



[Federal Trade Commission](#)

600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20580

[International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network](#)

29 April 2024

**Deceptive Marketing Complaint Vs Wheeler Seafood re. Wester Ross Salmon (Mowi):
“hand rearing”, “hand-feeding”, “hands-on in every detail”, “truly artisan”, “nurtured by
hand, not machines”, “wild at heart”, “traditional non-mechanized”, “no short cuts”, “fed
by hand three times a day”, “independent salmon farm” & “not ever relying on machines
or cameras”**

Report international scams online!
econsumer.gov
econsumer.gov, a project of the International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network (ICPEN), is a partnership of more than 65 consumer protection agencies around the world.

WHEELER SEAFOOD

WESTER ROSS SCOTTISH SALMON

Hand-rearing
Hand rearing means being hands-on in every detail and not ever relying on machines or cameras to know how the fish are doing. A truly artisanal process, wild at heart, today's farmers are the second generation grand children of the original farmers, continuing their legacy and ultimately yielding the perfect salmon.

Nurtured by Hand, Not Machines

Please consider this a formal complaint against [Wheeler Seafood](#) who have offices in Boston, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Seattle and are based in Puyallup, Washington. \$camon \$cotland understands that the US Federal Trade Commission has powers under ‘[Truth In Advertising](#)’ and has a mandate of ‘[Protecting Consumers from Fraud and Deception](#)’. Since \$camon \$cotland operates outwith the United States we are, as a first step, filing this deceptive marketing complaint via the [International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network](#) with specific reference to [Online Shopping](#). A similar complaint was [filed with Trading Standards at Highland Council and other distributors and marketers of Wester Ross Salmon](#) earlier this month (23 April 2024).

The deceptive marketing appears online via: <https://wheelerseafood.com/fish/wester-ross/>



The [false claims by Wheeler Seafood](#) include reference to an ‘artisanal’ product “made in a traditional non-mechanized way” and “using old fashioned labor intensive techniques” with “no short cuts”:



Salmo salar

Artisanal: “a product made in a traditional non-mechanized way”

Artisanal is an attribute that has to be qualified by a commitment to adhere to standards and workmanship that are drawn from tradition. Labor intensive products occupy a special place in our rapidly changing world.

Wester Ross Salmon is an extended family of salmon farmers from the remote village of Ullapool on the banks of Loch Broom in Scotland. Three generations of salmon farmers and former fishermen adhere to a standard to detail that embraces both state of the art science and traditional animal husbandry.

Slow Grown to Perfection

.....

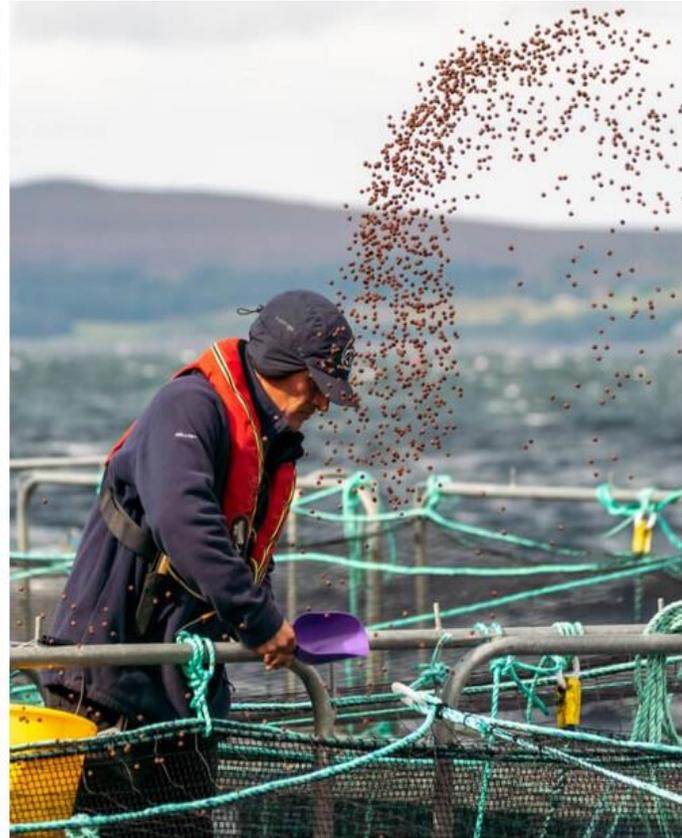
Since 1977 Wester Ross farmers have reared their salmon from fry to adult using old fashioned labor intensive techniques that have been abandoned by large salmon farms. Wester Ross salmon is a truly artisanal product. More than 40 years of hand wrought experience go into every fish that comes to your table. There are no short cuts for the farmers of Wester Ross.

Wheeler Seafood’s [webpage on Wester Ross Salmon](#) (as of 29 April 2024) continues to mislead consumers with a photo of a worker hand feeding farmed salmon and the false claims that the fish are “nurtured by hand, not by machines” and “Wester Ross salmon are fed by hand three times a day” (including the suggestion that ‘automation’, ‘machine feeding’ and ‘video monitoring’ is not practiced):

Nurtured by Hand, Not Machines

.....

