



14<sup>th</sup> October 2015

## Another nail in the coffin for illegal toothfish fishing

The São Tomé and Príncipe court judgement against the Captain and two senior officers of the illegal toothfish fishing vessel, the *Thunder* is a welcome, major, blow against IUU fishing for toothfish. It has reinforced the need for operators to work within legal, sustainable, fisheries.

Martin Exel, Chair of the Coalition of Legal Toothfish Operators, said that credit was due to the officers and crew of the Sea Shepherd vessels *Bob Barker* (who pursued the *Thunder* for 110 days), and the *Sam Simon* who hauled the illegal nets, as well as provided support in the pursuit.

Without the actions of Sea Shepherd, the *Thunder* would likely still be illegally fishing, and the Captain, officers and crew likely still operating illegally. With the support of nations like São Tomé and Príncipe in prosecuting the *Thunder* officers, and Spain's investigations of the beneficial owners, the process to totally eliminate illegal fishing for toothfish is rapidly tightening.

Illegal fishing for toothfish has been reduced by over 95% since the peak in 1997 and hopefully it will be totally eliminated in the near future, Martin said. Congratulations to the authorities in São Tomé and Príncipe who took the issues seriously, and were prepared to pursue the offenders through their judicial system.

COLTO noted that this result would not have been possible without the many past actions and measures taken to eliminate illegal fishing by member states of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, along with agencies such as INTERPOL. It was also a victory for the collaborative work between conservation groups and toothfish industry members, who remain determined to ensure sustainable, healthy fisheries for toothfish.

For more information:

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## Background

### COLTO:

COLTO represents fishing operators who catch around 90% of the world's legal toothfish, along with supporters such as fishing gear manufacturers, fish traders, and retailers. COLTO is a strong supporter of sustainable, legal management of toothfish fisheries and work closely with governments, conservation groups, scientists and CCAMLR to ensure that toothfish stocks are healthy and sustainable. Members come from Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Spain, UK, and the USA.

Over 60% of the world's toothfish catch has been independently certified by the [Marine Stewardship Council](#) as sustainable and well managed, as well as being rated as 'Best Choice' or 'Good Alternative' by the [Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch program](#).