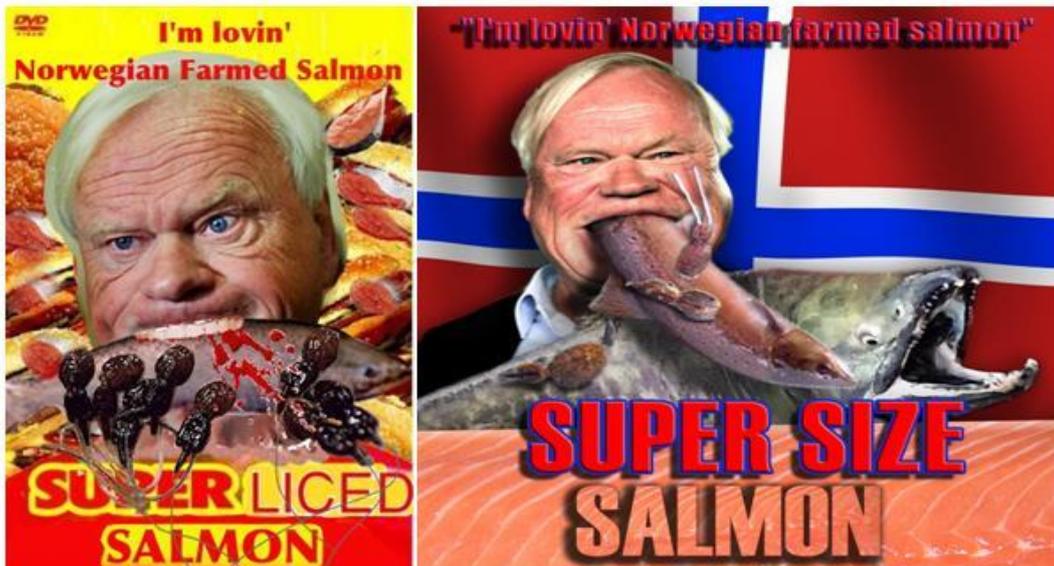


[Scottish Salmon Watch](#), 8 May 2018

[Supersized McSalmon - I'm Lovin' It Sings Fergus!](#)

"I'm lovin' it!" will be the take-away message tomorrow (9 May) when Fergus Ewing (Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy & Connectivity) is gently grilled by the [Scottish Parliament's inquiry into salmon farming](#).



When it comes to his love for Scottish salmon farming - a misnomer since [over 70% is controlled by Norway](#) with [over 90% of the eggs used for 'Scottish' salmon imported from Norway](#) - Fergus warbles like a [Norwegian blue parrot from Monty Python](#).

"Salmon has been a great success story for Scotland and its aquaculture sector," crowed the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy & Connectivity to [Holyrood magazine in February 2017](#) (despite the fact that [lice-infested](#) dead salmon are piling up higher than Galdhøpiggen - Norway's tallest mountain - with [15-20 million dead salmon in 2017 and 61 salmon farms in Scotland breaching lice limits](#)).



"We fully support the plans for sustainable growth that the Industry Leadership Group have said to double production by 2030," [parroted the Cabinet Secretary](#) last month in Brussels whilst peddling [disease-ridden Scottish salmon](#).

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Cabinet Secretary: We fully support 2030 growth plans

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A photograph of Fergus Ewing, the Scottish Cabinet Secretary, speaking into a microphone at a podium. He is wearing a dark suit and a purple and yellow striped tie. In the background, there are other people and a display of salmon.

Fergus Ewing makes a speech supporting the salmon industry's 2030 expansion plans. Photo: FFE

“ We want that growth because of what it can do in providing to the world the most nutritious food that there is with the lowest carbon footprint, and from the country that has the freshest marine environment

— Fergus Ewing

Fish Update [reported](#) (25 April 2018):

‘Parliament has only heard one side of the argument so far,’ he said, but that would be rectified when farmers give evidence next week and have a chance to tell their story ‘based on fact’.

‘I’m confident there’ll be a positive message from the very important cohort of companies...with different approaches to sustainable fish farming and tackling disease.’

Marine Harvest, the Scottish Salmon Company, Grieg Seafood and the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation will appear before the REC committee on May 2. Ewing will then give evidence in the final hearing on May 9, before MSPs consider their recommendations.

‘I’m determined to give what leadership I can to make sure that no matter what challenges are thrown at it you double growth,’ he said at the reception, organised by Seafood Scotland.

‘Let’s do it...let’s go Scotland!’

