

Explanation by Denmark on the transfer of traditional food, including minke whale meat, blubber and mattak to *Kalaallit* living in Denmark

During the meeting at the Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling Sub-committee, a few contracting governments criticized Greenland for exporting minke whale meat into Denmark. Due to this, it is appropriate to give an explanation on the terminology on “export” and “transfer” in connection to minke whale meat, blubber and mattak in order not to create misunderstanding.

Before doing so, a reference is made to the IWC document IWC/54/AS4 page 5, which states that “Greenlanders [*kalaallit*] prize food from whales and other “country food”, which they refer to as *kalaalimerngit*, or “Greenlanders’ food”. These foods constitute a significant part of many household diets and are integrally linked to Greenlandic identity.” and the document continues as follows; “. Eating Greenlandic foods are of great symbolic weight in determining whether a person is a true Greenlander.”

Kalaalimerngit have even greater value when you are not living in your own country, while you are under education or hospitalized or for other reasons are in Denmark for a period. The access to the highly valued *kalaalimerngit* is in general extremely limited in Denmark.

Greenland is part of the Kingdom of Denmark, and therefore, you are not talking about “export”, as we normally understand the word in connection to any commercial trade between countries.

Commercial export of meat, blubber and mattak from large whales is prohibited by law in Greenland. Since 1983, the West Greenland minke whale stock has been listed on Appendix II in CITES. In this relation, the CITES management authorities in Denmark and Greenland signed an agreement in 1986 as a follow up for the uplisting.

The agreement contains an allowance for Greenland to transfer minke whale meat, blubber and mattak of up to 8 tons per year to Denmark to Greenlanders on education and hospitalized in Denmark. In this context, it is underlined in the agreement, that the transfer or sale of the mentioned products shall not contain any commercial elements, that only the processing, packing and transferring costs should be covered.

The 8 tons limit was set in relation to an estimated need for about 7,000 – 10,000 *kalaallit* living in Denmark, which gives less than 1 kg minke whale products per person per year. The factual amount of transferred minke whale products of between 1-2 tons gives about 150 grams per *kalaaleq* living in Denmark per year.

The Greenlander Houses distributes or serves *kalaalimerngit*, while the Greenland Patient Hospital uses the minke whale products purely for patient consumption. The hospital has a capacity of 70-100 hospitalized persons. The minke whale products are not sold to shops, restaurants or kiosks in Denmark.

However, the mentioned regulation allows individual persons from Greenland to send/transfer or bring a maximum of 5 kg of *kalaalimerngit*, including minke whale products (within the above mentioned limit), when you enter into Denmark. It is the so-called “gift-package”. It is for your own and/or family private consumption in Denmark.

Denmark and Greenland are aware that CITES Secretariat registers the transfer of minke whale products from Greenland to Denmark as “export”. “Export” is not the right word to use in connection to minke whale meat, which is an unique example as described above.

All parts from CITES species transferred from Greenland to Denmark have to be registered through the CITES permit system, before you are allowed to send it to Denmark, and minke whale meat, blubber and mattak to Greenlander Houses and the Greenland Patient Hospital are not exceptions.