermen who claim to have harvested from unregulated Areas 51 and 57, where scientific findings suggest Chilean sea bass does not live in harvestable quantities.
- A requirement for U.S. vessels in the Commission's management area that harvest Antarctic marine living resources to use a vessel monitoring system. Such a system is already required on all other vessels in the Commission's management area.
- A requirement of pre-approval on any frozen or fresh (in excess of 2,000 kilograms) imports of toothfish into the U.S. This would help the U.S. monitor imports more closely and be able to check the catch document in advance of the shipment for its validity and legality.
- A requirement that foreign importers designate and retain a U.S.-resident agent to act as business liaison.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. We provide effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public. To learn more about NOAA Fisheries, please visit: www.nmfs.noaa.gov.

The Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. To learn more about NOAA, please visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.