As Ben Hadfield, Managing Director of Marine Harvest Scotland, [testified to the Scottish Parliament's Rural Economy & Connectivity Committee on 2 May 2018](#):

Ben Hadfield: I will give you some numbers. About 2.1 million or 2.2 million tonnes of salmon is produced worldwide. Norway produces the lion’s share of that at around 1.1 million tonnes, and our volume is about 175,000 million tonnes—Scotland sits third. If we look purely at the cost of buying salmon, there is a premium for Irish salmon, organic salmon and then Scottish Label Rouge production. Most of the companies produce specifically for supermarkets in the domestic market to very high welfare and environmental standards. That is the next price bracket, and there is not really a commodity product with salmon any more. It is a high-value protein but, generally, Scottish salmon trades at about 50p or 60p per kilo over Norwegian salmon. As others have said, that is because it is regarded as being produced in a sustainable way with good regulation to a high quality, so it is quite desirable.

A startling fact is that Norway produces about 1.2 million tonnes of salmon and has 250 active farms, while we produce 170,000 tonnes, give or take, and have 207 active farms. Our farms are fundamentally smaller—SEPA policy has kept the farms small. We have farms that produce 2,500 tonnes that could sustain 5,000 or 6,000 tonnes.

Insider [reported](#) in November 2017:

Commenting on the Scottish Salmon Economic Report, Rural Economy Secretary Fergus Ewing said: “This report shows our salmon sector is thriving economically, increasing the number of full-time jobs, supporting communities and generating significant levels of investment.

“The industry is a key part of Scotland’s rural economy and this government is committed to supporting the sector to explore new approaches which will continue sustainable and productive growth in the future.”

Lest Fergus forgets that [mass mortalities on Scottish salmon farms](#) are also 'thriving' with infectious diseases driving up mortality rates to over a quarter ([26.7% to be exact according to Fergus Ewing's Parliamentary Reply in January 2018](#)).



[Tweet Tweet](#) as Fergus sang for his salmon supper at Seafood Expo Global in April 2018 showing his appetite for a doubling of salmon farming production by 2030.



Read more on the salmon farming industry's 2030 expansion plans via "[Value of Scottish Aquaculture 2017](#)" (June 2017) - including:

1.7. POSSIBLE FUTURE SCENARIOS TO 2030

The industry's Aquaculture Growth to 2030 report states that "sustainably achievable projections for 2030 could be in the range of 300,000 to 400,000 tonnes per annum for finfish production, with "a medium production figure of 350,000 tonnes of salmon". This would be approximately double the average 2014 and 2015 years harvest of 175,372 tonnes.

Read more via:

["New strategy launched to 'double' size of aquaculture"](#) (BBC News, October 2016)

["Aquaculture Growth to 2030"](#) (Scotland Food & Drink, October 2016)

["New innovation roadmap outlines pathway for Scottish aquaculture growth"](#) (SAIC, February 2017)

How far does Fergus want to go in terms of pushing salmon farming into [bigger and bigger offshore sites](#)?



Is the sky the limit to salmon farming production under Fergus's bird-brained vision of progress?



The Cabinet Secretary's 'progress' in [expanding salmon farming exports](#) comes at a heavy price.

Scotland Food & Drink Following
@scotfooddrink

BREAKING NEWS: Overseas Scottish food and drink exports were worth approximately £6 billion in 2017 - almost £570 million more than 2016. bit.ly/2GtmTa8



1:54 PM - 14 Mar 2018

Both to wild fish which are being [eaten alive by sea lice from salmon farms](#).



SST-T @ScotSalmonTank · Apr 25

This is alarming. While @FergusEwingMSP promises to double growth of #salmon industry in #Scotland at #SEG18, latest government figures show #Scottish wild #salmon catches 4th lowest on record #SaveScottishWildSalmon bit.ly/2qWAZdx



And to Scotland's seal population which is being [slaughtered by trigger-happy salmon farmers threatening a ban on exports to the United States](#).



Supersizing Scottish salmon farming is certainly not green [as the Scottish Government Tweeted via Greener Scotland](#) in April 2018.



When [pressed by the real Scottish Greens in the Scottish Parliament on 24 April 2018](#), the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change & Land Reform conceded that "there is a point beyond which it becomes difficult to sustain growth":

Mark Ruskell: To use salmon farming as an example, is the target to double production by 2030 consistent with sustainable development? You acknowledge that there are tensions between the economic, environmental and social issues. Is that target primarily driven by indefinite economic growth, or does it have a sustainable development aspect?

Roseanna Cunningham: Of course that target will have a sustainable development aspect. It will be achieved in a way that ensures that we balance the environmental issues. Indeed, we should remember that aquaculture has a social and economic aspect. The point is about keeping all of those in balance. No Government will say that any industrial sector can run out of control. All sectors are subject to the application of the same test, and we are looking at balance across the board to ensure that growth is sustainable. It would not do aquaculture any good if the growth was unsustainable, because that would end up leading to collapse. That is the case in almost any sector of our economy.

Mark Ruskell: Is there a limit to growth in the aquaculture sector, then?

Roseanna Cunningham: You would probably need to have that conversation directly with those who are involved in the aquaculture sector. I imagine—

Mark Ruskell: I mean in terms of environmental constraints.

