

Iceland to resume disputed fin whale hunt in June

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The tails of two 35-tonne Fin whales are bound to a Hvalur boat on June 19, 2009, after being caught off the coast of Hvalfjörður, north of Reykjavik, on the western coast of Iceland. Iceland plans to resume its disputed commercial fin whale hunt in June with a quota of at least 154 whales, the head of the only company that catches the giant mammals said Saturday.

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Two vessels are being prepared for the hunt and they will head out to sea in early June, Hvalur chief executive Kristjan Loftsson told Icelandic public broadcaster RUV.

"The quota is 154 whales plus some 20 percent from last season possibly," he said.

Loftsson's company caught 148 [fin whales](#) in 2010, but none in 2011 and 2012 due to the disintegration of its only market in quake- and tsunami-hit Japan.

Most of this year's whale meat would be exported to Japan, he said.

"Things are improving there ... everything is recovering," he said.



Whalers cut open a 35-tonne fin whale on June 19, 2009, one of two fin whales caught aboard a Hvalur boat off the coast of Hvalfjörður, north of Reykjavík, on the western coast of Iceland.

Fin whales are the second largest whale species after the blue whale. Iceland also hunts [minke whales](#), a smaller species.

The International Whaling Commission imposed a global moratorium on whaling in 1986 amid alarm at the declining stock of the marine mammals.

Iceland, which resumed commercial whaling in 2006, and Norway are the only two countries still openly practising commercial whaling in defiance of the moratorium.

Japan also hunts whales but insists this is only for scientific purposes even if most of the meat ends up on the market for consumption.



Whalers cut open and inspect meat from a 35-tonne fin whale on June 19, 2009, one of two fin whales caught aboard a Hvalur boat off the coast of Hvalfjörður, north of Reykjavik, on the western coast of Iceland.

In 2011, the United States threatened Iceland with economic sanctions over its [commercial whaling](#), accusing the country of undermining international efforts to preserve the ocean giants.

But President [Barack Obama](#) stopped short of sanctions, instead urging Reykjavik to halt the practice.

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