Automation has dramatically reduced labor needs in salmon farming. Machine feeding and video monitoring have become an industry norm. But this reduces the amount of human interaction with the salmon. Industrial level farming produces generic salmon without distinct qualities. Respect for the animal is lost and humane treatment becomes more challenging. There is a bond between farmer and animal that makes a critical difference. WR farmers are on the water every day to tend their salmon. Wester Ross salmon are fed by hand three times a day. This is more efficient than machine spread feeding. Less feed is wasted and this keeps the seabed cleaner. The salmon are observed first hand Every Day by those who care for them. Their salmon are slowly grown to market size at a natural rate that takes more time. Natural growth is more humane. It rewards us with a firmer salmon that resembles its wild cousins in appearance and texture.



Exclusively packed for Wheeler Seafood

Wester Ross/Highland Blue Salmon are hand selected and individually tagged to assure quality and traceability

Promotional images on [Wheeler Seafood's website](#) show Wester Ross Salmon tagged with a label reading “slowly hand reared on organic material”:



“Artisanal is what our customers want”



Wheeler Seafood – via their [webpage on Wester Ross Salmon](#) – provide consumers with further information via a [‘Sales Sheet’](#) which appears to be dated February 2023:



Wheeler Seafood is the exclusive agent.

INFO@WHEELERSEAFOOD.COM
TEL. 800.674.8718

WESTER ROSS
SCOTTISH SALMON

The complex block contains the Wheeler Seafood logo at the top left, a close-up of a salmon fillet at the top right, and a photograph of a salmon in a wooden crate at the bottom left. The crate has the text "WESTER ROSS SCOTTISH SALMON" on it. To the right of the crate, there is a quote: "Wheeler Seafood is the exclusive agent." followed by the contact information: "INFO@WHEELERSEAFOOD.COM" and "TEL. 800.674.8718".

The ‘[Sales Sheet](#)’ includes the false claims that Wester Ross Salmon - Scotland’s last ‘independent’ salmon farmer but [taken over by Norwegian multinational Mowi in June 2022](#) – is “truly artisanal”, “wild at heart” and is “hand-rearing”, “hand feeding” and “hands-on in every detail and not ever relying on machines or cameras to know how the fish are doing”:

Hand-rearing

Hand rearing means being hands-on in every detail and not ever relying on machines or cameras to know how the fish are doing. A truly artisanal process, wild at heart, today’s farmers are the second generation grand children of the original farmers, continuing their legacy and ultimately yielding the perfect salmon.

Careful Harvest

Careful, humane harvesting methods in accordance with RSPCA Freedom Foods guidelines avoid stress to the fish and ensure the best quality salmon.

Hand Feeding

Hand-feeding has been a central practice at the farm since the beginning. Wester Ross salmon farmers are meticulous with their fish and the environment. They also have one of the world’s best “Fish in : Fish Out” (less than 1:1 FIFO), greatly reducing dependency on wild fish stocks. | Hand-feeding results in stronger, tastier fish, and a cleaner environment, delivering best results. | It allows farmers to respond in real time to how much the fish are eating, producing the best results, while reducing feed waste and accumulation of feed on the seafloor. | Wester Ross salmon are strong, lean, firm fish, perfect for white table cloth, retail, sushi, and smoked markets.

WWW.WHEELERSEAFOOD.COM

BRINGING A WORLD OF ARTISAN
SEAFOOD TO NORTH AMERICA



The fact is that Wester Ross Salmon (Mowi) is using automated feeding machines, cameras and has a feed barge installed at Ardmair salmon farm in Loch Kannaird with an application for another feed barge at Corry salmon farm in Loch Broom filed with Highland Council.

\$camon \$cotland [reported in a press release dated 23 April 2023](#):

“\$camon \$cotland was tipped off earlier this month that [Wester Ross Fisheries – bought out by Norwegian giant Mowi in June 2022](#) – was using automated feeding machines at their salmon farm at Ardmair in Loch Kannaird near Ullapool. Images taken last week clearly show the use of feed pipes and automated machines in operation with the sound of pellets rattling down feeders heard on the neighbouring Isle of Martin.



Photos show automated feeding systems already in operation at the “hand reared” salmon farm with feed pipes blocking the walkways (a health and safety hazard):



Plastic pipes extend the length of the “hand reared” salmon farm at Ardmair supplying feed into cages via an automated feeding system:





Despite claims by Wester Ross Fisheries (Mowi) that automated feeders, machines or cameras are not used, a [GaelForce 'SeaSight Controller'](#) is operating at the “hand reared” salmon farm:



The [GaelForce 'SeaSight Controller'](#) allows 'in-house experts' to monitor feeding without workers even being present on site:

SeaSight Control



Clear underwater video viewed through our user-friendly SeaSight Control software, designed to enhance feed monitoring and fish inspection.

Designed, built, and supported by our in-house experts, clear underwater video is viewed through our user-friendly SeaSight Control software, enhancing feed monitoring and fish inspection.