Roseanna Cunningham: With respect, I imagine that any country in the world that has an aquaculture sector might feel that there is a point beyond which it becomes difficult to sustain growth. The issue is about the sustainability of that growth, and I cannot foresee what that might look like in the future, because the technologies, the understanding and the science change all the time, so what might look sustainable now may not look sustainable in five years, and vice versa. All that we can ever do at any one point with regard to any sector in our economy is to make our best estimate on the basis of our current understanding.

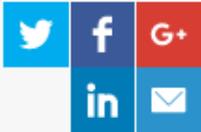
A coalition of wild fish and environmental NGOs certainly think a critical point has already been reached. The Fish Site [reported](#) (26 April 2018):

Call for salmon farm moratorium



Rob Fletcher
26 April 2018, at 9:24am

A call for an immediate moratorium on any new open cage marine salmon farms in Scotland or any expansion of existing sites was made by 27 environmental NGOs and other bodies yesterday.



The joint statement declares: "Until the current failings in the regulation of the salmon farming industry and the environmental problems the industry causes, as identified by the [Scottish Parliament's Environment Climate Change and Land Reform \(ECCLR\) Committee](#), are resolved, there must be an immediate moratorium on any new marine open cage fish farms or any expansion of existing fish farm sites, including any increases in farmed fish biomass at existing sites, as any expansion of the industry now will be unsustainable and may cause irrecoverable damage to the environment."

The Oban Times [reported](#) (4 May 2018):

The Oban Times

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Lochaber fishery groups back call for moratorium on new salmon farms



Salmon & Trout Conservation Scotland [reported](#) (26 April 2018):

The call for an immediate moratorium is supported and endorsed by Angling Trust, Argyll District Salmon Fishery Board, Argyll Fisheries Trust, Atlantic Salmon Trust, Community of Arran Seabed Trust, Fauna & Flora International, Fish Legal, Friends of Loch Etive, Friends of the Sound of Jura, Lochaber District Salmon Fishery Board, Lochaber Fisheries Trust, National Trust for Scotland, Orkney Trout Fishing Association, Outer Hebrides Fisheries Trust, Salmon and Trout Conservation Scotland, Scottish Anglers National Association, Salmon Aquaculture Reform Network Scotland, Save Seil Sound, Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation, Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network, Sustainable Inshore Fisheries Trust, Scottish Salmon Think-Tank, Skye District Salmon Fishery Board, Skye & Lochalsh Environment Forum, Skye & Wester Ross Fisheries Trust, Wester Ross Area Salmon Fishery Board and Whale and Dolphin Conservation.



Guy Linley-Adams, Solicitor for S&TC Scotland, said:

"If planning departments don't believe that the firm conclusions of the ECCLR Committee's report are sufficient to enable them to refuse such applications and so are carrying on with business as usual, then we need a moratorium now.

If we agree with the MSPs on the ECCLR Committee that further expansion must be sustainable and that, unless current issues are addressed, any expansion will be unsustainable and may cause irrecoverable damage, there can be no other logical conclusion.

Nobody, not even the salmon farmers themselves, should be supporting expansion while current environmental issues are still to be addressed."

If the Scottish Government has a single jot of ecological foresight, they must heed the Scottish Parliament's [damning report into the environmental impacts of salmon farming published in March 2018](#).

"The planned expansion of salmon farming over the next 10 to 15 years, which aims to grow the industry by 300,000 - 400,000 tonnes, is unsustainable and may, without changes in approach, cause 'irrecoverable damage'," warned a [press release](#) (5 March 2018).

Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee Convener, Graeme Dey said:

"The sector has ambitious expansion targets but the Committee is concerned as to how these can be achieved in an environmentally-sustainable way. The sector continues to grow and expand with little meaningful thought given to the impact this will have on the environment. In the Committee's view, if the current environmental impact issues are not addressed, the expansion will be unsustainable and may cause irrecoverable damage."

Fergus Ewing should read and heed the report in full [online here](#)

Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee: report on the environmental impacts of salmon farming

- Scotland is at a critical point in considering how salmon farming develops in a sustainable way in relation to the environment. The planned expansion of the industry over the next 10-15 years will place huge pressures on the environment. Industry growth targets of 300,000 - 400,000 tonnes by 2030 do not take into account the capacity of the environment to farm that quantity of salmon. If the current issues are not addressed this expansion will be unsustainable and may cause irrecoverable damage to the environment.
- The Committee is deeply concerned that the development and growth of the sector is taking place without a full understanding of the environmental impacts. The Committee considers an independent assessment of the environmental sustainability of the predicted growth of the sector is necessary.

As the Shetland News [reported](#) (5 March 2018):

Scottish Greens environment spokesperson Mark Ruskell, however, believes the industry is at a "breaking point".

"The salmon farming industry is breaking Scotland's marine environment and aggressive expansion plans will damage it beyond repair," he said.

