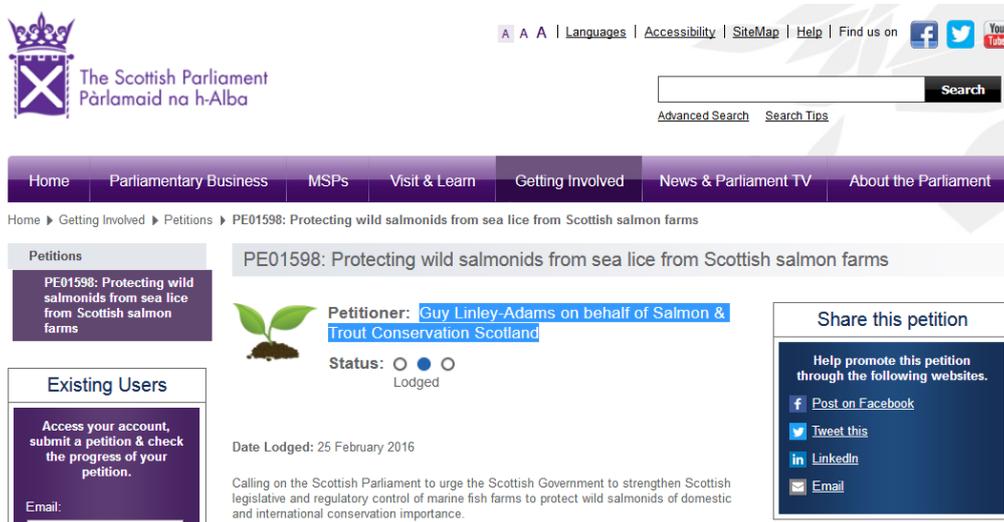


Media Backgrounder: Inquiry into Salmon Farming by the Scottish Parliament

The inquiry by the Scottish Parliament's Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee "[in early 2018](#)" stems from a public petition - [PE01598: Protecting wild salmonids from sea lice from Scottish salmon farms](#) - filed by Guy Linley-Adams on behalf of Salmon & Trout Conservation Scotland in February 2016.



The screenshot shows the Scottish Parliament website interface. At the top left is the logo of the Scottish Parliament, "Pàrlamaid na h-Alba". To the right are links for "Languages", "Accessibility", "SiteMap", "Help", and "Find us on" with social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. A search bar is present with a "Search" button and links for "Advanced Search" and "Search Tips". Below this is a navigation menu with items: Home, Parliamentary Business, MSPs, Visit & Learn, Getting Involved, News & Parliament TV, and About the Parliament. The main content area shows the breadcrumb "Home > Getting Involved > Petitions > PE01598: Protecting wild salmonids from sea lice from Scottish salmon farms". The petition title is "PE01598: Protecting wild salmonids from sea lice from Scottish salmon farms". The petitioner is "Guy Linley-Adams on behalf of Salmon & Trout Conservation Scotland". The status is "Lodged". The date lodged is "25 February 2016". There is a call to action: "Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to strengthen Scottish legislative and regulatory control of marine fish farms to protect wild salmonids of domestic and international conservation importance." On the right, there is a "Share this petition" section with options to "Post on Facebook", "Tweet this", "LinkedIn", and "Email". On the left, there is an "Existing Users" section with a link to "Access your account, submit a petition & check the progress of your petition." and an "Email:" field.

