

Scottish' Salmon Scam: British Consumers Being Misled by Tesco

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Press release by E-MAIL FROM: John F. Robins & Don Staniford. John is Secretary of Save Our Seals Fund (SOSF), C/O Animal Concern, Post Office Box 5178, Dumbarton G82 5YJ. Tel: 01389-841-639, Mobile: 07721-605521. Fax: 0870-7060327. SOSF is a recognised Scottish charity: RCNo. SC025489. E-MAIL: sosf@jfrobbins.force9.co.uk website: <http://www.saveoursealsfund.org/> and Don is the Director of Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture (GAAIA): dstaniford@gaaia.org

Two leading campaigners against floating factory fish farms have joined forces in an attempt to persuade both Westminster and Holyrood Government Ministers to take action against retailers who they claim are deliberately misleading the public on the source of farmed salmon.

The campaigners have sent the Ministers photographs of tartan packaged “Scottish smoked salmon” which was farmed in Norway and details of a current major promotion by Tesco which has seen stores decked out in huge Scottish themed posters and saltires despite the fact that the vast majority of the salmon on sale is from Norway. Trading Standards officers are currently investigating the Tesco promotion and company directors have already ordered major changes to their in-store promotion of salmon.

John Robins of Animal Concern has condemned Tesco for misleading consumers. He said “By making their Norwegian farmed salmon look more Scottish than Billy Connolly in a kilt at a ceilidh Tesco obviously think they will increase their sales. Tough luck Tesco, Scottish shoppers are not as daft as you think and will see through your scam.”

Don Staniford of the Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture added; “All around the world salmon farmers and their retailers use misinformation to sell their products. Tartan packs, pictures of Scottish castles and images of salmon leaping in open water are a far cry from the reality of a factory farming industry which pollutes our seas and kills our wildlife. They cannot even be open and honest about what country their salmon comes from.”

EDITORS NOTES: Our E-mail to Government Ministers Fergus Ewing MSP and Owen Paterson MP is copied below. This explains in more detail the murky international political intrigue in which the salmon farming industry wallows. It also includes links to photographs and other information which show the extreme lengths farmed salmon retailers will go to in an effort to camouflage the origin of the fish they sell. The photographs are our copyright and you are free to use them. Should you require further info or comment please contact John Robins on 01389841111 or 07721605521 and/or Don Staniford on: dstaniford@gaaia.org

PHOTO LINKS: (You may have to cut and paste)

<http://donstaniford.typepad.com/files/appendix-to-letter-to-tesco-ceo-1-april-2014.pdf> , here: <http://donstaniford.typepad.com/files/john-robins-photos-tesco-22-march-2014-main-poster.jpg> and here: <http://donstaniford.typepad.com/files/john-robins-photos-tesco-22-march-2014.jpg>

If you want a photo of the tartan clad Macrae Scottish Smoked Salmon (from Norway) which was sold by Morrisons and is mentioned in the letter to Messrs Ewing and Paterson please e-mail John Robins or Don Staniford.

To

Fergus Ewing MSP,
Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism,
The Scottish Government,
Holyrood scottish.ministers@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

&

Rt. Hon. Mr Owen Paterson MP,
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs,
The U. K. Parliament,
Westminster defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Dear Mr. Ewing and Mr. Paterson,

We are writing to you as we believe protecting consumers in Scotland and the U.K. falls within your respective Government offices.

Over the last few months we have become aware that as Scottish salmon producers win massive increases in export orders to China and the U.S.A. the U.K. market is being flooded with imports of factory farmed salmon from Norway and other countries.

Much of this is down to the Chinese Government boycotting Norwegian salmon for political reasons and Norwegian producers, who also own two-thirds of the floating factory fish farms in Scotland, getting around that ban by supplying China from their Scottish farms and in turn supplying the UK with salmon from their farms in Norway.

It is of course environmentally ludicrous that we should export our own produce half way across the globe while relying on imports to supply the domestic market. However we accept that there is little common sense in international commerce and there is nothing we can do about this.