"Salmon should be an iconic naturally produced food, but farming practice has become tarnished with widespread disease, chemical pollution and impacts on wild fish.

"This is a sector at breaking point driven by fantasy targets to double production by 2030 that bear no relation to the capacity of the environment to sustain that level of growth.

"The killing of protected seals and acoustic disturbance of dolphins is utterly unacceptable and it's clear that Scotland faces a ban on all of our fisheries products to the United States unless these practices are banned."

The Sunday Times [reported](#) (6 May 2018):

Supersizing salmon farms in Scotland 'will be a disaster'

Julia Horton

May 6 2018, 12:01am,
The Sunday Times

Environment



The watchdog wants to lift the restriction on the size of fish farms, to make it viable for the industry to move farms to more remote locations.
ALAMY

Even retailers are questioning the supersizing of Scottish salmon with The Fish Site [reporting](#) (7 May 2018):

Are salmon stocking densities too high?



Rob Fletcher
07 May 2018, at 11:17am

The Scottish salmon industry should consider reducing its stocking densities in order to help to reduce mortality levels, according to a major retailer.



In a submission to the Scottish Parliament's Rural Economy and Connectivity (REC) committee, [Waitrose](#) asked whether the Scottish sector "should consider uniformly reducing stocking densities to the level of the current organic standard of 10 kgs/m³ [from 15-20kg/m³] in order to test the idea that lower stocking densities may reduce stock mortality".

The retailer, which sources its salmon from four Scottish producers, added that: "Mortality rates are currently far too high - at around 23% - and reducing this level through better husbandry at lower stocking density should, in theory, result in the farms maintaining harvested volume; a potential win-win for the industry, the environment and fish welfare."

They also emphasised that the industry should increase its transparency if it wants "a social licence to expand".

"[The industry] should increase the level of transparency around operations and protocols so that key animal health, welfare and environmental indicators and issues are made more widely available to the public. This would likely act as a counter to the all-out focus on volume of production which, as argued by some, lies at the heart of some of the greatest criticism levelled at the industry," said the retailer.

Yet the Scottish Government appears hell-bent on expanding salmon farming in Scotland at all costs. In February 2018, the Scottish Government [Tweeted](#):



3:11 PM - 9 Feb 2018

Fish Farming Expert [reported](#) in December 2017:



Rural Economy Secretary Fergus Ewing: Putting welfare of fish "at the heart of production". Photo: Scottish Government

Ewing said: "This framework reflects the importance of fish health to our aquaculture industry, and puts the welfare of our marine environment and fish at the heart of production."

Industry's vision

"It recognises that innovation is essential to deliver the industry's vision for aquaculture, to maintain Scotland's reputation for quality produce and enhance our position on the global finfish production stage. It will also focus on creating an environment in which fosters innovation and drives sustainable growth."

"The group has an ambitious but deliverable timetable and I look forward to working with the co-chairs to make this happen."

Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham added: "It is imperative the right balance is struck between the continued growth of Scotland's aquaculture, whilst ensuring fish health and environmental interactions are managed."

Nearly twenty years ago in 1999 [the Scottish Government announced a moratorium on salmon farms on the North and East coasts of Scotland.](#)



Environment

Scotland's salmon farms face strict curbs

By Jack O'Sullivan, Scotland Correspondent | Tuesday 23 November 1999 00:00 GMT | [0 comments](#)

Salmon farming in Scotland is to be heavily restricted, with no new farms allowed on the north and east coasts, because of government fears that the industry is destroying the environment.

Salmon farming in Scotland is to be heavily restricted, with no new farms allowed on the north and east coasts, because of government fears that the industry is destroying the environment.

Friends of the Earth Scotland welcomed the initiative. Don Staniford, the group's fish farming research officer, said: "It is a good first step, but we want these controls rigorously enforced. We would prefer to see a complete moratorium on fish farm expansion." ●

Friends of the Earth Scotland and other members of Scottish Environment LINK have been calling for a moratorium on salmon farming for 20 years - [back when salmon farming production was less than 100,000](#) let alone the proposed 400,000 tonnes.

Production

Production survey information was collected from all 15 companies actively involved in Atlantic salmon production, farming 253 active sites. This figure represents the entire industry operating in Scotland.

Table 24: Annual production of salmon (tonnes) during 1996-2016 and projected production in 2017

Year	Tonnes	Percentage difference	Year	Tonnes	Percentage difference
1996	83,121	19	2007	129,930	-1.4
1997	99,197	19	2008	128,606	-1
1998	110,897	12	2009	144,247	12
1999	126,686	14	2010	154,164	6.9
2000	128,959	2	2011	158,018	2.5
2001	138,519	7	2012	162,223	2.7
2002	144,589	4	2013	163,234	0.6
2003	169,736	17	2014	179,022	9.7
2004	158,099	-7	2015	171,722	-4.1
2005	129,588	-18	2016	162,817	-5.2
2006	131,847	2	2017	177,202*	

*Industry estimate of projected tonnage based on stocks currently being on-grown.

The total production of Atlantic salmon during 2016 was 162,817 tonnes, a decrease of 8,905 tonnes (5.2%) on the 2015 total.

WWF Scotland called for a moratorium back in 2001. ['Bitter Harvest - A Call for Reform in Scottish Aquaculture'](#) stated:

WWF recommends that:

a comprehensive Scottish Aquaculture Strategy should be developed by the Executive for approval by the Scottish Parliament. This strategy should be informed by a strategic environmental assessment under EC guidelines, and should balance the development and financial aspirations of an expanding industry with social and economic factors and the requirement for continued good stewardship and sustainability in Scotland's marine environment.

In the light of the environmental and sustainability shortcomings of the present regulatory system and the urgent need for a strategic approach to be taken to the future development of the industry, WWF strongly believes that there is merit in seeking a pause or temporary moratorium on further large-scale aquaculture development until the promised strategy is implemented.

This moratorium would avoid any temptation to rush applications through the existing system when the Scottish Aquaculture Strategy is being devised and implemented.

Anglers and environmentalists proposed a moratorium back in 2014 when a [letter was delivered to the then First Minister of Scotland, Alex Salmond](#).

Alex Salmond
First Minister of Scotland
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG
FirstMinister@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

15 January 2014

Dear First Minister of Scotland,

Salmon Farming Moratorium

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](#).

In 2011, '[Scotland's National Marine Plan](#)' pledged that by 2020 Scottish Ministers planned "to increase the sustainable production of marine finfish at a rate of 4% per annum to achieve a 50% increase in current production". In a [press release](#) issued by the Scottish Government in May 2012, you referred to "our aim of increasing production by 50 per cent on 2009 levels to 210,000 tonnes by 2020".



A moratorium on salmon farming in Scotland has become a burning issue with the [Scottish Greens questioning the First Minister of Scotland \(Nicola Sturgeon\) in the Scottish Parliament in December 2017](#).

#FMQs



First Minister's Questions
Mark Ruskell
Mid Scotland and Fife

Dec 14
Green

 sptv

 **Mark Ruskell MSP - Scottish Greens** 9 hrs · € Like Page ...

Today at FMQs Mark raised the recent BBC1 investigation into Scotland's salmon farms and asked how a farming system with a mortality rate of 25% could be allowed to continue. We're backing calls for a moratorium on industry expansion until a full parliamentary inquiry has been completed.

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

21st October 2017

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

Jody Harrison [@JodeHarrisonHT](#)
Reporter



Salmon farming is booming in Scotland

[f](#) [t](#) [G+](#) [e](#) [1 comment](#)

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.

Writing in [The Scotsman in February 2017](#), Ilona Amos said:



Ilona Amos: Unbridled expansion of fish farms is not sustainable



Scotland is the EU's leading producer of farmed salmon, with plans to step up production by 30,000 tonnes by 2020. Picture: Stephen Mansfield

Scotland has an international reputation for high quality food and drink. Our fish is no exception and some parts of the world have a seemingly insatiable appetite for Scottish-reared salmon.

Norway is currently responsible for producing a third of all farmed salmon in the world, with Chile close behind at 31 per cent and other European countries at 19 per cent. But despite its small stature, Scotland is now the largest producer in the EU.

We have come a long way since the first forays into fish farming in the late 1960s. The inaugural harvest in 1971 was 14,000 tonnes. Compare that to record production figures seen in 2014, when nearly 180,000 tonnes were produced.

Farmed salmon is one of our most important exports, distributed to more than 50 countries and estimated to be worth £1.86 billion to the economy. The Scottish Government has set out plans to “sustainably” increase production to 210,000 by 2020 to take advantage of rising demand from abroad.

There are already about 250 farm sites off the coast of Scotland and its islands. Can this massive expansion actually be done in a way that is not damaging?

0
comments



**HAVE
YOUR SAY**

Scottish Environment LINK's [written submission to the Rural Economy & Connectivity Committee](#) in April 2018 included:

LINK believes that there must be no new marine fish farms using current 'open cage' practices or any expansion of existing fish farm sites, including any increases in farmed fish biomass at existing sites until the current failings in the regulation of the salmon farming industry and the environmental problems the industry causes, as both identified by ECCLR Committee, are understood and resolved.

To approve any expansion of the industry now will be unsustainable and may cause irrecoverable damage to the environment. LINK would like to see the immediate introduction of incentives for salmon farm operators to adopt and innovate new designs, practices and technologies that aim to reduce their environmental impacts to acceptable levels. It is essential that both Government and industry growth targets are subject to independent environmental assessment and are in line with the environmental carrying capacity of Scotland's marine environment.