- [Read Petition background information](#)
- [Previous action taken to resolve issue](#)
- [Click here for the petition PDF](#)

Petition History:

- [SPICe Briefing \(287KB pdf\)](#)
- [SPICe Briefing on practices in Norway 22 August 2016 \(103KB pdf\)](#)

Summary:

30 June 2016: The Committee took evidence from Guy Linley-Adams and Andrew Graham-Stewart, Salmon & Trout Conservation Scotland. The Committee agreed to write to Marine Scotland/Scottish Government, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, the Scottish Salmon Producers Association, the Atlantic Salmon Trust and the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards. The Committee also agreed to seek further information on practices in Norway. [Link to Official Report 30 June 2016](#)

29 September 2016: The Committee agreed to refer the petition to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee under Rule 15.6.2 of Standing Orders. [Link to Official Report 29 September 2016](#)

14 December 2016: The Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee considered the petition and agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity seeking further information on the issues raised in the petition and to arrange a visit to a salmon farm. [Link to Official Report 14 December 2016](#)

21 June 2017: The Committee agreed that in early 2018 they will conduct an inquiry into aquaculture in Scotland, which would seek to include consideration of the issues raised in the petition. [Link to the Official Report - 21 June 2017](#)

Written Submissions:

- [PE1598/A: Callender McDowell Letter of 27 May 2016 \(323KB pdf\)](#)
- [PE1598/B: SEPA Letter of 28 July 2016 \(53KB pdf\)](#)
- [PE1598/C: Atlantic Salmon Trust Letter of 1 August 2016 \(392KB pdf\)](#)
- [PE1598/D: Marine Scotland Letter of 2 August 2016 \(81KB pdf\)](#)
- [PE1598/E: Association of Salmon Fishery Boards Letter of 2 August 2016 \(133KB pdf\)](#)
- [PE1598/F: Letter from Callendar McDowell of 17 August 2016 \(98KB pdf\)](#)
- [PE1598/G: Scottish Oceans Institute Letter](#)
- [PE1598/H: Letter from Guy Linley-Adams of 15 September 2016](#)
- [PE1598/I: Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation Letter of 16 August 2016 \(491KB pdf\)](#)

In June 2017, [the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee agreed](#) to "carry out an inquiry into aquaculture, probably in early 2018" with the Scottish Parliament information centre carrying out "a review of the literature on the environmental impacts of farmed salmon in Scotland....in advance of our inquiry":

Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee 21 June 2017

Petition 

Marine Fish Farms (Legislative and Regulatory Control) (PE1598) 

The Convener:

I take the points that have been raised. I suggest that the committee might like to consider allowing the petition to continue and, to address the points that John Finnie and other committee members have raised, to look to carry out an inquiry into aquaculture, probably early in 2018. It would be extremely helpful to try to find common ground between the interests, which Stewart Stevenson has said are very important to Scotland as a whole. I seek the committee's approval to carry that out. Are we agreed on that?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: 

There is one other matter to bring to the committee's attention. An opportunity has arisen to have some research carried out by the Scottish Parliament information centre: a review of the literature on the environmental impacts of farmed salmon in Scotland. I propose to ask SPICe to carry out that work in advance of our inquiry. I make it clear that I have been in conversation with the convener of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee to discuss how we can consider the issue together, to ensure that we have the best possible impact.

Mike Rumbles: 

I make a request that the research look at the situation in other countries, such as Norway and Ireland, where there has been an issue for years. Specific research has been done on those countries that could be useful to the committee.

The Convener: 

Absolutely. The research will take the form of a literature review, which will be as broad and far reaching as possible, to allow us to make proper and informed decisions.

An Editorial - ["Independent scrutiny is a cornerstone of democracy"](#) - published in The Sunday Herald in November 2017 included:

"What we think is now important is that the aquaculture inquiry promised for early next year by Holyrood's rural economy and environment committees takes a serious look at what happened with Slice. MSPs should closely question those involved and decide whether industry and the Scottish Government have behaved properly. And whether Sepa is actually an independent watchdog."

An article - ["Revealed: Scottish Government put pressure on Sepa to drop ban on toxic pesticide"](#) - published in The Sunday Herald in November 2017 included:

"The controversy is due to be examined as part of a major investigation into the fish farming industry by the Scottish Parliament's rural economy and environment committees early next year."

The [Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Work Programme](#) (20 December 2017) stated:

Environmental Impacts of Aquaculture

16. The Committee has agreed to consider the environmental impact of aquaculture on the marine environment in advance of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee's wider inquiry into the aquaculture industry. The Committee has asked SPICe to conduct research on aquaculture and the environment, building on a 2002 Scottish Government commissioned [review and synthesis of the environmental impacts of aquaculture](#). The Committee will consider its results and has agreed to hear from the report's authors, stakeholders and regulators, before reporting ahead of the REC Committee's inquiry. The Committee will be issuing a call for views on the outcomes of its research, once published.

Salmon & Trout Conservation stated in a press release - "[New scientific study underlines damage to wild salmon and sea trout populations from salmon farm parasites](#)" – in Scotland, Norway and Ireland - in January 2018:

Andrew Graham-Stewart, Director of S&TC Scotland, said:

"For many years we have maintained that the Scottish Government's position – that there is 'no evidence' in Scotland that sea lice from salmon farming damage wild salmon and sea trout 'populations' – is untenable. This report substantiates our view that it would be very odd indeed if the Scottish situation was markedly different to elsewhere. We do after all have the same sea lice, which all too often Scottish salmon farm operators are incapable of keeping under control, and the same wild fish."

Mr Graham-Stewart added:

"The forthcoming Parliamentary Inquiry provides a timely opportunity to redress the balance between the drive for growth of the salmon farming industry, at all costs, and the need to protect wild fish. We trust that the Committees conducting the Inquiry will pay close heed to the conclusions of this important report."

Read more via:

["Salmon & Trout Conservation Scotland campaign leads to salmon farming inquiry"](#)

["Scottish Parliament to investigate environmental impacts of salmon farms"](#)

["SSPO opens farm gate to inquiry MSPs"](#)

[PE01598: Protecting wild salmonids from sea lice from Scottish salmon farms](#)

[PE1598: Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee](#)

Previous Inquiries & Public Petitions:

Anyone experiencing a curious case of *deja vu* is forgiven - there was a 'rolling inquiry' by the Transport & Environment Committee in 2001 (not the independent and public inquiry called for by petitioner Allan Berry in 2000) as well as an inquiry into 'Fish Farming in the UK' by the House of Commons Agriculture Select Committee back in 1989.

A [petition filed with the Scottish Parliament by Allan Berry in 2000](#) called for an independent and public inquiry into sea cage fish farming by the Scottish Parliament. However, despite cross-party support from the Rural Affairs Committee and Transport and Environment Committee in 2001, [the request was rejected prompting a petition to Europe](#).



Fish farm inquiry snub prompts appeal to EU

Published: 00:00
Wednesday 07 November 2001

Share this article



THE European parliament is to be urged to investigate Scotland's £250 million fish farming industry, after the Scottish executive refused to hold an independent inquiry.

Allan Berry, a former oyster farmer and past chairman of the Association of Scottish Shellfish Growers, petitioned the executive in February last year seeking an inquiry into the alleged environmental damage caused by sea cage fish farming.

Despite cross-party support from two parliamentary committees this year, both of which recommended an inquiry, the request was rejected.

Mr Berry, who lives at Cannich, near Beauly, said the decision was an "affront to democracy and public accountability" and he has now taken the case to Europe.

In a submission to the transport and environment committee, which meets in Aberdeen on Friday, Mr Berry said: "The executive's proposed aquaculture strategy is nothing more than a cosmetic exercise designed to prevent proper scrutiny of the devastating damage caused by the sea cage fish farming industry.

"The failure of the regulatory process to prevent the greatest man-made environmental disaster in the history of Scotland demands independent inquiry."

