

# Fishing boat crew acquitted

November 6 2005

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The crew of a fishing vessel have been acquitted in Australia of illegal fishing for the Patagonian tooth fish, known on restaurant menus as Chilean seabass.

The Uruguayan ship, *Viasra*, was detained after a 4,350-mile chase, the BBC reported. Inspectors found 214,000 pounds of Patagonian sawfish on board the vessel after the longest and most expensive maritime chase in Australia's history -- but the vessel did not have its fishing gear in the water when it was caught.

A jury in the first trial was unable to reach a verdict.

The fishing industry has increasingly turned to the Patagonian toothfish and other formerly exotic species with the collapse of cod fisheries and other species around the world. Experts fear some of the new highly valued species could be next to be overfished.

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