FishyLeaks, 4 February 2013

Scottish Salmon Infested With Parasites
- Sea Lice Data Reveals 1001 Reasons to Boycott Farmed Salmon

Wester Ross, Scotland – Scottish salmon and sea trout are infested with sea lice parasites according to new data released by Marine Scotland via Freedom of Information and published online via FishyLeaks. Infestation levels of up to 145 sea lice per fish were recorded in Shieldaig in Wester Ross in 2012; up to 196 in Laxford in West Sutherland in 2008; 117 in Tarbert in Argyll in 2008; 113 in Sunart in Lochaber in 2008; and a staggering 1001 sea lice on a salmon sampled in Kanaird in Wester Ross in 2008.

Out of over 11,000 wild salmon and sea trout sampled since 1997 there were 2,750 fish with 10 or more sea lice; 913 fish with 50 or more sea lice and 367 fish with 100 or more sea lice. By far the worst area was Dundonnell in Wester Ross which reported 40 out of the top 50 infestation rates.

Read the sea lice data in full online here




The latest information published by the Scottish Salmon Producers' Organisation (SSPO) also reveals alarming sea lice infestation levels across Scotland – with salmon farms in North Mainland 263% above the suggested lice treatment threshold of 1.0 adult female lice per fish; East Shetland 135% above the threshold; and West Shetland 123% above the threshold for the period September to December 2012.

Salmon farming companies operating in Scotland all report growing parasite problems. "Grieg Seafood Hjaltland has suffered from sea lice challenges in 2012," stated Grieg Seafood in their Q3 2012 report published last month. "All regions reported higher sea lice levels at the end of the second quarter of 2012 compared to the second quarter of 2011," stated Marine Harvest's Q2 2012 report. Marine Harvest publishes their Q4 2012 report on Wednesday (6 February).

"Scottish salmon is farmed and dangerous," said Don Staniford of the Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture. "Sea lice from salmon farms are killing wild salmon and sea trout across Scotland. Scottish farmed salmon should be avoided like the plague."

The revelations comes in the wake of a scientific paper published in November 2012 by the Royal Society which detailed the lethal impact of sea lice from salmon farms on wild salmon. Scottish Government research published in February 2013 also revealed that sea lice from salmon farms impact wild sea trout up to 32km away. Another report published in January 2013 by the Rivers & Fisheries Trusts of Scotland detailed increased sea lice infestation levels on wild sea trout during 2012 compared to 2011 with an "increasing infestation pattern" and "detrimental lice loads above critical thresholds".

The Scottish Government is protecting the salmon farming from public scrutiny. Last month, Marine Scotland refused a FOI request on sea lice as "manifestly unreasonable". In a debate in the Scottish Parliament (9 January), the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Paul Wheelhouse, also refused to publish sea lice data. "It is not that farm-by-farm data on sea lice are not being collected; the issue is more to do with publication," testified the Minister. "Why does the Scottish Government seem so reluctant to go down the route of farm-by-farm data collection on sea lice?" asked Alex Fergusson MSP.

The issue of sea lice was also debated in December 2012 by the Scottish Parliament's Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee. "Publication of aggregated figures, controlled by the SSPO, on a delayed basis, is unacceptable in the 21st century for an industry which claims to 'have nothing to hide'," stated one submission. "We need data on a 'real time' basis to allow mitigation measures to be put in place at the time of crisis, rather than reflecting on a disaster after it has occurred. Why can Scotland not have a similar level of transparency from the largely Norwegian-owned operators to that which they are obliged to comply with in their home country?"

"The Scottish Government's refusal to publish sea lice data for Scotland's salmon farms is manifestly unreasonable," continued Staniford. "It is shameful that the Scottish Government is allowing the salmon farming industry to hide behind a veil of secrecy on sea lice. A public register detailing infestation rates on farmed salmon as well as wild salmon and sea trout must be published as a matter of urgency."

In September 2012, FishyLeaks published damning figures revealing a 12-fold increase in the use of toxic chemicals on Scottish salmon farms (due to chemical resistance and the development of so-called 'super-lice'). In December 2012, FishyLeaks published data from Ireland showing how Marine Harvest was breaching sea lice thresholds with 44 sea lice per farmed salmon. Last month, FishyLeaks published details of how parasite infestation associated with Amoebic Gill Disease has affected at least 44 salmon farms in Scotland since October 2011.

Contact:

Don Staniford (Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture): 07771 541826

Notes to Editors:

[1] For recent news on sea lice infestation on salmon farms please read:

"44 sea lice per salmon at Marine Harvest Ireland farm" (Undercurrent News, 18 December 2012)

"FishyLeaks: Lice-Infested Irish Salmon (Continued)!" (FishyLeaks, 18 December)

"Sea lice levels in local fish farms: reports show breaches of sea lice levels in Donegal" (Donegal Democrat, 17 December 2012)

"Sea lice hitting Donegal farms hardest – problems in Lough Swilly and Mulroy Bay" (Donegal news, 30 November 2012)

"Wild salmon stocks 'wiped out' by sea lice" (Irish Independent, 16 November 2012)

"Devastating impact on Wild Salmon populations from Sea Lice" (Inland Fisheries Ireland, 15 November 2012)

"Parasites have big impact on salmon" (Royal Society, 7 November 2012)

"Sea lice killing large numbers of salmon" (BBC News, 7 November 2012)

"Farmed fish lice link to wild salmon deaths" (The Herald, 7 November 2012)

"Chemicals to control salmon parasites" (The Guardian, 10 September)

"Keeping Salmon Farming Problems Secret" (Sunday Herald, 1 July 2012)

"Sea lice infestations on farmed Atlantic salmon in Scotland and the use of ectoparasitic treatments" (Veterinary Record, 2012)

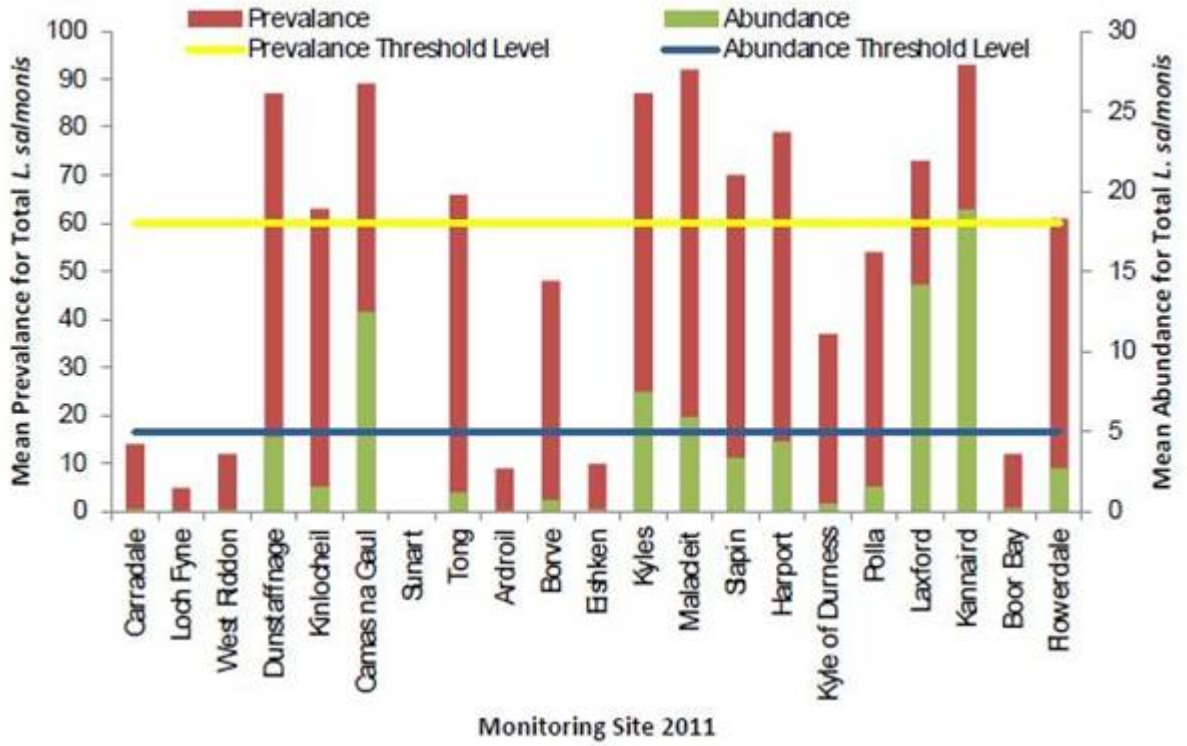
"Inspections reveal 'sea lice breaches' in salmon farms" (BBC News, 7 April 2011)

"Government 'gagged' by salmon farming industry" (Sunday Herald, 26 December 2010)

"Plague of 'super-lice' threatens wild salmon" (Caledonian Mercury, 16 February 2010)

[2] A report - Managing Interactions Aquaculture Project: Sea Trout Post Smolt Monitoring Project Regional Report 2011 – published in April 2012 showed high levels of sea lice infestation of sea trout sampled in the vicinity of salmon farms. It refers to "twenty eight core sites throughout the West Coast of Scotland which aimed to give extended coverage of sites across a range of distances from fish farms."

The report detailed 93% sea lice prevalence at Kanaird in Wester Ross (1.5 km from the nearest salmon farm), 89% sea lice prevalence at Camas na Gaul in Lochaber (6km from the nearest salmon farm) and 88% sea lice prevalence at Dunstaffnage in Argyll (4km from the nearest salmon farm). Infestation levels of up to 130 sea lice per sea trout were recorded at Camas na Gaul; up to 126 sea lice per sea trout at Laxford and up to 120 sea lice per sea trout at Kanaird.



Graphs presented in the [final published report] by RAFTS included:

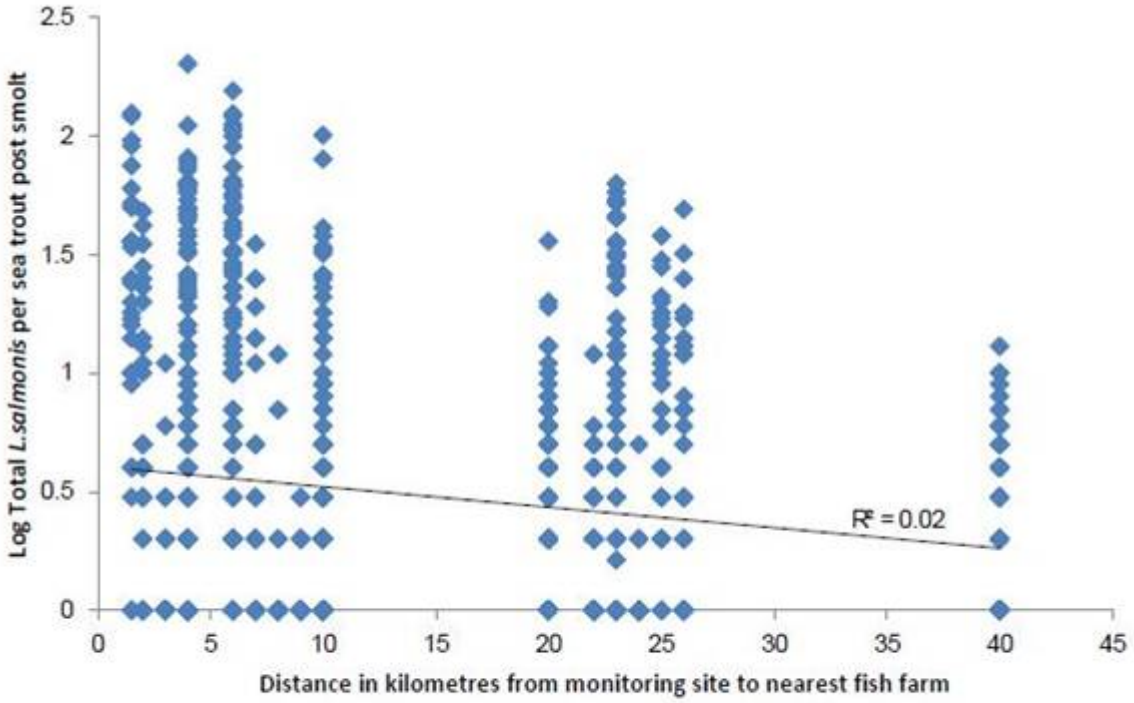


Figure 22 *L. salmonis* Log total per individual fish host for each monitoring site compared to the distance in km to the nearest active fish farm 2011.

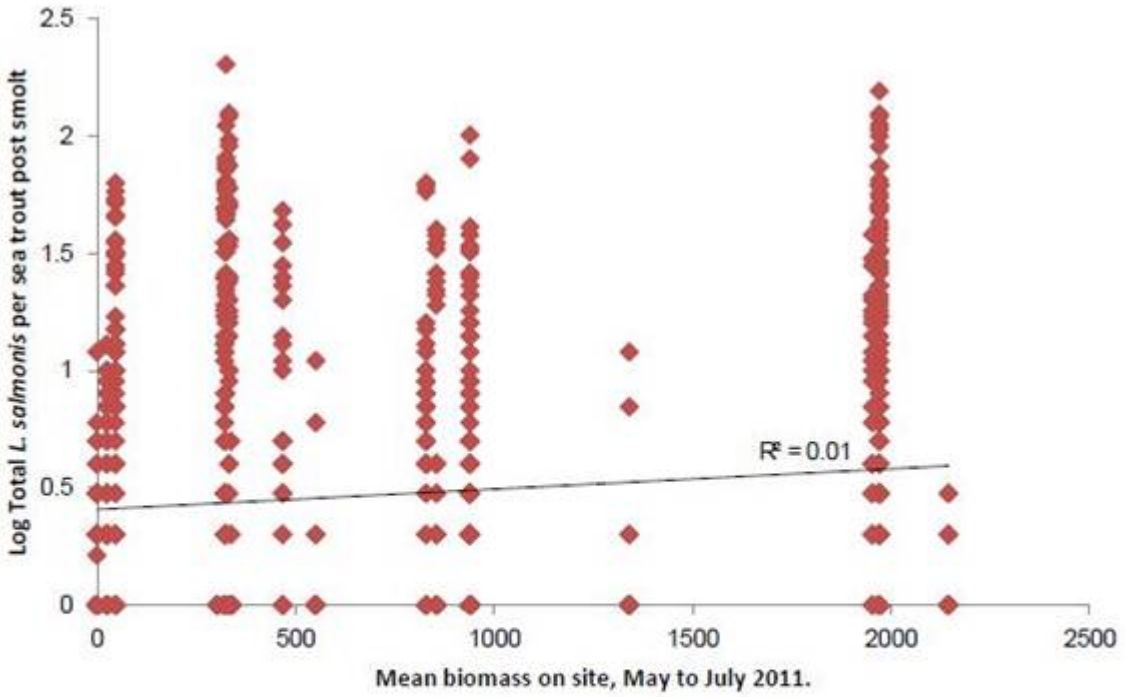


Figure 23. *L. salmonis* total per individual fish host for each monitoring site compared to the mean biomass on the nearest active fish farm for the period of May to July 2011.

Data collected during 2012 was published by RAFTS in January 2013 – the results indicated that five monitoring sites experienced extensive heavy sea lice infestations (epizootic). Read the report in full online here