Allan Berry's petition was [considered by the European Parliament's Committee on Petitions in 2008](#):

Fishery

38. N° 518/2002 by Allan Berry (British), on behalf of the Scottish Society for the Protection of Salmon and Seatrout (SSPSS), on environmental impact assessment by the British authorities of FIGG-funded fish-farm projects PE 331.884/REV. IV
FdR 656996

In a [letter to the Sunday Herald published in June 2017](#), Allan Berry wrote:

"Holyrood has already had the opportunity to investigate environmental problems brought about by the sea cage salmon industry in Scottish coastal waters. In February 2000 Petition No PE96 which was supported by hundreds of organisations and individuals worldwide, asked for an independent objective inquiry into the environmental impact of the industry. It was accepted by the Scottish Parliament and after discussion it agreed to hold such an inquiry. Unfortunately following a year of considerable private debate a 'rolling inquiry' which was neither independent or objective was held instead under the chairmanship of Maureen Macmillan MSP, who declared 'Jobs come first' and informed the petitioner that he had 'no locus' in the inquiry.

"No credible conclusions were produced and the main claims of the petition dismissed. As elsewhere in the world, where the industry as been allowed to develop in coastal waters, it has proved to be a gross polluter, causing terrible damage to other interests.



Allan Berry [said outside the Scottish Parliament in March 2017](#):

"Successive Scottish Governments have promoted an industry which discharges huge volumes of untreated waste into the pristine waters of the west coast and islands. Damage caused by the Scottish salmon farming industry includes the virtual extinction of our native sea trout and salmon; widespread epidemic contamination of shellfish by poisonous algal toxins and contamination of the sea bed with a range of the dangerous pesticides. Salmon farming produces the most toxic food you can buy: farmed salmon."



Allan Berry - Press Conference, 16 March 2017

Evidence given to the Transport and Environment Committee in 2001 included written evidence by [Scottish Environment LINK](#), [Dr Richard Shelton](#), [Friends of the Earth Scotland](#), [RSPB Scotland](#), [The National Trust for Scotland](#), [World Wildlife Fund](#), [Orkney Trout Fishing Association](#), [Allan Berry](#), [Don Staniford](#) and [Frank Buckley](#).

Transport and the Environment Committee

5th Report 2002

Report on Phase 1 of the Inquiry into Aquaculture Volume 2: Evidence

In written evidence, [Dr Richard Shelton](#) (Head of the Scottish Government's FRS Freshwater Laboratory in Pitlochry from 1982 to 2001) stated:

"It is possible, therefore, that salmon farming on its present scale in confined Scottish waters is, for practical purposes, incompatible with healthy local populations of wild sea trout and salmon. If this interpretation is correct it would be prudent for Government to place an immediate moratorium on the expansion in scale and space of the salmon aquaculture industry and to introduce a proper system of inspection and regulation covering husbandry standards, louse levels, infectious diseases and polluting output. In the longer term the industry should be encouraged to operate on smaller scales with lower stocking densities at sites well clear of historically important sea trout and salmon rivers."

In oral evidence in December 2001, [Dr Richard Shelton](#) said:

Dr Dick Shelton: If we are to include sea lice in the carrying capacity calculation, I can say confidently that the carrying capacity of Scottish coastal waters is already substantially exceeded. I have prepared a background paper for the committee, which I hope members have received.

Sea trout populations in the north-west of Scotland have collapsed—a situation that is unique to that part of Scotland. Sea trout spend the entire summer in inshore waters where they are exposed constantly to high levels of young sea lice. That exposure has caused the collapse in the sea trout population. Given the collapse of many of the wild fish populations, the staple diet for young sea lice now has to be caged salmon. As a matter of urgency, the salmon industry needs to be regulated and inspected. As I said, I have given the committee a full background paper on the subject.

Sea lice are the biggest threat to wild salmonid fish in north-west Scotland. In some of the more fiordic systems, salmon are also affected. In contrast to sea trout, which hang about in the inshore waters, young salmon go to sea rapidly. Sea lice larvae treat long fiordic systems such as Loch Fyne and Loch Linnhe as bomber alleys. I would like a moratorium on the expansion of salmon farming in Scottish coastal waters until the problem has been resolved properly. The carrying capacity is exceeded substantially.

Written evidence from [Allan Berry](#) included:

SUBMISSION FROM ALLAN BERRY

The Committee, whose membership has changed significantly since it first considered PE 96 in 2000, has apparently gerrymandered the previous unanimous decision by two committees to instigate an independent inquiry into the damage caused by sea cage fish farming.

Rebuffed by the refusal of the Executive to carry out the decisions made by these committees, the current membership has decided to disregard the previous unanimous committee findings, jettison PE96 and conduct a 'rolling inquiry into aquaculture'.

The call for evidence on the agreed remit for evidence on locational guidelines for sea cage fish farming, voluntary codes of practice and area management agreements, the proposed transfer of planning controls for fish farming to local authorities, and the extent to which current regulatory systems can be harmonised and made more effective, merely repeats almost verbatim similar requests made in the past by the Executive.

Competent responses to all of the above topics can only be formed in the light of sound factual evidence, requiring basic information not yet available to the wider public. The call for an inquiry into the environmental damage caused by the sea cage fish farming industry, is a call for the proper examination and verification of the foundation on which the current regulatory framework is based.

Written evidence from [Don Staniford](#) included:

There is a real risk that this 'rolling inquiry' will only serve to railroad these legitimate and internationally supported concerns. Without prejudicing the outcome of either the Parliament's inquiry or the Executive's aquaculture strategy, the 'remit of the inquiry' and this first 'call for written evidence' does precious little to alter the view that the Parliament is little more than lapdog to the Executive's guard dog. The underlying fear is that it is merely 'business as usual' and that those Government agencies cited in PE 96 are busily shoring up their defences behind the scenes in private whilst systematically protecting themselves from public scrutiny. Unless there is a public, transparent and independent cross-examination of the issues detailed in PE 96 the can of worms that is sea cage fish farming - including mass mortalities, mass escapes, algal blooms, shellfish poisoning closures, the spread of parasites and diseases around Scotland's coasts and illegal use of toxic chemicals - will be left to fester in a climate of apathy and denial. Insofar as the T&E's first call for written evidence addresses the points raised in PE 96 the following comments, under the headings provided, are offered in relation to regulation:

The inquiry prompted a report - "[Review and synthesis of the environmental impacts of aquaculture](#)" - published in 2002 by the Scottish Executive.

Read more via:

["Letter by Allan Berry to the Sunday Herald, July 2017"](#)

["Allan Berry - press conference, 16 March 2017"](#)

["Fish Farming - House of Commons Research Briefing 2009"](#)

[Scottish Parliament: Report on Phase 1 of the Inquiry into Aquaculture: Volume 2: Evidence](#)

["Fish farm inquiry snub prompts appeal to EU"](#)

["Scottish anti-industry campaigner's petition to be heard by European Parliament"](#)

["Clean-up warning to fish farmers"](#)

["Cage Rage: An inquiry is needed into Scottish Fish Farming"](#)

[PE96: Petition calling for the Scottish Parliament to hold an independent and public inquiry into the adverse environmental effects of sea cage fish farming](#)

["Fish Farming in the UK: House of Commons Agriculture Select Committee, 1989"](#)

Another petition filed in 2006 ([PE941](#)) by [Frank Buckley of the Society for the Protection of Salmon and Sea Trout](#) called "for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to ensure greater protection for the rivers, streams and lochs of Scotland, such as Loch Broom and the River Gruinard, from fish farms developments" (read more [online here](#)).

The Scottish Parliament reported in 2016 via [PE1598: Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee](#):

Previous petition

In 2010, the Parliament was petitioned by Lawson Devery on behalf of the Salmon and Trout Association ([PE01336](#)). The petition called on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to take immediate action to protect wild salmon and sea trout stocks from inappropriate commercial fish farm activities by taking action to ensure that (a) all sea-based fish farms are moved away from the estuaries of major wild salmon rivers to reduce the

impact of sea lice and (b) ban salmon smolt farms from operating within any wild salmon river system.

