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**INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION SEES LARGE DROP IN ILLEGAL FISHING FOR
CHILEAN SEA BASS**

Scientists have released new data showing a dramatic decrease in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing for Patagonian and Antarctic toothfish, species commonly marketed in the United States as Chilean sea bass. The new data was presented last week at the annual meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources in Hobart, Australia, attended by a delegation from the U.S. Departments of Commerce and State and the National Science Foundation.

Estimates show that IUU fishing within the area regulated by the commission has decreased by 75 percent, from 10,070 tons in 2003 to 2,622 tons in 2004. The United States is one of 24 member nations to the commission and is the world's third largest importer of toothfish. In recent years, overfishing concerns due to the high volume of illegal toothfish harvests prompted the United States to take action, both within the commission and through domestic regulation, to reduce financial incentive for poachers.

"This welcome decline in toothfish poaching is due in large part to NOAA Fisheries' aggressive and sustained effort to ensure we keep poached toothfish out of this country," said Bill Hogarth, director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service. "The commission's catch documentation program is working to ensure long-term sustainable fisheries."

NOAA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Several high profile and successful enforcement cases prosecuted against illegal importers in the United States have further discouraged IUU fishing.

One regulatory change would be to require the use the commission's web-based electronic version of the catch documents for all imports of toothfish to enhance the quality and timeliness of information about them. The commission requires all toothfish boats to use satellite-tracking equipment when fishing within the commission's management area. NOAA Fisheries also may require that these vessels use the equipment from the time they leave the homeport to the time they return, if importing toothfish into the United States.

These actions on the part of the commission, NOAA Fisheries and the Department of State provide assurances to law enforcement, importers and consumers that the resource is being managed in a controlled manner for long-term sustainability. It should also improve consumer confidence that toothfish offered for sale in the United States have been legally harvested and imported.

NOAA Fisheries is dedicated to providing and preserving the nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries provides 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.

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.

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On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA Fisheries: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>

CCAMLR: <http://www.ccamlr.org>

Chilean Sea Bass Management Fact Sheet:

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2002/mar02/noaa02031.html>

Brochure on how the CDS program works:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/sfweb/nsil/toothfish%20brochure.pdf>

Latest U.S. Chilean Sea Bass Management News:

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/sep04/noaa04-093.html>