Allow yourself to take greater control over the monitoring of feeding and fish activity with crystal clear, high-definition video imagery and visually intuitive software.

Functions include camera pan, tilt, zoom, and focus control, as well as multi-directional movement control for SeaSight Double Winch.

Wester Ross's "hand reared" salmon farm at Ardmair is now serviced by an automated feed barge – complete with a generator and other machinery - with feed pipes extending to the cages”:





Don Staniford 
@TheGAAIA



Exposed: "Nurtured by hand, not machines" claims @WesterRossSalmo in online marketing
Then why is @MowiScotlandLtd now operating automated feeders at the 'artisanal' salmon farm promoted as 'hand reared'? @ScotlandSalmon Trading Standards @HighlandCouncil must investigate!

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying an article from Wheeler's Food. The article title is "Artisanal: 'a product made in a traditional non-mechanized way'". The text discusses the definition of artisanal products and mentions Wester Ross Salmon. Below the text is a photo of a farmer in a red safety vest feeding salmon in a cage. The article text is partially obscured by a watermark.

https://wheelersfood.com/fish/wester-ross/

About Wheeler Sustainability Our Fish

Artisanal: "a product made in a traditional non-mechanized way"

Artisanal is an attribute that has to be qualified by a commitment to adhere to standards and workmanship that are drawn from tradition. Labor intensive products occupy a special place in our rapidly changing world. Wester Ross Salmon is an extended family of salmon farmers from the remote village of Ullapool on the banks of Loch Broom in Scotland. Three generations of salmon farmers and former fishermen adhere to a standard to detail that embraces both state of the art science and traditional animal husbandry.

Nurtured by Hand, Not Machines

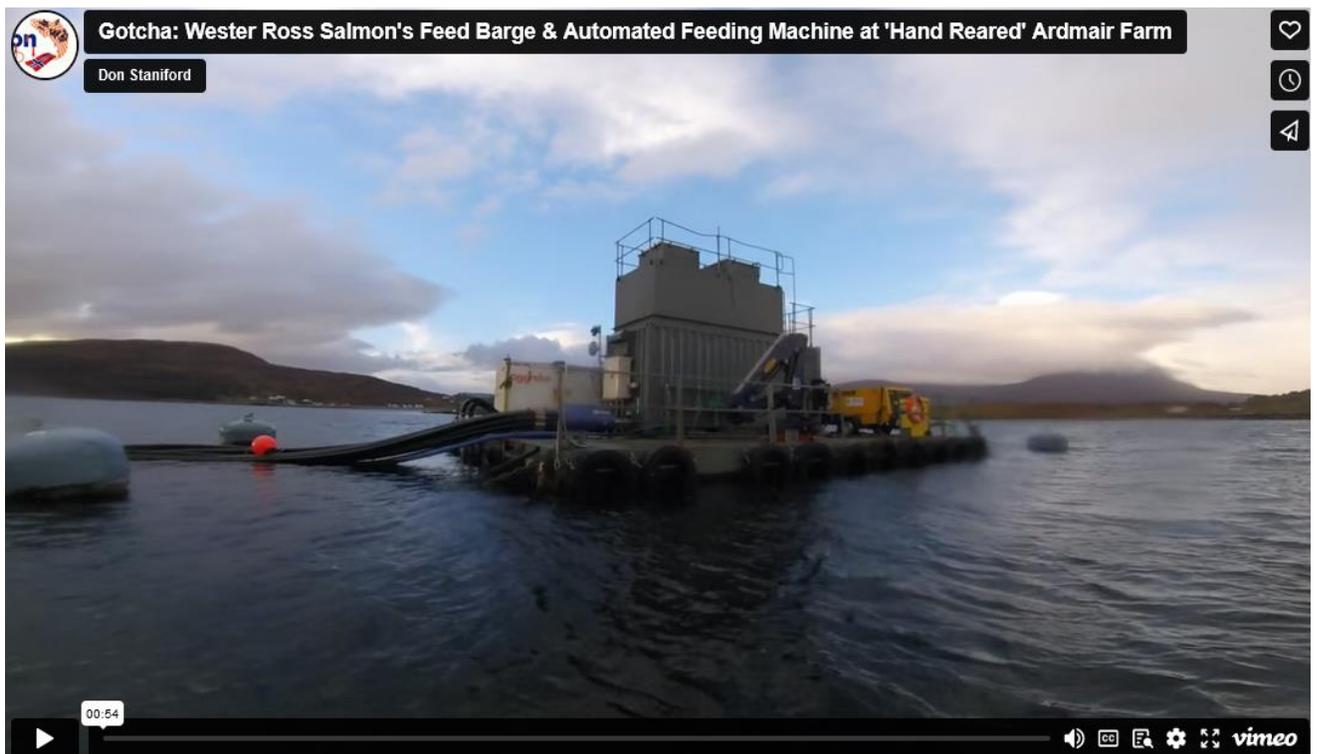
Automation has dramatically reduced labor needs in salmon farming. Machine feeding and video monitoring have become an industry norm. But this reduces the amount of human interaction with the salmon. Industrial level farming produces generic salmon without distinct qualities. Respect for the animal is lost and humane treatment becomes more challenging. There is a bond between farmer and animal that makes a critical difference. WR farmers are on the water every day to tend their salmon. Wester Ross salmon are fed by hand three times a day. This is more efficient than machine spread feeding. Less feed is wasted and this is the seabed cleaner. The salmon are observed first hand Every Day by those who care for them. Their