Scottish Wildlife Trust [wrote in their submission to the Rural Economy & Connectivity Committee](#) in April 2018:

The Scottish Wildlife Trust considers the current state of salmon aquaculture in Scotland as unsustainable and that its impact on the marine environment is unacceptable. The Trust believes radical changes are required in how the industry is regulated, how farms are managed, and the types of methods and technology used to ensure any further growth of the industry does not jeopardise the health of the marine environment.

It is clear from the Scottish Association of Marine Science's report² on the environmental impacts of salmon farming in Scotland and the final report from the ECCLR Committee's inquiry into salmon farming that there continues to be a concerning lack of information and understanding of the extent to which salmon farming is impacting Scotland's marine environment. These concerns have been raised by environmental groups for 30 years (see the Scottish Wildlife and Countryside Link's 1990 report 'Marine Salmon Farming in Scotland'³), and yet, despite these knowledge gaps, the size of the industry has increased significantly (from 83,000t in 1996 to 162,000t in 2016) and there are further plans to double production over the next 10-15 years. The Trust considers it essential that the growth targets set by the Scottish Government (210,000t by 2020) and industry (300,000-400,000t by 2030) are subject to an independent environmental assessment and are in line with the environmental capacity of Scotland's marine environment.

The Trust believes that until the issues identified in the ECCLR Committee's inquiry report⁴ are resolved, there should be no new fish farms that use current 'open-cage' practices, or expansions of existing fish farms (i.e. size or biomass). The Trust considers that exceptions should only be granted in specific circumstances where the relocation of an existing fish farm results in a significant net environmental benefit or for proposals that wish to trial innovative new designs and practices that aim to reduce their environmental impact. It is imperative that a strict criteria for exceptions is established to provide clear direction for the industry and ensure environmental protection.

Scottish Wildlife Trusts [wrote in April 2018](#):

Salmon farming in Scotland began in the early 1970s and is considered a relatively young industry. The production of salmon grew steadily over the first couple decades but in the mid-1990s the industry experienced a rapid expansion and doubled its production in 20 years from 83,000 tonnes in 1996 to 162,000 tonnes in 2016. Salmon farming is now widespread along Scotland's west coast and Western and Northern Isles, and has become Scotland's second biggest food export with an estimated value of £600m in 2017.

Looking at these figures, it is easy to see why the salmon farming industry promotes itself as a symbol of industry growth in Scotland, and why the Scottish Government and the salmon farming industry have both proposed ambitious growth targets – of 210,000 tonnes by 2020, and 300,000 – 400,000 tonnes by 2030.

However, as eye-catching as these figures are, this story of rapid growth comes with a worrying caveat: the cost to our marine environment.

Salmon farming is an intensive activity. Open-net pens are placed in inshore coastal waters, each of which can hold tens of thousands of fish at a time. The open design of the pens is good for the farmed fish as it allows for fresh water to enter the pen, but it also allows for fish faeces, uneaten food, chemical treatments, and medicines to enter directly into the surrounding waters – effectively disposal of untreated waste which would not be tolerated if it was on land. The high volume of pollutants released into the marine environment is a concern as they threaten the health of our coastal waters and the wildlife that lives there.

Salmon farms also act as breeding grounds for diseases and pests (namely sea lice). The high density of salmon kept in the cages makes them vulnerable to disease outbreaks, which can, in some cases, lead to high mortality of farmed fish and pose a risk to wild fish in the vicinity.

Concerns over the environmental impacts of salmon farming in Scotland have been repeatedly raised for many years:

- 1990 – [Marine Salmon Farming in Scotland](#) by Scottish Wildlife and Countryside Link
- 2001 – [Bitter Harvest: a call for reform in Scottish aquaculture](#) by WWF
- 2002 – [Review and Synthesis of the environmental impacts of aquaculture](#) by the Scottish Association of Marine Science
- 2012 – the Scottish Wildlife Trust provided oral and [written evidence](#) to inform the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Bill
- 2016 – Community of Arran Seabed Trust (COAST) [raise concerns](#) to Scottish Ministers over the expansion of salmon farming in Lamlash bay
- 2017 – Salmon and Trout Conservation Scotland petition, which resulted in the [Scottish Parliament inquiry](#) into salmon farming

Despite these concerns and a growing body of supporting evidence, the salmon farming industry has expanded hugely and has been encouraged by the Scottish Government to grow even further.

Read more via "[Time for Change in Scottish Salmon Farming](#)"

Scottish Salmon Watch wrote in their [submission to the Rural Economy & Connectivity Committee](#) in March 2018:

Far from promoting the expansion of salmon farming or even considering a doubling or trebling by 2030, the Scottish Parliament should be recommending drastic reductions in salmon farming production immediately. Indeed, the Scottish Government ought to heed the warnings in North America and follow the lead of the Washington state government in ordering a ban on open net cages.

By operating outside ecological limits, salmon farming in Scotland has patently lost its social and political licence. The Scottish Parliament must signal an end to the industry's licence to pollute with impunity and rescind salmon farm licences starting with those sites where lice infestation levels, infectious diseases and mass mortalities have spiralled out of control.

From an animal welfare and environmental point of view, salmon farming is a morally repugnant industry which is now both ecologically and economically bankrupt. Strip away state sponsorships, government grants and taxpayer subsidies and the Scottish salmon farming industry is dead in the water (along with the estimated 15-20 million disease-ridden farmed salmon the industry racked up in 2017 weighing in at a staggering 25,435 tonnes).

Salmon & Trout Conservation Scotland [wrote in their submission to the Rural Economy & Connectivity Committee](#) in April 2018:

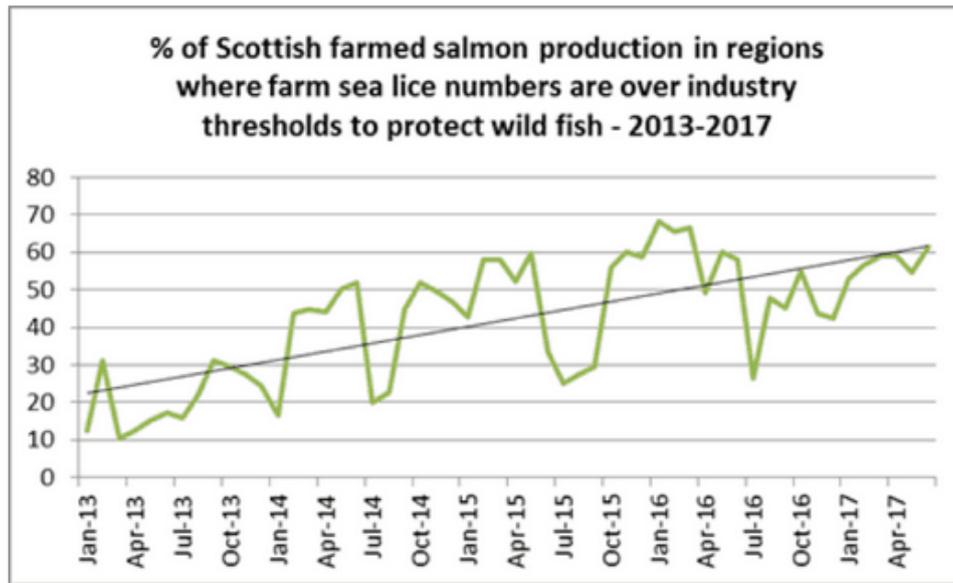
S&TCS' view is that, until the current failings in the regulation of the salmon farming industry and the environmental problems the industry causes, as identified by the ECCLR Committee, are resolved, there must be an immediate moratorium on any new marine open cage fish farms or any expansion of existing fish farm sites, including any increases in farmed fish biomass at existing sites, as any expansion of the industry now will be unsustainable and may cause irrecoverable damage to the environment.

It's a no-brainer for sure.



Photo: Steinar Kálás. Heavily lice-infested sea trout, causing loss of skin and thus brain to be exposed.

Bigger and bigger salmon farms will mean [even more sea lice problems](#).



Read more via "[Scottish salmon farming's 'liciest' farms named and shamed](#)" and "[Scottish salmon sold by a range of supermarkets in the UK has sea lice up to 20 times acceptable limit](#)"

38 Degrees [reported](#) in May 2018:

38 DEGREES people. power. change.

To: The Scottish Government

Time to Clean up Scotland's Salmon Farming Industry

Campaign created by
SARNS Salmon Aquaculture
Reform Network Scotland



The Scottish salmon industry is in dire need of reform: ever increasing levels of sea lice which threaten Scotland's wild salmon stocks, infectious diseases resulting in the deaths of millions of fish each year and contamination of our beautiful sea lochs and coastal waters from chemical pollutants have shown that this industry's business model is broken.

The question is whether the Scottish Government is prepared to listen to environmental warnings and truly balance the costs and benefits of salmon farming - or just go 'Kerching' as the dirty cash rolls in?



Tomorrow's [oral evidence to the Rural Economy & Connectivity Committee](#) will feature not only the Cabinet Secretary but other cheerleaders of the salmon farming industry including Alastair Mitchell who was caught up in the '[Slicegate](#)' scandal.



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

AGENDA

14th Meeting, 2018 (Session 5)

Wednesday 9 May 2018

The Committee will meet at 9.00 am in the Mary Fairfax Somerville Room (CR2).

3. **Salmon farming in Scotland:** The Committee will take evidence from—

Fergus Ewing, Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity, Mike Palmer, Deputy Director, Aquaculture, Crown Estate, Recreational Fisheries, EMFF and Europe Division, Marine Scotland, Alastair Mitchell, Head of Aquaculture & Recreational Fisheries, Marine Scotland, and Charles Allan, Head of Fish Health Inspectorate, Marine Scotland, Scottish Government.

