

Media Backgrounder:

Scottish Salmon's Serial Seal Killers (30 August 2015):



Drowning in Data:

GAAIA received 10 MB of data including 250 PDFs via email from the Scottish Government on 21 August 2015 (all the PDFs are available via Dropbox - email dstaniford@gaaia.org).

SCOTTISH INFORMATION COMMISSIONER DECISIONS 102/2015 and 103/2015

Oana.Racu@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

You forwarded this message on 25/08/2015 09:05.

Sent: Fri 21/08/2015 07:01

To: salmonfarmingkills@gmail.com

Cc: Sarah.Walkinshaw@scotland.gsi.gov.uk; Sam.Baker@scotland.gsi.gov.uk; Ian.Walker@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Message | Letter on Decisions 102 and 103.doc (467 KB) | Release Forms.zip (10 MB)

Dear Mr Staniford,

Attached is the information we are required to release in order to comply with Scottish Information Commissioner Decisions 102/2015 and 103/2015.

Best regards,
Oana

Marine Environment
[marinescotland](http://marinescotland.scot.nhs.uk)
Scottish Government | 1A-South | Victoria Quay | Edinburgh EH6 6QQ
Tel: 0131 2440318
Oana.Racu@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

GAAIA has now made all the "Marine Scotland Statutory Seal Licence Return Forms" submitted quarterly by salmon farms for 2013 and 2014 (and some of January 2015) detailing seals killed and carcasses recovered, reported and collected online via:

["Appendix: Companies, Regions & Sites"](#)

["Appendix: Source Data - Seal Killing Return Forms Submitted by Salmon Farms"](#)

The Scottish Government has thus far (as of 27 August 2015) published generic seal killing data [online here](#) - including the years [2014](#) (80 seals killed), [2013](#) (105 seals killed), [2012](#) (208 seals killed) and [2011](#) (241 seals killed).

Site specific data on salmon farms killing seals is currently available on the [Scottish Government web-site](#) to download for [2013](#), [2012](#) and [2011](#) but thus far not [2014](#) and there is no data at all available for 2015. GAAIA filed a Freedom of Information request for seal killing data for 2015 on 24 August 2015.

Where names of salmon farms are given as codes - e.g. FS/1043 - the deciphering information is available via the [Scottish Government's Authorised Production Businesses \(Fish\)](#).

"Strictly Confidential - Commercially Sensitive Information":

In a number of cases there is still a name blackened out on a return form (GAAIA has requested clarification on this issue but it appears to be confined to Scottish Seafarms).

 MARINE (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010 : PART 6 - CONSERVATION OF SEALS
Marine Scotland Statutory Seal Licence Return Form
 It is the duty of licensees to complete this form and return it to Marine Scotland quarterly

marinesc

Licence Number	Name on Licence		Date of Return					
S8/2011/w/o	[REDACTED]		20/11/2014					
			Seals Shot			Recovered 1	Reported 2	
OSFB/Netting Station/Fish Farm Registration/Other	Date	Time	Common	Grey	Unidentified			
Loura Voe (Dury Voe area)	11th Oct 2014	11.3	0	1		0	0	
Loura Voe Voe (Dury Voe area)	16th Oct 2014	13		1		0	0	
Slocka (Ronas Voe)	17th Oct 2104	10.00am		1		0	0	
Holms	30th Oct 2014	12		1				
Totals								

Please report carcases for collection to: Scottish Agricultural College Strandings Scheme: Tel: 01463 243030

1: Was the carcase recovered?
 2: Was the carcase reported to Scottish Agricultural College Strandings Scheme?
 3: Was the carcase collected by Scottish Agricultural College Strandings Scheme?

In other cases, Scottish Seafarms are reluctant to name the sites killing seals (using codes which have to be deciphered):



MARINE (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010:PART 6 - CONSERVATION OF SEALS
Marine Scotland Statutory Seal Licence Return Form

marine scotland

It is the duty of licensees to complete this form and return it to Marine Scotland quarterly.

