

Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Environmental impacts of salmon farming

Written submission Charlotte Goodlet

I have lived on the west coast of Scotland for 20 years and I am extremely concerned at the environmental impact of Scotland's salmon farming on our marine environment and the fact that the industry intends to double its output by 2030.

Both my partner's and my own livelihood rely on a healthy marine environment. My partner is a scallop diver and creel fisherman. His livelihood, along with others who fish in a sustainable and responsible way, is threatened because crabs, prawns and lobsters are known to be affected by sea lice treatment chemicals used in salmon farming. I have a small scale edible seaweed harvesting enterprise - the success of which relies entirely on a clean, unpolluted marine environment.

How is it fair to allow salmon farming to pollute the sea and threaten jobs that use the sea sustainably?

Jobs are so precious in rural areas and well-managed fisheries, sustainable seaweed farming and harvesting, and wildlife tourism can protect the coastal economy long term.

The Scottish Government must tackle:

- Parasitic sea lice, thriving in overcrowded open net salmon pens, are driving wild salmon and sea trout numbers to dangerously low levels.
- Toxic chemicals designed to kill these sea lice now exceed safe levels in at least 45 Scottish sea lochs, and studies implicate them in harm to crustaceans and other forms of marine life far from the farm cages.

I am extremely concerned about the welfare of farmed fish - overstocked pens and disease-ridden fish appear to be the norm. If the industry is allowed to expand welfare standards can only be expected to deteriorate further.

The public are increasingly doubting the capability and efficiency of the regulatory bodies - indeed it is sometimes revealed through FOI that they are colluding with the industry.

Our seas are home to incredible wildlife, including wild salmon and sea trout, porpoises, dolphins, whales and seals. These protected species are under threat because of the harmful impacts of salmon farming.

A reported 130 salmon farms on Scotland's west coast have fitted Acoustic Deterrent Devices (ADDs) to their nets, to scare away seals with loud underwater noises. These ADDs also affect porpoises, dolphins and whales, even though it is illegal to disturb them. They can also cause hearing damage to these echo-locating animals, whose hearing is as important to them as eye-sight is to us. And if the ADDs don't work, the government issues licences for fish farmers to shoot so called 'rogue' seals.