 Mairi Gougeon and 8 others

11:20 AM · Apr 23, 2024 · 1,783 Views

Scamon Scotland can now share video footage shot on 15 April 2024 at Wester Ross Salmon's Ardmair farm in Loch Kannaird - this video footage clearly shows the use of automated feeding machines (you can hear the sound of artificial pellets running down the plastic pipes from a feed barge pumping out food whilst workers are not on site):



\$camon \$cotland raised the false claims directly with Wheeler Seafood via email last week (24 April 2024) – including the citation of the role of the FTC:

From: Don Staniford <salmonfarmingkills@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Apr 24, 2024 at 7:06 AM
Subject: Complaint vs Wester Ross "hand reared" Scottish salmon
To: <brian@wheelerseafood.com>, <patrick@wheelerseafood.com>, <alma@wheelerseafood.com>, <bill@wheelerseafood.com>, <rick@wheelerseafood.com>, <mike@wheelerseafood.com>, <sasha@wheelerseafood.com>, <art@wheelerseafood.com>, <steveng@wheelerseafood.com>, <mark@wheelerseafood.com>, <sebastien@wheelerseafood.com>, <dave@wheelerseafood.com>

From: Don Staniford <salmonfarmingkills@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Apr 24, 2024 at 6:23 AM
Subject: Complaint vs Wester Ross "hand reared" Scottish salmon
To: <info@wheelerseafood.com>
Cc: <marketing@wrs.co.uk>, <ivan.vindheim@mowi.com>, <media@mowi.com>

Could Wheeler Seafood please correct and update their marketing and promotional materials in relation to Wester Ross Salmon?

\$camon \$cotland filed a complaint yesterday with Trading Standards at Highland Council in Scotland with respect to the false advertising and deceptive marketing of "hand reared" by Wester Ross Salmon (taken over by Norwegian giant Mowi in June 2022):

[Complaint Vs. Wester Ross \(Mowi\) for Deceptive Advertising & Misleading Marketing of "Hand Reared" Scottish Salmon](#)

Wheeler Seafood makes similarly false claims. For example, an Instagram post in November 2023 showcases 'artisan' and 'hand reared' Wester Ross Salmon:
<https://www.instagram.com/wheelerseafood/p/CzorkX9Pzu8/>

A YouTube video posted by Wheeler Seafood also showcases the now false claims that Wester Ross Salmon hand rears their fish: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5f51L9CkFgw>

Wheeler Seafood currently promotes Wester Ross Salmon with deceptive images of hand-reared fish - including the false claims that the product is "nurtured by hand, not by machines" and that "Wester Ross salmon are fed by hand three times a day" - via <https://wheelerseafood.com/fish/wester-ross/>

Photographic evidence detailing how Wester Ross Salmon now use a feeding machine and automated feeding systems at their Ardmair salmon farm (and have applied to Highland Council for a feed barge at Corry salmon farm) are detailed via:

[Complaints Filed Vs Wester Ross ‘Hand Reared’ Scottish Salmon - Mowi-owned Wester Ross accused of misleading marketing & false advertising- Images show feed pipes & automated feeding machines at ‘hand reared’ Ardmair farm \(23 April 2024\)](#)

Wheeler Seafood is certainly not alone in falsely advertising Wester Ross Salmon as "hand reared" - more examples are detailed via:

[Complaint Vs. Wester Ross \(Mowi\) for Deceptive Advertising & Misleading Marketing of “Hand Reared” Scottish Salmon \(23 April 2024\)](#)

\$camon \$cotland understands that in the United States the Federal Trade Commission has powers to enforce laws on advertising and marketing including unfair and deceptive trade practices:

<https://www.ftc.gov/business-guidance/resources/advertising-marketing-internet-rules-road>

The FTC has a mandate to protect consumers from fraud and deception:

<https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/topics/truth-advertising/protecting-consumers>

In the case of Wester Ross Salmon - and the specific claim that the product is "hand reared" without machines - \$camon \$cotland believes that Wheeler Seafood is guilty of fraud and deception.

Please therefore correct and update your website and promotional materials accordingly to reflect the current reality at Mowi-owned Wester Ross Salmon.

In the hope that this matter can be resolved quickly, I have copied Wester Ross Salmon's marketing team and their owners Mowi into this email.

Thanks,

Don Staniford

Director, \$camon \$cotland

Wheeler Seafood was also [made aware of their false claims via Twitter](#) and politely asked to correct and update the marketing of Wester Ross Salmon but they have failed to respond:

Don Staniford ✓
@TheGAAIA

...

Could @WheelerSeafood please correct & update the marketing of Wester Ross Salmon?

wheelerseafood.com/fish/wester-ro...