Licence Number		Name on Licence: SSF						Date of Return		
WS13/2014/W/0		Scottish Sea Farms - Scotland Region						07/05/2014		
DSFB/Netting Station/Fish Farm Registration/Other	Date	Time	Location*	Seals Shot			Carcase Recovery			
				Common	Grey	Unidentified	Recovered1	Reported2	Collected3	
FS0804	11/03/2014	4.28pm	NG791380	1			no	no	no	
FS1047	04/04/2014	10am	NM 932418	1			no	no	no	
FS0634	20/02/2014	1pm	NM 677268	1			no	no	no	
FS0253	25/04/2014	10.30am	NM 689269	1			no	no	no	
FS0209	04/02/2014	10am	NM 684396	1			no	no	no	
FS0549	13/03/2014	4.30pm	NB 985075	1			no	no	no	
FS0549	26/03/2014	4am	NB 985075		1		no	no	no	
Totals				6	1					

Each incident must be listed separately on the form with relevant details.

*Please supply the OS reference or fish farm location (if applicable) of where seal was shot.

Please report carcases for collection to: Scottish Agricultural College Strandings Scheme: Tel: 01463 243030

1: Was the carcase recovered?

2: Was the carcase reported to Scottish Agricultural College Strandings Scheme?

3: Was the carcase collected by Scottish Agricultural College Strandings Scheme?

In other cases Hjaltland Seafarms (Grieg Seafood) has (unsuccessfully it turns out thanks to the [SIC's Decisions](#)) marked the return form "[Strictly Confidential - Commercially Sensitive Information](#)":



MARINE (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010:PART 5 - CONSERVATION OF SEALS
Marine Scotland Statutory Seal Licence Return Form

marine scotland

It is the duty of licensees to complete this form and return it to Marine Scotland quarterly.

Licence Number		Name on Licence						Date of Return		
S07/2012/W/02		Hjaltland Seafarms						08/02/2013		
DSFB/Netting Station/Fish Farm Registration/Other	Date	Time	Location*	Seals Shot			Carcase Recovery			
				Common	Grey	Unidentified	Recovered1	Reported2	Collected3	
FS0447	18/02/2013	1200	HU374378		1					
FS1099	02/02/2013	1215	HU466507		1					
FS1099	08/02/2013	1540	HU466507		1					
FS1099	14/02/2013	0730	HU466507		1					
FS1099	16/02/2013	0815	HU466507		1					
FS1099	19/02/2013	0730	HU466507		1					
FS1099	23/02/2013	0800	HU466507		1					
FS0333	04/02/2013	0900	HU449482		1					
FS0333	10/02/2013	0730	HU449482		1					
FS0333	12/02/2013	0800	HU449482		1					
FS0333	17/02/2013	0715	HU449482		1					
FS0333	18/02/2013	0800	HU449482		1					
FS0333	22/02/2013	1645	HU449482		1					
FS0333	24/02/2013	0715	HU449482		1					

Strictly Confidential - Commercially Sensitive Information (The disclosure of any content to any third party is not permitted without the written consent of Grieg Seafood Hjaltland UK Ltd.)

In the above return form marked "Strictly Confidential - Commercially Sensitive Information", Hjaltland Seafarms (Grieg Seafood) reported a staggering 21 dead grey seals in a two month period (February & March 2013) including 11 grey seals killed at one site alone in East Voe in Lax Firth, Shetland.

At another Hjaltland Seafarms (Grieg Seafood) salmon farm in South Voe of Gletness (also in Shetland) six grey seals were killed in a three week period in February 2013. Not a single one of the 21 seals killed by Hjaltland Seafarms (Grieg Seafood) were listed as recovered, reported or collected via Scottish Agricultural College Strandings Scheme.

In another return form marked "[Strictly Confidential - Commercially Sensitive Information](#)", Hjaltland Seafarms (Grieg Seafood) reported another 8 grey seals killed between May and July 2013 at their salmon farm in East Voe, Lax Firth, Shetland.

MARINE (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010:PART 6 - CONSERVATION OF SEALS
Marine Scotland Statutory Seal Licence Return Form
 It is the duty of licensees to complete this form and return it to Marine Scotland quarterly.

marinescotland

Licence Number		Name on Licence				Date of Return				
S07/2012/W/02		Hjaltland Seafarms				01/05/2013-31/07/2013				
DSFB/Netting Station/Fish Farm Registration/Other		Date	Time	Location*	Seals Shot			Carcase Recovery		
					Common	Grey	Unidentified	Recovered ¹	Reported ²	Collected ³
FS0333		12/05/2013	0745			1				
FS0333		02/06/2013	0630			1				
FS0333		07/06/2013	1045			1				
FS0333		15/06/2013	0730			1				
FS0333		26/06/2013	1500			1				
FS0333		01/07/2013	1730			1				
FS0333		06/07/2013	0600			1				
FS0333		14/07/2013	0830			1				
Totals					0	8				

*Each incident must be listed separately on the form with relevant details.
 Please supply the OS reference or fish farm location (if applicable) of where seal was shot.

