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Halifax Media CO-OP

2013 New Year's Resolution: Salmon Feedlot Boycott

Canada-wide campaign launched to stand up for wild salmon and the marine environment

BY SALMON FEEDLOT BOYCOTT



Days before the end of 2012, a campaign has been launched that calls for Canadians to stop purchasing and consuming salmon that has been raised in open-net feedlots.

SalmonFeedlotBoycott (SFB) is hoping to make 2013 the year that Canadians stand up to protect wild salmon, lobster, the marine environment, and the thousands of jobs that rely on them. In time for the New Year, SFB is encouraging Canadians to join this campaign as their New Year's resolution.

There is growing concern on both the East and West Coasts of Canada that wild fisheries and marine environments are being irreversibly harmed by industrial salmon feedlots. These feedlots are industrial livestock operations in the ocean, with up to one million fish raised at a single site.

Anissa Reed, coordinator of SalmonFeedlotBoycott commented, "Many years ago I used to manage an Atlantic salmon 'farm' so I know the nature of the beast. Today they still use open nets, they are still crowded feedlots, and the fish waste and excess feed fall to the sea floor. I have travelled all over British Columbia and, more recently, into communities throughout Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The faces of the people who know what is happening haunt me."

Reed added, "This boycott is a platform for stories to be told on our social media pages, and the public can then participate and choose what they want for themselves and this country. I see this

industry as a predator. They lobby the government for access into our communities with promises of good jobs, and pit neighbour against neighbour. They spend millions on advertising campaigns saying it is good for us, but I have seen, and believe, otherwise."

Despite recent findings by the federal Cohen Commission of Inquiry into the Decline of Sockeye Salmon in the Fraser River, salmon farm leases continue to be granted by provincial governments for high-risk locations and no actions have been taken on the federal inquiry's recommendations.

This campaign follows decades of attempts to negotiate with the industry and have government honour their own numerous reviews that recommended getting salmon feedlots away from wild fisheries. People have become more aware of the potential severe consequences of the practice of raising salmon in floating feedlots on Canada's east and west coasts.

"While salmon feedlots have been contentious on the West Coast for a long time, this issue is rapidly becoming a hot topic on the East Coast with the increased rates of feedlot site lease applications and the growing awareness of the impacts these operations have on wild salmon, lobster, and coastal habitat," stated Inka Milewski, New Brunswick-based SalmonFeedlotBoycott supporter and marine science advisor to community groups.

SFB is interested in spreading the boycott message throughout Canada but is also conscious of the global implications of salmon feedlots, since wild salmon go into decline wherever open net-pen salmon farms operate. There is also a boycott underway in Ireland.

Polling undertaken last month by SalmonFeedlotBoycott indicated just over half of Canadians would support boycotting farmed salmon. Support for a boycott is highest in the Maritimes, Quebec and B.C. The most frequently cited reasons for supporting a boycott were: concerns related to the products used to kill sea lice harming lobster; a diminished wild salmon population will impact orcas, eagles and grizzly bears; concerns about viruses in food; and the knowledge that wherever salmon farms operate wild populations are in decline.

The campaign website at www.salmonfeedlotboycott.com provides a series of easy-to-deploy actions designed to help educate Canadians and pressure politicians and other regulators into taking action.

Canadians who want to demonstrate their concern and have their voice heard can:

- Boycott the purchase and consumption of farmed salmon
- Ask markets and restaurants not to carry the product
- Check the label on your pet's food and avoid farmed salmon
- Educate friends about the issue
- Sign SFB's petition and/or write a letter to federal members of parliament

Ongoing and informed conversation by Canadians with their supermarkets, pet food manufacturers, fishmongers and government is an important starting point for positive change.

In addition to asking Canadians to embrace their call for action as a New Year's Resolution, a series of educational activities to raise awareness of the impacts of salmon feedlots are planned over the next several months.

<http://salmonfeedlotboycott.com/>