Mowi has installed automated feeders - the claim @WesterRossSalmo that the fish are "nurtured by hand, not machines" is now false!

@MowiScotlandLtd

A case for the @FTC



IntraFish Media and 9 others

6:51 AM · Apr 24, 2024 · 839 Views

Don Staniford ✓
@TheGAAIA

...

Helpful definition @WheelerSeafood: "Hand rearing means being hands-on in every details and not ever relying on machines or cameras"

@WesterRossSalmo

So why is @MowiScotlandLtd still peddling the myth that Wester Ross Salmon is "hand reared" when machines & cameras are used?



FTC and 3 others

2:01 PM · Apr 26, 2024 · 527 Views

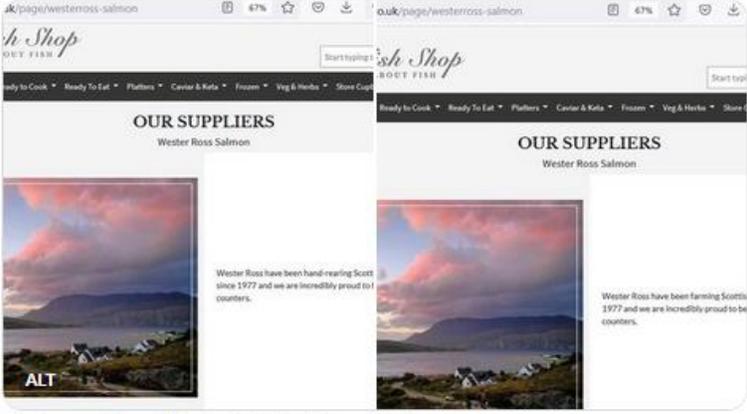
Whilst Wheeler Seafood has ignored the complaint and still promotes false claims, [two companies in the UK \(The Fish Shop and Canagan\) using Wester Ross Salmon have deleted 'hand reared' claims in their marketing material:](#)

Don Staniford 
@TheGAAIA

Victory: The Fish Shop deletes "hand-rearing" claim about [@WesterRossSalmo](#) following deceptive marketing complaint [@MowiScotlandLtd](#)

Here's the before & after webpage passionateaboutfish.co.uk/page/westerros...

Now to stop [@Passion4fish](#) from stocking Scottish salmon altogether!
[@ScotlandSalmon](#)



Competition & Markets Authority and 2 others

10:36 AM · Apr 25, 2024 · 1,169 Views

Don Staniford 
@TheGAAIA

Scottish salmon is not fit to feed your dog!
Pet food supplier Canagan deletes "lovingly hand reared" from their website following our complaint [@WesterRossSalmo](#) [@MowiScotlandLtd](#)
canagan.com/uk/our-ingredients

Now it's time to drop 'sustainably & responsibly sourced' [@CMAgovUK](#)
[@ASA_UK](#)



8:06 AM · Apr 26, 2024 · 2,380 Views

Last week (23 April 2024), \$camon \$cotland [filed a complaint Vs Wester Ross Salmon \(Mowi\)](#) with Trading Standards at Highland Council in Scotland:

Don Staniford 
@TheGAAIA ...

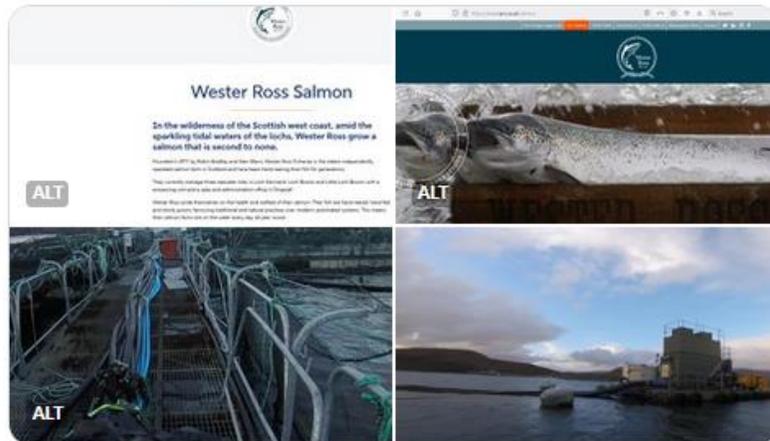
"Our fish are hand reared" claim [@WesterRossSalmo](#) "We don't use unnatural management or artificial feeding regimes" [@ScotlandSalmon](#) Surely Trading Standards [@HighlandCouncil](#) should force Mowi to tell the truth? [@MowiScotlandLtd](#)



10:46 AM · Apr 24, 2024 · 666 Views

Don Staniford 
@TheGAAIA ...

