

Seabed pollution at Scottish salmon farms under scrutiny

Press release:



Seabed pollution at almost two thirds of Scottish salmon farms is either ‘unsatisfactory’ or ‘borderline’, analysis of FOI information reveals

The Salmon and Trout Association (S&TA) has today published a comprehensive analysis of reports obtained from SEPA under the a Freedom of Information (FOI) request, establishing that levels of seabed pollution at almost two thirds of Scottish marine salmon farms are either ‘unsatisfactory’ or ‘borderline’, according to SEPA’s own categorisation.

The study reviewed 311 reports of seabed self-monitoring by farms between 2009 and March 2012. Of these 137 (44%) were deemed by SEPA to be “unsatisfactory” (“beyond the assimilative capacity of the local environment”), 64 (21%) were “borderline” (“close to having an unsustainable impact”) and only 106 (34%) were “satisfactory”.

Hughie Campbell-Adamson, Chairman of S&TA Scotland, said:

“This report is another damning indictment of the salmon farming industry. It is symptomatic of a systemic failure to control seabed pollution and throws into doubt whether the current expansion plans of the Scottish salmon farming industry in open-cage systems can ever be environmentally sustainable”.

Guy Linley-Adams, Solicitor to the S&TA Aquaculture Campaign and author of the analysis, said:

“These findings are yet further evidence that open-cage salmon farming as practiced in Scotland is inherently unsustainable. They support the S&TA’s conviction that the way forward over the medium-term is to move to closed containment units, from which all waste can be collected and treated or re-used in the same way as any terrestrial intensive food animal production factory unit would be required to do.

They also reinforce for the need for the forthcoming Aquaculture and Fisheries Bill to deliver a robust approach to regulating the industry as suggested by S&TA and many other bodies in their various consultation responses. Under the current regulatory regime, it appears that the salmon farming industry is able to breach pollution guidelines with relative impunity. This cannot be allowed to continue”.

Paul Knight, CEO at the S&TA, added:

“This report makes a mockery of the industry’s claims on packaging, websites and elsewhere that it always operates in harmony with the wider environment”.

The two companies with the highest percentage of “unsatisfactory” reports are Wester Ross Fisheries Ltd (70 % “unsatisfactory”, 30% “borderline” and 0% “satisfactory”) and **Loch Duart Ltd (68% “unsatisfactory”, 26% “borderline” and 6% “satisfactory”)**, both based in the north-west Highlands.

Wester Ross Fisheries Ltd was the winner of the Crown Estate’s Stewardship Award at the Scottish Marine Aquaculture Awards in 2011. Its website declares that “all of our operations.....minimize our impact on the environment ensuring that we are producing the finest quality Scottish salmon in harmony with our environment”.

Loch Duart Ltd markets itself as “the Sustainable Salmon Company” and its website states: “‘Best practice’ is the principle applied to Loch Duart salmon at every stage of rearing, harvesting and supply – a sustainable and environmentally-responsible approach”. The company’s website’s “Where to eat our salmon” section includes Gordon Ramsay at Claridge’s and Rick Stein’s Seafood Restaurant in Padstow.