Please report carcasses for collection to: Scottish Agricultural College Strandings Scheme: Tel: 01463 243030

1: Was the carcase recovered?
 2: Was the carcase reported to Scottish Agricultural College Strandings Scheme?
 3: Was the carcase collected by Scottish Agricultural College Strandings Scheme?

The Filthy Five:

The five worst companies for killing seals between 2013 and 2014 are:

- Scottish Seafarms: 56
- Hjaltland/Grieg: 36
- Scottish Salmon Company: 23
- Marine Harvest: 12
- Balta Island Seafare: 10

- #1: Scottish Seafarms (Leroy & SalMar)

[Scottish Seafarms](#) is owned by the Norwegian companies [Leroy](#)- and [SalMar](#). Marks & Spencer source exclusively from Scottish Seafarms via the [fake brand 'Lochmuir'](#) (read more via "[Lochmuir salmon? It doesn't exist: How supermarkets invent places and farms to trick shoppers into buying premium food](#)").

In May 2015, Scottish Seafarms, Leroy and SalMar all withdrew from the [Global Salmon Initiative](#). In 2014 it was [revealed](#) that a humpback whale had been [killed in a salmon farm](#) operated by Scottish Seafarms off the Sound of Mull. Scottish Seafarms was [fined £333,335 in 2012](#) following the deaths of two salmon farm workers.



- #2: Hjaltland Seafarms (Grieg Seafood)

Hjaltland Seafarms, Shetland's largest salmon farmer, is owned by the Norwegian multinational [Grieg Seafood](#). Grieg Seafood (Hjaltland Seafarms) use the Soil Association logo on their [leaflets](#) and [brochures](#). Hjaltland Seafarms was [kicked out of the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation](#) in April 2014 for "importing smolts from Norway without putting them in quarantine".

In 2013, The Herald [reported](#): "Grieg Seafood, one of Scotland's big five salmon farmers, has lost one-third of its latest harvest to amoebic gill disease (AGD), the ailment that is set to cost the industry more than £30 million in lost revenue." In 2009, salmon farms operated by Hjaltland Seafarms were infected with the deadly virus with [Infectious Salmon Anaemia](#). Disease problems in Shetland cost Grieg Seafood over [£800,000](#) in the first three months of 2009.

In 2012, Grieg Seafood was charged under the Fisheries Act in Canada with nine counts of drowning sea lions or seals at its salmon farms in British Columbia – including the "[accidental drowning](#)" of 52 California sea lions and one Harbour seal.

- #3: Scottish Salmon Company

The Scottish Salmon Company is [owned](#) by Swiss and Norwegian banks. The Scottish Salmon Company withdrew from the [Global Salmon Initiative](#) in January 2015. In 2013 it was [revealed](#) that the Scottish Salmon Company was "facing growing difficulties winning public support for massive expansion plans after a concerned local community was labelled a "vipers nest" in a leaked company email".

- #4: Marine Harvest

Norwegian-owned [Marine Harvest](#) is the world's largest and Scotland's largest salmon farming company. In 2005, following [the slaughter of seals in Loch Alsh](#) 'Special of Area of Conservation', Marine Harvest claimed that the slaughter of seals was "a last resort". However, local tourist operator Nigel Smith [testified](#) that "their strategy appears to be to shoot every seal that comes anywhere near their cages."

In 2005, the Pure Salmon Campaign secured a [legal opinion](#) on a potential ban for imports of Scottish farmed salmon to the United States . In 2008, further evidence of killing of seals by [Marine Harvest Scotland](#) was [published](#) when two headless seals (including a pregnant female) were washed up near their farm in Loch Alsh.



- #5: Balta Island Seafare

Balta Island Seafare is believed to be [certified as organic by the Soil Association](#) (read a letter sent by GAAIA to the Soil Association on 30 August 2015 - [online here](#)).

Lobbying by the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation:

The Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation (SSPO) argued unsuccessfully back in 2012 (in a [letter addressed to the Scottish Government obtained via FOI](#)) that disclosure of the names of salmon farms killing seals would "have a direct impact....on the market success of their products":



Willie Cowan
Marine Scotland
Scottish Government
Victoria Quay 1-B
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

December 6th 2012

Dear Willie

Information Commissioner Decision 193/2012

Following the recent decision by the Information Commissioner to permit the disclosure of locations where seals have been shot at salmon farms, I have been asked to write to you on behalf of SSPO members.