The Public Petitions Committee took evidence from the petitioners and invited written comments from the Scottish Government and a range of relevant organisations. The Petition was kept open between Sessions 3 and 4. In Session 4 it was referred to the RACCE Committee. The Committee agreed to take evidence on the issues related to this petition and all associated written submissions as part of its consideration of the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Bill.

The RACCE Committee's Stage 1 report says that the Committee took the issues raised into consideration during its' Stage 1 scrutiny, and that the Committee's Stage 1 report refers extensively to the issue of sea lice (see above). The Committee agreed to keep the petition open while the Bill completed its passage through Parliament. On 12 June 2013, the Committee agreed to close PE1336 and to continue to monitor the issue, requesting updates and further evidence from the Scottish Government and any other appropriate bodies as necessary.

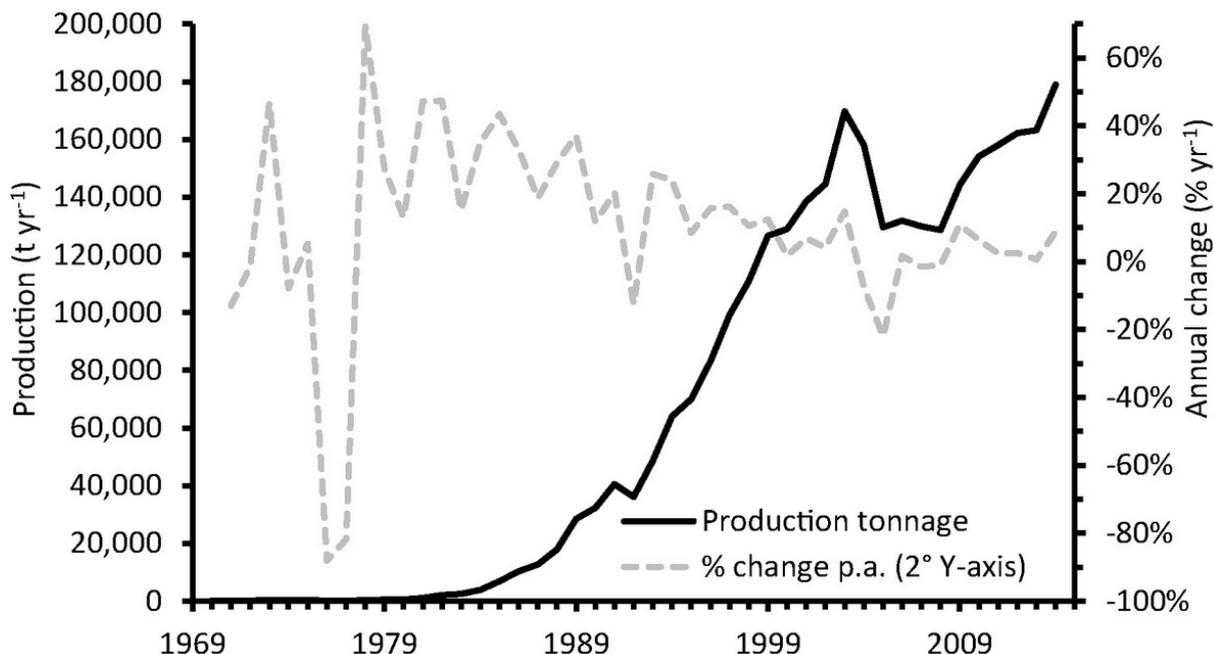
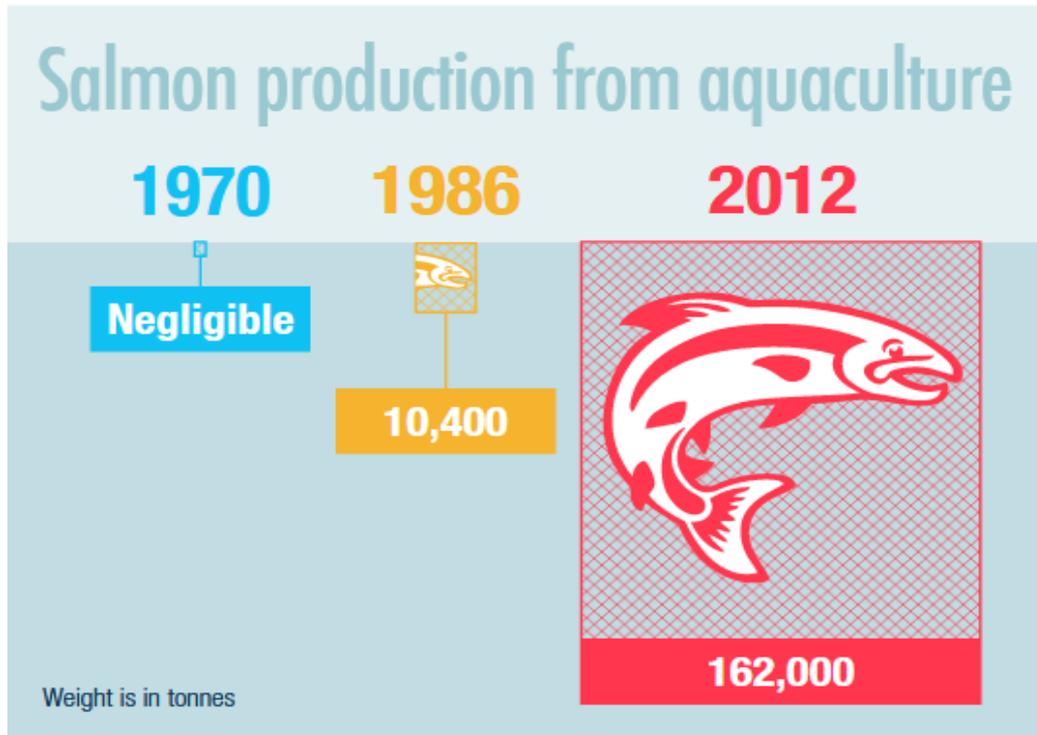
Calls for Moratorium:

Salmon farming has increased significantly in Scotland since the late 1970s - prompting repeated calls for a moratorium.



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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In January 2014, a [letter to the First Minister of Scotland](#) from wild salmon champions including Orri Vigfússon, Michael Wigan, Stan Headley, Andrew Flitcroft, Charles Clover, Sandy Leventon, Mark Bowler, Frank Buckley, Bruce Sandison, Allan Berry and Dr. Richard Shelton (former Head of the Scottish Government's Freshwater Fisheries Laboratory in Pitlochry) called for a moratorium on salmon farming in Scotland:

"In view of the deteriorating state of salmon farming in Scotland, we urge Scottish Ministers to curb expansion by instituting an immediate moratorium. Far from expanding salmon farming production as planned [by 50% by 2020](#), the Scottish Government ought to heed the warnings and pledge to reduce production accordingly. To increase salmon farming production further beyond Scotland's carrying capacity will only exacerbate the [problems of sea louse infestation, infectious diseases, chemical pollution and escapes](#)."

Read in full via "[Salmon Farming Moratorium: Letter to the First Minister of Scotland](#)"

In 2016 a report - "[Aquaculture Growth to 2030](#)" - supported by Fergus Ewing, Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity, proposed to double Scottish aquaculture production by 2030.

Read more via:

"[Aquaculture Growth to 2030: a strategic plan for farming Scotland's seas](#)"

"[New innovation roadmap outlines pathway for Scottish aquaculture growth](#)"

"[Scottish Aquaculture: a view towards 2030](#)"

"[New strategy launched to 'double' size of aquaculture](#)"

"[New Strategy to Double Size of Scotland's £1.8 billion Aquaculture Sector](#)"

"[Study outlines future scenarios for UK aquaculture](#)"

"[Future of the Sea: Trends in Aquaculture](#)"

The Herald [reported](#) in October 2017:

The Herald
sundayherald

21st October 2017

Campaigners say 'no more salmon farms' after disease on Lewis kills 125,000 fish

Jody Harrison [@JodeHarrisonHT](#)
Reporter



ENVIRONMENTAL campaigners have called for a halt on any further expansion of the Scottish salmon farming industry after tens of thousands of fish died in an outbreak of seaborne plague.

The charity Save Our Seals Fund and the pressure group Animal Concern have called on the Scottish **Government** to bring in a moratorium blocking new farms until it can be made safer for the fish and disposal sites can be created near lochs used by the industry.

Major company Marine Harvest admitted yesterday that 125,000 salmon had fallen victim to the bacterium *pasteurella skyensis* at the end of August at its farm at Loch Erisort on the Isle of Lewis.

This comes after new figures showed that the industry threw away up to ten million salmon last year – nearly a quarter of its stock – because of diseases, parasites and other problems.

John Robins, Secretary of the Save Our Seals Fund, believes that a public inquiry is now needed to investigate problems within the industry.

Mr. Robins said: “Instead of encouraging an industry which is causing major animal welfare and environmental problems the Scottish Government must exercise control over it.

“How many more millions of fish have to suffer and die and how much toxic waste has the industry to create before our politicians act?”

The Scotsman [reported](#) in January 2018:



Call for curb in fish farms as study shows pest risk to wild fish



A new international study has shown wild salmon and sea trout living near fish farms are under serious threat from potentially deadly sea lice

Campaigners at the charity Salmon & Trout Conservation (S&TC) Scotland, which commissioned the study, say the results back calls for the Scottish Government to rethink its drive to expand the aquaculture sector and increase farmed salmon production.

They claim the plans are “untenable” and steps should be taken to limit the number of fish farms in Scottish seas to help safeguard wild fish and halt dramatic declines in populations.

Andrew Graham-Stewart, director of S&TC Scotland, said: “For many years we have maintained that the Scottish Government’s position – that there is ‘no evidence’ in Scotland that sea lice from salmon farming damage wild salmon and sea trout populations – is untenable.

“This report substantiates our view that it would be very odd indeed if the Scottish situation was markedly different to elsewhere.

“We do, after all, have the same sea lice, which all too often Scottish salmon farm operators are incapable of keeping under control, and the same wild fish.”

Don Staniford, director of the campaign group Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture, has backed the calls.

He said: “The weight of scientific evidence is overwhelming – salmon farms are killing wild salmon and sea trout.

“The Scottish Government need to stop ignoring the science and start protecting Scotland’s iconic wild salmon and sea trout. “That means closing down salmon farms on migration routes of wild fish and relocating the industry to closed containment on land.”

Read more via:

["Call for curb in fish farms as study shows pest risk to wild fish"](#)

["First Minister questioned on leaking wastes from morts - call for a moratorium from Greens"](#)

["Campaigners say 'no more salmon farms' after disease on Lewis kills 125,000 fish"](#)

["NGO calls for moratorium on Scottish salmon farm expansion"](#)

["Map: Wild salmon dangerously scarce in Highland rivers"](#)

["Stop salmon farm expansion in Lamlash Bay"](#)

["Safe passage for wild salmon and sea trout"](#)

["Salmon Farming Moratorium: Letter to the First Minister of Scotland"](#)

["Scottish fish farms under threat from ‘backdoor salmon exports to China’"](#)

["Bitter message for Scotland's fish farmers"](#)

["The horrors of intensive salmon farming"](#)

["Cage Rage: An inquiry is needed into Scottish Fish Farming"](#)

["Disease fear may force salmon farmers to abandon estuaries"](#)

["Scotland's salmon farms face strict curbs"](#)

["End to fish farm growth demanded by campaigners"](#)