Scottish salmon [@WesterRossSalmo](#) "are hand reared, hand fed and slowly grown, favouring traditional and natural practices over modern, automated systems" claim [@ScotlandSalmon](#) Surely this is now misleading since [@MowiScotlandLtd](#) installed automated feeding? [@HighlandCouncil](#)



 Ailsa McLellan and 7 others

9:35 AM · Apr 24, 2024 · 1,212 Views

Here is a copy of \$camon \$cotland’s complaint to Trading Standards at Highland Council:

From: **Don Staniford** <salmonfarmingkills@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Apr 23, 2024 at 9:37 AM
Subject: Complaint vs Wester Ross Salmon (Mowi)
To: <trading.standards@highland.gov.uk>

Please consider this a formal complaint against Wester Ross Salmon for false advertising and misleading marketing via <https://www.wrs.co.uk/>

A detailed dossier of various breaches in Trading Standards (falsely advertising and marketing 'hand reared' salmon) is outlined via <https://donstaniford.typepad.com/files/complaint-vs-wester-ross-fisheries-23-april-2024.pdf>

A press release - detailing photographic evidence of automated feeding at Wester Ross Salmon's Ardmail farm - is detailed online via: <https://donstaniford.typepad.com/files/pr-complaint-vs-hand-reared-wester-ross-salmon-23-april-2024.pdf>

The breaches of trading standards at Wester Ross Salmon (Mowi) and other companies falsely selling 'hand reared' Scottish salmon are all too clear. Could Highland Council please force Wester Ross Salmon to correct their website?

More details will be posted online via:

[Complaint Vs. Wester Ross \(Mowi\) for Deceptive Advertising & Misleading Marketing of “Hand Reared” Scottish Salmon](#)

 **Don Staniford**  @TheGAAIA

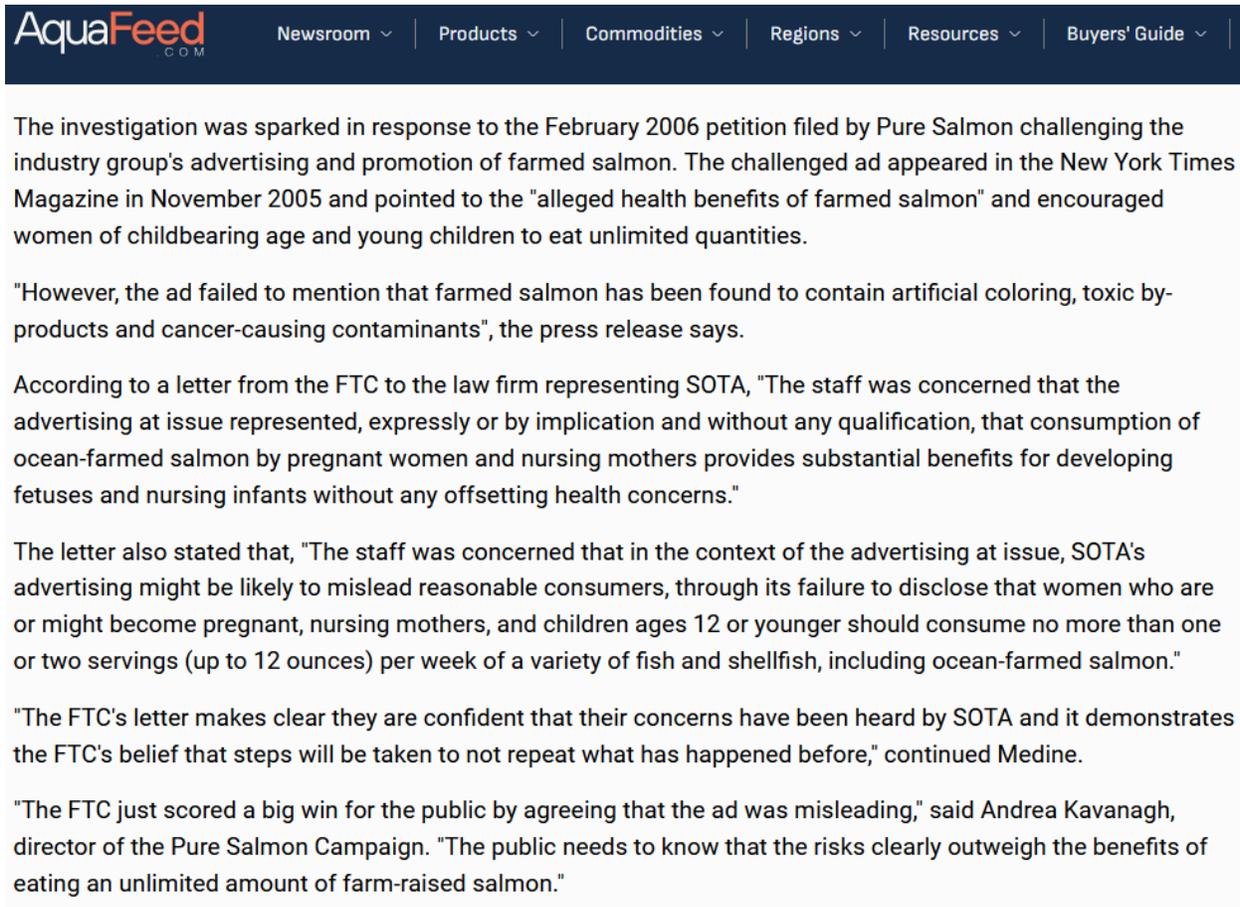
Complaints filed Vs Wester Ross 'hand reared' Scottish salmon - Mowi-owned Wester Ross accused of misleading marketing & false advertising!
@MowiScotlandLtd @WesterRossSalmo @HighlandCouncil @ASA_UK
@CMAgovUK @ScotlandSalmon @rspcaassured @friendofthesea
@WheelerSeafood

Complaint Vs. Wester Ross (Mowi) for Deceptive Advertising & Misleading Marketing of “Hand Reared” Scottish Salmon (23 April 2024)



This is certainly not the first time that farmed salmon has been the subject of deceptive marketing complaints.