Expect a 'Wham Bam Salmon' play straight out of the [Scotch Lamb promotional handbook](#).



Writing in [today's Scotsman](#) (8 May 2018), Ilona Amos warns:

Fish-farming began here in the 1970s, and is considered a major success story. Scotland is now the leading producer of farmed fish in the EU, and third in the world. The sector is worth around £1.8 billion annually and provides jobs in rural areas. Farmed salmon is our top food export, with an international reputation for high quality. So it's hardly surprising ministers aim to double production to around 350,000 tonnes a year by 2030.

READ MORE: [Online tool to help shoppers land right fish for the dish](#)

But the industry is now a victim of its own success. Environmentalists believe open-water farms are responsible for massive declines in wild salmon and sea trout.

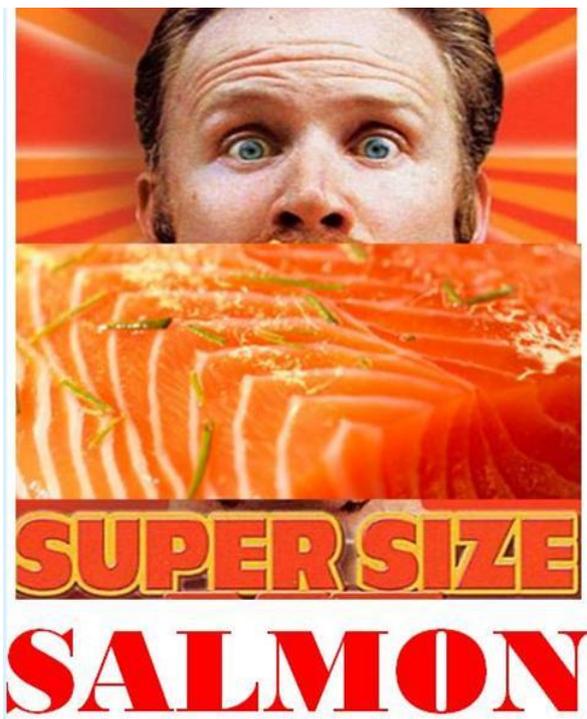
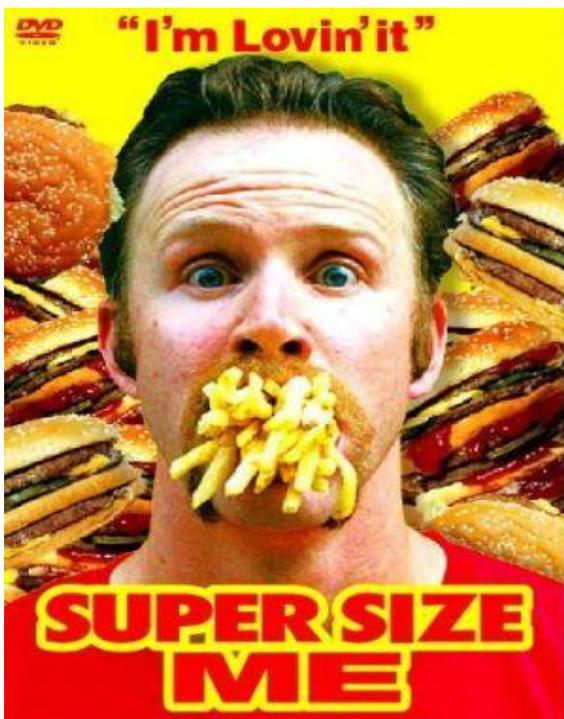
An inquiry into the impacts of aquaculture is currently under way at Holyrood, where economy minister Fergus Ewing is due to give evidence tomorrow. At the same time, a petition with more than 41,000 signatures – calling for regular testing of waste water from salmon farms – is being presented.

Whatever the outcome, one thing seems clear – the fish-farming industry must clean up its act if Scotland is to keep its status and remain a global leader in the sector.

Fergus would be loathe to admit it but the prized image of Scottish salmon is being used and abused by Norwegian companies like a drive-through McDonald's take-away.



Fast food farmed fish leaves a bad taste in the mouth. [Big McSalmon](#) - I'm not lovin' it!



Supersized Scottish salmon is stomach-churning stuff.



Read more on supersized salmon farming via:

[Big McSalmon, Large Lice & Toxic Chemicals - Supersized Salmon Goes Global!](#)

[Sunday Times: "Supersizing salmon farms in Scotland 'will be a disaster'"](#)

[SEPA proposes lifting biomass cap for Scottish salmon farms](#)

[Industry: no imminent plans for super-sized salmon farm](#)

[Outrage over secret plans to base world's biggest salmon farm in Scotland](#)

[Super-sized Scottish Salmon - 8,000 tonnes of trouble on the horizon!](#)

[Opposition mounts to super-sized fish farm in Galway Bay](#)



[Don Staniford](#), Director of Scottish Salmon Watch