

First Canadian retailer stops selling farmed salmon!



Three years after Greenpeace's first ranking of Canada's eight largest supermarket chains on seafood sustainability, Overwaitea Food Group has become the first chain to attain a "green" rating, in part due to its complete removal of open net-pen farmed salmon from its stores.

Overwaitea Food Group (OFG) is the first of Canada's eight largest food retailers, and the third in North America, to stop selling the highly controversial product. The move by the company comes at a time when reports of viral outbreaks on salmon farms on the east and west coast of North America are prevalent and public outcry directed at the industry is mounting.

"We commend this latest step by OFG to source seafood products that are more compatible with healthy oceans," said Sarah King, Greenpeace Ocean Campaign Coordinator. "It's time the federal government and the salmon farming industry start getting the message that this product doesn't fit in with the Canadian retail market's growing sustainable seafood movement."

In 2010, OFG introduced a more sustainable alternative to open net-pen farmed salmon, known as closed containment, and began to phase out product from conventional farms. Loblaw and Safeway support and are seeking closed-system alternatives; however, these more sustainable options are not currently found in those stores.

The removal or replacement of Redlist seafood – harmfully fished or farmed products from sale remains a key indicator of progress towards greener seafood procurement tracked by Greenpeace. This year's ranking found that most chains continue to identify species of concern and seek better options; however, the high volume sales of farmed salmon remains a key road block.

"Some supermarkets are clearer about their plans to address these big sellers with big problems, and that is reflected in the scores," said King. "Canadian retailers continue to take positive steps forward with seven out of eight receiving a passing grade this year, but expectations remain high as they approach their policy implementation goals."

Loblaw came in second place this year approaching a green rating with a score of 68 per cent. Safeway followed holding its third position at 63 per cent. Metro (4th), Walmart (5th), Sobeys (tied

for 6th) and Federated Co-operative Ltd. (tied for 6th) all scored in the 50 per cent range, with Costco (7th) falling short of a passing grade with 43 per cent.

As companies seek better alternatives to problematic products, Greenpeace is urging them not to confuse their customers by marketing products as a “green” choice that are not actually sustainable. A number of existing and pending farmed salmon stamps of approval fail Greenpeace’s assessment because key issues are not addressed. Greenpeace does not endorse certifications and eco-labels for salmon including Seafood Trust, WiseSource Salmon, the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), Global G.A.P., Friend of the Sea (FOS), GAA Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) certification standards, the Canadian Organic Aquaculture Standard for salmon, other “organic” certifications, and other eco-stamps.

Open net-pen farmed salmon is red-graded by Greenpeace because of the documented negative impacts on coastal ecosystems around the world. Disease and parasite transmission, toxic contamination, escaped farmed fish, and the use of wild fish in feed are among the key threats to marine life posed by the industry. Greenpeace urges supermarkets to move away from selling this product and to invest in more sustainable aquaculture operations that do not threaten the health of marine ecosystems.