Our membership is extremely dismayed by this decision and believes it will have a direct impact on the safety of their employees and on the market success of their products. Don Staniford stated in this week's media that "the consumer now has the opportunity to boycott salmon from the named farms".

Bearing this additional information in mind, SSPO member companies would expect the Scottish Government automatically to appeal this decision.

Could you please confirm that this is your intention?

Yours sincerely,

SCOTT LANDSBURGH
Chief Executive

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council Sanctions Seal-Killing:

The data also reveals that a Marine Harvest salmon farm in Loch Leven (FS0244) - [Scotland's only salmon farm currently certified by the Aquaculture Stewardship Council](#) or perhaps another Marine Harvest site close by - killed a common seal in October 2014 (the same month as an ASC audit):

Shamefully, the ASC farmed salmon standard permits the killing of seals and other marine mammals. The [ASC farmed salmon standards \(June 2012\)](#) actually specifies the number of "lethal incidents" permitted - with as many as eight animals including two marine mammals such as seals or sea lions allowed to be killed over a prior two year period!

Criterion 2.5 Interaction with wildlife, including predators²⁷

INDICATOR	STANDARD
2.5.6 Maximum number of lethal incidents ³⁵ on the farm over the prior two years	< 9 lethal incidents, ³⁶ with no more than two of the incidents being marine

³⁵ Lethal incident: Includes all lethal actions as well as entanglements or other accidental mortalities of non-salmonids.
³⁶ Standard 2.5.6 applicable to incidents related to non-endangered and non-red-listed species. This standard complements, and does not contradict, 2.5.3.

Final Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue Standards for the Aquaculture Stewardship Council, June 13, 2012

Read more via:
["The Abominable Salmon Council"](#)
["WWF Greenwashes Marine Harvest"](#).
["Killer Panda"](#)



No Freedom of Information At Freedom Food/RSPCA Assured:

RSPCA Assured/Freedom Food has stubbornly refused to name the salmon farms it certifies under the welfare scheme (read more via a [letter sent today](#)). Freedom Food told GAAIA in January 2015:

"Approximately 70 per cent of farmed Scottish Salmon is produced under Freedom Food. You will appreciate that due to data protection, we are unable to provide you with a list of Freedom Food approved salmon members. The number of seals shot on our farms, as a last resort, has significantly reduced over the last seven years and continues to do so year on year. We are unable to disclose the figures as they are submitted to us by our members, in confidence, for the benefit of developing the scheme."

The RSPCA's then Chief Executive, Gavin Grant, told GAAIA in July 2012:

"In 2008, 460 seals were shot at Freedom Food farms. This was totally unacceptable and led to our standards being re-written. In 2010 the number declined to 52, a reduction of 90 per cent. In 2011, this figure was further reduced to 46".

[Note that the figure for 46 dead seals in 2011 was upgraded to 61 during a Radio 4 broadcast on 18 October 2012: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01nbqzc>]

The Daily Telegraph [reported](#) in April 2015:

"More than a quarter of the seals killed along the nation's coastline last year were shot by RSPCA-accredited fish farmers. In Scotland alone, 205 seals are known to have been legally killed to protect stocks of salmon and other fish. Of those, 52 were shot by the animal welfare charity's Freedom Food initiative, which is dedicated to improving conditions for farm animals."

According to the latest [Scottish Government annual survey of fish farms](#) there were 145 active salmon farms in 2013. If RSPCA Assured/Freedom Food certify 70% then the number of RSPCA Assured/Freedom Food-certified salmon farms is in the region of 100.

Wester Ross Fisheries boast of their RSPCA/Freedom Food certification via their [web-site](#). Loch Duart also boasts of their RSPCA/Freedom Food certification via their [web-site](#). Grieg Seafood also claims to be both RSPCA/Freedom Food certified and organically certified on their [web-site](#).

According to the data disclosed by the Scottish Government: Wester Ross Fisheries killed three seals in 2014; Loch Duart killed eight seals in 2014; and Grieg Seafood (owners of Hjalmland Seafarms) killed six seals in 2014 and a staggering 30 in 2013.

