

THE SUNDAY TIMES PART ONE: SPACE

# Salmon farms 'pollute' coast

S1 9.9.12

Mark Macaskill

DOZENS of salmon farms around the Scottish coastline have been dumping unacceptable levels of pollution into the sea, it has emerged.

The impact of Scotland's £500m aquaculture industry, which supplies many of Britain's top chefs including Rick Stein and Gordon Ramsay, is revealed in more than 300 seabed surveys which have been released by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (Sepa).

The surveys, carried out over the past three years, cover more than 250 fish farms run by 23 companies. Some of the sites were surveyed more than once.

Officials at Sepa classified 137 of the surveys (44%) as unsatisfactory, indicating high levels of organic matter, such as fish faeces and uneaten food, on the sea bed.

Such waste, if allowed to accumulate, can disrupt biodiversity by killing off flora and fauna.

A further 64 sites (21%) were deemed as borderline — defined as close to having an unsustainable impact on the environment — and 106 of the sites (34%) were labelled satisfactory.

The surveys do not cover all of Scotland's 450 or so fish farms, but they suggest that seabed pollution is "unsatisfactory" at up to 20% of farms.

This is because only about 250 sites actively rear fish at any one time and, last year, 43 were found by Sepa to be breaching environmental guidelines. About 30 other farms are graded as "borderline", according to Sepa officials.

The findings have prompted fresh criticism of aquaculture as a "dirty industry" and

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►► Continued from page 1 renewed calls for chefs to boycott the product.

However, last week Stein and Ramsay declined to comment on the subject.

In December 2010, after a survey of a farm owned by Lakeland Marine Farms Ltd in Argyll, Sepa officials issued a warning that "measures should be taken to reduce the severe environmental impacts at this site".

The same year, Lighthouse Caledonia, now part of the Scottish Salmon Company, was warned that fish cages at its Strone Point farm, also in Argyll, were "significantly overstocked by 63%".

In 2009, a sea bed survey at the company's Ardyne fish farm prompted a Sepa official to say: "The deterioration of the sea bed at this site is some cause for concern."

Last year, the Scottish Salmon Company was told to reduce the tonnage of fish farmed at its Quarry Point site after a survey revealed "severe environmental degradation".

According to the Sepa documents, the firms with the poorest records included Wester Ross Fisheries. They show 70% of the company's reports were classed as unsatisfactory, 30% were borderline.

Of the surveys around sites run by Loch Duart — which, according to its website, supplies Rick Stein's Seafood Restaurant in Cornwall and Gordon Ramsay's Maze restaurant in London — 68% of them were classed as unsatisfactory, while 26% were borderline and 6% were satisfactory.

The documents show some companies have been asked to consider reducing the scale of their operation or introducing "fallow" periods to ease their environmental impact.

The Salmon and Trout Association (S&TA), which obtained details of the surveys under a freedom of information request, said the industry's expansion in Scotland was a cause for concern.

There is growing demand for farmed salmon, fuelling the growth of fish farms. Last year, the value of exports of Scottish salmon America reached £211m, an increase of 36%.

"This report is a damning indictment of the salmon farming industry and makes a mockery of its claims that it always operates in harmony with the wider environment," said Hughie Campbell-Adamson, chairman of the S&TA.

"It throws into doubt whether the current expansion



**Loch Duart supplies Stein**

plans in open-cage systems can ever be environmentally sustainable."

Scott Landsburgh, the chief executive of the Scottish Salmon Producers' Organisation, pointed out that 87% of Scotland's 451 fish farms had received "excellent" or "good" assessments from Sepa last year.

Nick Joy, the managing director of Loch Duart, admitted that some sites had "not been performing to our standards" but insisted the company was striving to improve.

Wester Ross Fisheries declined to comment.

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The Sunday Times, 9 September 2012

# Dirty secrets down on the salmon farm

**CHARLES  
CLOVER**



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**Y**ou have to credit the people who sell Scottish farmed salmon. They deserve their awards — for marketing. They have managed to convince us that their product in the supermarket is just as good as the wild thing and comes from clear, unpolluted waters with tidal flows that produce strong and healthy fish.

All suggestions that salmon are kept like battery chickens in cages that foul the natural environment, have their flesh dyed, are prone to disease and are treated regularly with chemicals to remove parasites that have finished off wild sea trout and salmon — well, these slurs belong to the past. Tesco's website gives the common line taken by the supermarkets: "Farm assurance standards have been introduced to ensure the fish remain healthy and have minimal impact on the environment."

