

Dear Members of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee,

I am writing to you ahead of your forthcoming scrutiny of salmon farming in Scotland to raise serious concerns about the ongoing environmental impacts of open-pen salmon aquaculture on Scotland's marine environment and wild Atlantic salmon.

Evidence provided to your Committee during the Salmon Farming in Scotland inquiry has already documented persistent and unresolved issues, including high farm mortality rates, disease and sea-lice pressures, benthic pollution, farm escapes, and insufficient protection for wild salmonid populations. These concerns are clearly reflected in the Committee's own work and published evidence:

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-rural-affairs-and-islands-committee/business-items/salmon-farming-in-scotland>

Submissions to the Committee have highlighted the scale of these impacts and the weaknesses in the current regulatory framework, particularly in relation to wild fish interactions:

<https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/committees/rural-affairs-and-islands-committee/correspondence/2025/salmon-farming-in-scotland-wildfish.pdf>

I would urge the Committee to also consider the international legal context, particularly the recent Canadian Federal Court rulings which found that open-pen Atlantic salmon farming poses unacceptable risks to wild salmon and must be phased out in key regions. These rulings, which uphold precautionary and ecosystem-based management principles, represent a significant international legal precedent that Scotland should not ignore:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/open-net-pen-salmon-farms-court-ruling-1.6997375>

Wild Atlantic salmon are now red-listed, culturally significant, and economically vital to many rural and island communities. Continued regulatory delay or reliance on incremental change risks further harm to already fragile populations and exposes Scotland to reputational, environmental, and potentially legal consequences.

I respectfully ask the Committee to:

1. Acknowledge the significance of the Canadian court ruling and its relevance to Scottish aquaculture policy.
2. Consider whether current regulation of open-pen salmon farming is compatible with Scotland's obligations to protect wild salmon and the wider marine environment.
3. Recommend stronger precautionary measures, including limits or moratoria on new or expanded open-pen developments until independent evidence demonstrates no material risk to wild fish.

Thank you for your continued work on this issue and for considering the long-term protection of Scotland's marine environment and wild salmon heritage.

Yours sincerely,