Read more via:

["Mass seal slaughter as RSPCA opts to protect fish farms"](#)

["Freedom Foods 'failing to crack down' on poor salmon farming standards"](#)

["RSPCA Freedom Food fish farmers killing seals"](#)

In 2008, The Guardian reported via ["RSPCA warns Scottish salmon farmers to shoot fewer seals"](#):

"Salmon farmers could be expelled from one of the UK's leading animal welfare schemes if they continue shooting seals in large numbers, after scientists warned that common seals are suffering a catastrophic decline. The RSPCA is to warn more than 80 fish farms that are members of its Freedom Foods welfare accreditation scheme that they must curb the practice or face losing their valuable membership of the scheme. The retailer Sainsbury's has also promised it will phase out suppliers associated with seal shooting after the Guardian revealed that common seal numbers fell by a quarter last year in some parts of the UK and by 50% over the past five years in others."

Marks & Spencer's Fake Farmed Salmon:

Marks & Spencer (M&S) source exclusively from Scottish Seafarms (the #1 seal killer in Scottish salmon farming) via the [fake brand 'Lochmuir'](#) (read more via "[Lochmuir salmon? It doesn't exist: How supermarkets invent places and farms to trick shoppers into buying premium food](#)"). However, M&S claim on their [web-site](#) that:

"Our exclusively farmed Lochmuir™ Salmon is specially grown for M&S using a unique feed and award winning farms. The farms are all audited to Marks & Spencer specifications enabling us to give our customers assurances on animal welfare, food safety, and quality. The husbandry of fish is also approved by RSPCA Freedom Food, representing the best possible standards of care. Together with our suppliers we have developed detailed Codes of Practice, which insist on the highest standards of animal welfare, food safety and quality throughout the animal's life."

M&S claim to bring consumers "the best of Scottish":



The story behind our superior Lochmuir™ Salmon

Three years ago, M&S began working with Scottish Sea Farms. In response to our customers' needs, we were looking for a superior tasting, healthy fish that still met concerns about sustainability, animal welfare and the environment. The result is our exclusive Lochmuir™ Scottish salmon.



What makes this salmon so special?

The salmon are reared on a unique natural diet of fish meal and oil from well managed fisheries, that doesn't contain any artificial colour. Scottish Sea Farms work with RSPCA Freedom Foods to make sure that their salmon are cared for according to the very highest welfare standards and can be fully traced back to source.



Why Scottish Sea Farms?

Scottish Sea Farms operate across the west coast of Scotland and the northern isles of Shetland, where conditions are ideal for rearing first-class Atlantic salmon.

As innovative industry leaders who respect the environment, they were a perfect partner for M&S and we now have an exclusive supply agreement with them, which began in September 2006. This farmer-retailer relationship is the first of its kind and lets us both focus on exceeding customer expectations. Robert Macdonald, Marine Farm Manager at SSF Loch Creran Marine Farms says "The quality of the fish that we are growing is the best in the market - it can't be anything but with the level of care and attention, and the raw materials used. We feel proud to produce such a high quality product."



Read leaflet above [online here](#)

But surely Scottish Seafarms is the worst not best in Scotland (as judged by the number of seals killed - read "[Appendix: Companies, Regions & Sites](#)" and "[Appendix: Source Data - Seal Killing Return Forms Submitted by Salmon Farms](#)")?

For more details read a letter sent today (30 August 2015) to supermarkets - [online here](#)

The Public Do Not Want to Buy" Seal-Unfriendly" Salmon:

A poll conducted in 2009 revealed that the majority of people in the UK believe that supermarkets should refuse to buy farmed salmon from companies which kill seals:

58% believe that High Street retailers should not buy salmon from any suppliers that kill UK seals' with only 15% disagreeing.

52% of people buying salmon products said they would be prepared to pay more for them to stop UK seals being killed, with only 17% disagreeing. 61% of women polled said they would be prepared to pay more.

“With the majority of people supporting a change in the law to protect seals and believing that High Street retailers should not buy salmon from producers that shoot seals, the tide is turning against the routine killing of our seals” said Andy Ottaway of the Seal Protection Action Group, “Even in these harsh economic times over half of the salmon buying public said they would be prepared to pay more for salmon products to stop seals being killed”.

Read more via "[New poll shows UK public want salmon without seal killings](#)"

Read more via GAAIA's "[Killing Farms](#)" and Don Staniford's blog "[The Killers](#)"

[Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture](#), 30 August 2015