In 2007, the FTC [closed an investigation into farmed salmon as advertised by Salmon Of The Americas](#). Aquafeed [reported in February 2007](#):



The investigation was sparked in response to the February 2006 petition filed by Pure Salmon challenging the industry group's advertising and promotion of farmed salmon. The challenged ad appeared in the New York Times Magazine in November 2005 and pointed to the "alleged health benefits of farmed salmon" and encouraged women of childbearing age and young children to eat unlimited quantities.

"However, the ad failed to mention that farmed salmon has been found to contain artificial coloring, toxic by-products and cancer-causing contaminants", the press release says.

According to a letter from the FTC to the law firm representing SOTA, "The staff was concerned that the advertising at issue represented, expressly or by implication and without any qualification, that consumption of ocean-farmed salmon by pregnant women and nursing mothers provides substantial benefits for developing fetuses and nursing infants without any offsetting health concerns."

The letter also stated that, "The staff was concerned that in the context of the advertising at issue, SOTA's advertising might be likely to mislead reasonable consumers, through its failure to disclose that women who are or might become pregnant, nursing mothers, and children ages 12 or younger should consume no more than one or two servings (up to 12 ounces) per week of a variety of fish and shellfish, including ocean-farmed salmon."

"The FTC's letter makes clear they are confident that their concerns have been heard by SOTA and it demonstrates the FTC's belief that steps will be taken to not repeat what has happened before," continued Medine.

"The FTC just scored a big win for the public by agreeing that the ad was misleading," said Andrea Kavanagh, director of the Pure Salmon Campaign. "The public needs to know that the risks clearly outweigh the benefits of eating an unlimited amount of farm-raised salmon."

Back in 2010, a complaint signed by Rick Moonen, chef at RM Seafood in Las Vegas; Marianne Cufone, Food & Water Watch fish program director; George Kimbrell, staff attorney for the International Center for Technology Assessment & The Center for Food Safety; Anne Mosness of the Go Wild Campaign; Bartlett Naylor of Capital Strategies; and Don Staniford, Pure Salmon Campaign global coordinator was [filed with the FTC complaint against the Norwegian Seafood Export Council](#).

“The lack of transparency and lack of due diligence by the advertiser to disclose the true nature of farmed 'Norwegian salmon' is cause for concern to both those consumers who make purchasing decisions based upon health concerns and those who factor in environmental impacts,” [said the complaint filed with the FTC in 2010](#). “We therefore ask that appropriate action is taken to ensure that 'Norwegian salmon' is not deceptively advertised in the U.S. marketplace and enforce truth-in-advertising laws. We urge you to ensure that consumers can make informed choices about the salmon that they buy, and that 'Norwegian salmon' is properly advertised by the Norwegian Seafood Export Council as farmed.”

In the case of [Wheeler Seafood's current marketing of 'independent' and 'artisanal' Wester Ross Salmon – taken over by Mowi in June 2022](#) – they have failed to correct how the Norwegian giant has installed automated feeding machines in their false claims that the company is engaged in 'hand-rearing' and "being hands-on in every detail and not ever relying on machines or cameras" (as detailed in [Wheeler Seafood's 'Sales Sheet' on Wester Ross Salmon](#)).

Mowi is no stranger to falsely marketing farmed salmon in the United States. In March 2021, Mowi (as owner of Ducktrap River of Maine) [paid £1.3 million to settle a US false marketing case and agreed to stop including "sustainably sourced," "all-natural," and language implying the salmon was caught in Maine on its Ducktrap salmon for at least two years:](#)



Ducktrap River smoked salmon is smoked in Maine but does not originate from the state.

Mowi pays £1.3m to settle US 'false marketing' case

Mowi has agreed to pay \$1.3 million (£933,000) plus costs to settle a proposed class action legal case brought by a general store in New York state. The action accused the company of falsely marketing a smoked salmon product as sustainably sourced, all-natural and caught in Maine.

Editors

PUBLISHED Friday 19. March 2021 - 11:25 LAST UPDATED Friday 19. March 2021 - 11:37



Tens of thousands of people have bought Mowi USA LLC's smoked Ducktrap River of Maine Atlantic salmon since March 2017, according to the agreement filed in New York federal court.

Under the agreement, buyers with proof of purchase will be able to recoup \$2.50 per package. Those without receipts will also be paid \$2.50 per package but can only claim up to 10 purchases.