What does concern us is that consumers in the United Kingdom are being conned by salmon producers and retailers. Despite the fact that the industry routinely shoots hundreds of seals every year, pollutes our seas, relies on chemicals and mass medication to keep their salmon alive and kill more wild fish to make food pellets than the number of salmon they harvest, Scottish salmon has a good reputation with consumers.

Factory fish farmers and retailers understand this and go out of their way to confuse consumers by giving their foreign farmed fish a distinct tartan tint.

Last Christmas customers in Morrisons were wooed by packets of tartan clad smoked salmon with the very Celtic moniker "Macrae" and the description "Scottish Quality" and "Scottish Smoked Salmon". A picture of a braw Scottish castle was thrown in for good measure. I

attach a photograph of that product. Have a look and see how long it takes you to get past the iconic Scottish images and notice the little stamp beside the sell by date. Look carefully, it reads “Salmon farmed in Norway.” Of course this, although extremely misleading, is all quite legal because it reads “Scottish Smoked Salmon” and not “Smoked Scottish Salmon”.

However what we have uncovered in the last few weeks may overstep the legal boundary and go further than simply misleading and confusing consumers. Some months ago, in response to a query from myself (John Robins), Tesco admitted that most of their salmon is sourced from Norway. Earlier this year Sainsbury took advantage of this and produced a TV advertisement pointing out that their economy salmon was Scottish farmed while the Tesco equivalent was not.

Last month Tesco mounted a huge in store promotion and their fish monger departments up and down the country became more Scottish than Billy Connolly in a kilt at a ceilidh. Huge blue and white printed posters declaring “Our Finest fresh salmon 100% Scottish” and “100% Scottish salmon from our fishmonger”. Some stores also used chalk boards with the word “SCOTTISH” written in large letters. To complete the Scottish saturation bombing Tesco used more saltires than Alex Salmond and his Cabinet could smuggle into Wimbledon. A roundel featuring the saltire with the phrase “I’m Scottish” above it was also placed on many of the display shelves. We visited circa 10 Tesco stores in Scotland (including stores in Ullapool, Inverness, Aviemore, Aberdeen, Perth, Milngavie and Edinburgh) and all had similar displays.

The problem was that despite turning their stores into Brigadoon theme parks the Lairds of Tesco had filled around 80% of their shelves with Norwegian salmon. Signs declaring produce to be “100% Scottish” hung above salmon products which would have been more at home in Viking helmets than tartan kilts. All four different products surrounding an “I’m Scottish” roundel had crossed the North Sea in a longboat. Photos of some of those products are attached and others can be found here: <http://donstaniford.typepad.com/files/appendix-to-letter-to-tesco-ceo-1-april-2014.pdf> , here: <http://donstaniford.typepad.com/files/john-robins-photos-tesco-22-march-2014-main-poster.jpg> and here: <http://donstaniford.typepad.com/files/john-robins-photos-tesco-22-march-2014.jpg>

As, store by store, we informed the CEO at Tesco of the problem we received replies suggesting this situation was down to simple errors in the various stores. Tesco stated they had contacted the individual store managers regarding the 'I'm Scottish' labels “.... and they all passed on their apologies for them being misplaced.”

This excuse does not make sense to us. Apart from the chalk boards the point of sales material is all centrally produced and delivered to the stores with instructions about how it should be used. For so many stores to get it so very wrong at the same time suggests this was more than a coincidence.

This promotion has misled Tesco customers on a massive scale. As consumer Ministers we ask you to intervene to ensure that Tesco and other retailers are made fully aware of their legal duty to ensure their customers are fully informed of the source of the products on sale. U.K. sales of Norwegian salmon have increased tenfold in the last few years. Please ensure that this huge market share has not been gained through underhand sales tactics designed to con consumers in the U.K..

In addition we have discovered that some of the Tesco range of farmed salmon is not clearly labelled as “farmed”. Again this causes consumer confusion.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins (Animal Concern and Save Our Seals Fund)
Don Staniford (Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture)