

Salmon crisis as 2.3m are dumped in nine months

NEARLY 2.3million salmon died in the first nine months of last year at one of Scotland's largest fish farm operators.

The shocking statistics showed that more than 4,200 tons of farmed salmon died at Marine Harvest fish farms between January and September 2017.

The salmon died from various diseases and predation, according to details revealed under a freedom of information request by the Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture (GAAIA).

However, the data does not include the 125,000 salmon deaths at the Loch Erisort sites on the Isle of Lewis in October last year, where fish died from the deadly bacterial infection *Pasturella Skyensis*.

According to the statistics released by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), one of the worst affected farms

By **Annie Butterworth**

within Marine Harvest was on Colonsay, where 149,949 fish perished in August.

Under a second FOI request to the Scottish Government by the GAAIA, a number of causes for the deaths were revealed, including the killer heart disease Cardiomyopathy Syndrome (CMS), gill diseases, treatment losses and anaemia.

In 2016, Scottish fish farmers admitted they threw away up to ten million farmed salmon - nearly a quarter of their stock.

The high mortality rates have drawn attention to the sector of the aquaculture industry, which contributes an estimated £620million a year to the Scottish economy and which hopes to double in size by 2030.

Don Staniford of the GAAIA said: 'Scottish salmon's mort mountain is leaping well over ten million diseased salmon each year. This shocking data blows

out of the water the industry's claims that they are dealing with diseases.'

Meanwhile, another one of Scotland's biggest salmon producers, the Scottish Salmon Company, was revealed to have suffered more than 1.5million salmon mortalities in 2017.

The data, released by the Scottish Government under the same FOI request,

'A nationally important industry'

showed the reasons for the deaths included 85 reported as gill diseases, 41 as treatment loss, 14 as cardiomyopathy syndrome and 11 as pancreas disease.

The Scottish Salmon Company said it would not be responding to the figures.

Last month we told how Marine Scotland

Science figures revealed the tonnages of dead fish having to be disposed of has more than doubled in three years, from 10,599 tons in 2013 to a record high of 22,479 tons in 2016.

A spokesman for Marine Harvest said: 'As we are farming in the natural environment we have times when we experience naturally occurring biological challenges. These challenges can be infections or environmental issues such as algal blooms or jellyfish.'

Anne Anderson, chief compliance officer at SEPA, said: 'Aquaculture is a nationally important industry for Scotland and SEPA has an important role in regulating the environmental impacts of this industry.'

A Scottish Government spokesman said: 'We continue to work with the aquaculture industry, which employs more than 12,000 people in Scotland, to ensure the highest standards are applied to the maintenance of fish health and welfare.'