In addition to the cash payments, Mowi agreed to stop including "sustainably sourced," "all-natural," and language implying the salmon was caught in Maine on its Ducktrap salmon for at least two years, [reported Law 360 website](#).

Intrafish [reported in March 2021](#):



Latest News Salmon Whitefish Shrimp Aquaculture Fisheries Markets IntraFish



Analysis: Mowi's concession on labeling may come back to haunt the entire seafood industry

The salmon farming giant's \$1.3 million settlement may not end its legal headaches, and in fact may have put a target on the seafood industry's back.

18 March 2021 22:38 GMT *UPDATED 22 March 2021 10:48 GMT*

By [Drew Cherry](#)

Mowi's \$1.3 million (€1 million) settlement to get rid of a class action lawsuit alleging misleading marketing seems like a relatively tidy way to make a pesky lawsuit disappear.

But take a step back, and the salmon farming giant may have inadvertently opened up the floodgates for similar suits, not just against its own products but those of the broader seafood industry -- wild and farmed -- as well.

A million-dollar fine is small change for Mowi, the world's most valuable seafood company. But here's the big concession that could come back to haunt them:

As part of the settlement, for a period of two years Mowi will be forbidden from using the terms "sustainably sourced," "all natural" and "naturally smoked salmon from Maine" on any Ducktrap packaging.



Mowi reiterates plan to cut 1,500 jobs as part of massive cost-reduction strategy

[Read more](#)

Though there is some wiggle room about how that may or may not be enforced on other products, by agreeing to not use those terms, Mowi has conceded that the language was misleading (though settlements tend to include language allowing for parties to avoid laying blame).

To muzzle Mowi's marketing language, the opposing attorneys, who represented the owners of a corner store in a New York town of 3,400 people, raised the specter of the company violating the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) guidelines for labeling.

Supermarkets in the US have also been the subject of false-labeling lawsuits. Seafood Source [reported in January 2024](#):

JANUARY 9, 2024

Sustainability-focused false-labeling lawsuits dropped after ALDI agrees to change farmed salmon marketing

 Christine Blank published in Business & Finance



SHARE



Two lawsuits arguing ALDI's misleadingly labeled some of its seafood products as sustainable have been dismissed.

Essen, Germany-based ALDI operates more than 2,000 U.S. grocery stores in 36 states. Toxin Free USA, represented by Richman Law and Policy, [filed one of the complaints](#) against ALDI in 2021. The nonprofit, which advocates against the use of GMOs, synthetic pesticides, and toxins in food products, alleged ALDI sourced salmon marketed with sustainability labels from fish farms in Chile that use unsustainable and environmentally destructive practices, including the use of toxic chemicals.

The second complaint against ALDI – a class-action suit led by Jessica Rawson via Richman Law in 2021 – was also voluntarily dismissed in November 2023. [That complaint](#) alleged the retailer made deceptive sustainability claims in marketing its fresh Atlantic salmon products.

Both cases [had entered mediation](#) with the goal of reaching settlements that would avert the necessity of going to trial. As part of the agreement to end the lawsuits, ALDI denied the allegation that its "sustainable" labeling is misleading but agreed to revise its fresh Atlantic salmon product labeling and marketing, Toxin Free USA said in a press release.

Additionally, ALDI will begin working to transition some of its supply of fresh Atlantic salmon products to aquaculture facilities certified by the Aquaculture Stewardship Council or the Global Animal Partnership, Toxin Free USA said. Aldi will also provide updates on the progress of its supply transition via its website.

In the Toxin Free USA suit, the judge hearing the case earlier [denied ALDI's motion to dismiss the lawsuit](#), ruling the nonprofit provided sufficient documentation that consumers may perceive ALDI'S use the word "sustainable" on its seafood packaging as misleading.

In the UK, the Competition and Markets Authority and Trading Standards were [asked earlier this month \(2 April 2024\) to investigate the greenwashing of Scottish and Norwegian farmed salmon as 'responsibly sourced' by supermarkets \(including the sale of Mowi salmon\)](#):



7:15 AM · Apr 3, 2024 · 3,001 Views

In conclusion, \$camon \$cotland urges the FTC and ICEPN to take immediate action to force Wheeler Seafood and other companies deceptively marketing Wester Ross Salmon as 'hand reared' – please note that [Gourmet South Meat Market](#), [Harbor Fish Market](#), [Catanese Classics](#), [Universal Seafood](#) and [The Lusty Lobster](#) in the US all make similarly false claims as detailed [online here](#) – to tell the truth in advertising and marketing materials.

Wheeler Seafood is clearly making a meal of the blatantly false claim that Wester Ross Salmon (Mowi) farms entirely by hand and does not use automated machines or feeding cameras. Unlike Wheeler Seafood, Mowi and Wester Ross Salmon, the camera never lies. Wheeler Seafood has been caught lying to their customers and is clearly guilty of misleading their customers. Please close the net on the deceptive marketing of 'hand reared' Scottish salmon in the United States and worldwide.

Yours sincerely,

Don Staniford

Director, \$camon \$cotland