I must also tell you that the moon is made of cheese and that there is a small bar in Memphis, Tennessee, where a heavily disguised Elvis Presley sneaks in sometimes to sing. What persuaded us to believe the claims made for Scottish salmon? Business leaders, politicians and officials in Scotland have conspired to perpetuate the myth that salmon farming has no impact on the environment. Alex Salmond, the first minister, recently claimed salmon farming was capable of vast expansion to satisfy growing demand from China.

The reality about salmon farming's impact on the environment is rather different. Occasionally the mask slips, as it has with the disclosure under freedom of information rules of official figures

**'THE WORST SALMON FARMS ARE KILLING ALL LIFE OTHER THAN MANURE WORMS'**

showing that sea bed pollution is "unsatisfactory" at 16%-20% of all active Scottish salmon farms and "borderline" at 10%-12% more. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (Sepa) has accepted that the figures published by the Salmon and Trout Association's lawyers are correct and that

"unsatisfactory" farms are killing all forms of life, other than marine manure worms, underneath the fish cages and sometimes far into the sea lochs where they are tethered.

The discovery that quite so many Scottish salmon farms are toxic with ordure affects their reputation all over the world. The two companies with the highest number of unsatisfactory reports were Wester Ross Fisheries — winner of an award for environmental stewardship from the Crown Estate last year — and Loch Duart, which bills itself as the "sustainable salmon company" and supplies Gordon Ramsay at Claridge's and Rick Stein's Seafood Restaurant in Padstow.

Nick Joy, managing director of Loch Duart, protests that the association's figures don't give the full picture: for instance, he fallows all his sites for one year in every three to reduce cumulative pollution and parasite problems. He is also reducing stocking levels at sites that fail Sepa's tests.

The Scottish Salmon Producers' Organisation pooh-poohs the figures. Scott Landsburgh, its chief executive, says: "Numerous time-consuming freedom of information requests and then taking raw data out of context to suit lobbying purposes is an abuse of taxpayers' money — this must stop!" The data reveal a truth he doesn't like, so he would like them suppressed by the Scottish state.

I am not against fish farming. But the reality is that if salmon farming were any other industry it would be required to use the best available technology to protect the environment. If it were pig farming, a comparable industry, farms would be issued with an enforcement notice and threatened with closure if their untreated effluent was found to be polluting watercourses. Open-cage salmon farming is highly polluting. And technology has moved on. Closed-containment production in tanks — floating and on land — has been tested and shown to be vastly more environmentally friendly.

A Norwegian firm, Niri Seafood, has installed tanks on land in Bantry Bay, southwest Ireland, which it says will produce salmon this year at a lower cost than sea cages. The world's largest salmon farmer, Marine Harvest, is planning a facility there too. Costs are lower because you don't need boats, or toxic chemicals to make the parasitic sea lice fall off (water is filtered as it enters the tanks to prevent infestation), and the salmon droppings can be siphoned off and used for fertiliser. Why does Scotland not spend some of the millions of pounds of EU money it receives for salmon farming on developing cleaner fish-farming technology? The only explanation can be that Scotland's salmon farmers see no need: their "light touch" regulatory system, and cronyism with ministers, has proved highly profitable.

It is now clear that these profits are made at untold cost to the marine environment. We knew whole river systems had been denuded of sea trout and salmon. We can now see that pollution exists on such a scale that shellfish, fish and other marine life are being poisoned. Expansion of the industry will only make these things worse. Scottish salmon farmers should be told that in five years' time sea cages will be banned. There should be a deadline, a road map and government help to get from here to there.

If Salmond is too beholden to vested interests to act, the time has come for the supermarkets and their customers to insist Scottish salmon farmers clean up their disgusting mess.

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<https://acs.thesundaytimes.co.uk/?gotoUrl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.thesundaytimes.co.uk%2Fsto%2Fcomment%2Fcolumns%2Fcharlesclover%2Farticle1121415.ece>

# Salmon farms turn sea bed into graveyard

**Mark Macaskill**

DOZENS of salmon farms around the Scottish coastline have been dumping unacceptable levels of pollutants into the sea.

The impact of Scotland's £500m aquaculture industry, which supplies many of Britain's top chefs, including Rick Stein and Gordon Ramsay, is revealed in the results of sea bed surveys released by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (Sepa).

The surveys, carried out over the past three years, cover more than 250 fish farms run by 23 companies. Some farms have been surveyed more than once. Sepa classed 137 of the surveys (44%) as unsatisfactory, indicating high levels of organic matter, such as fish faeces and uneaten food, on the sea bed.

Such waste can disrupt

and 30% were borderline. Of the surveys of sites run by Loch Duart — which, according to its website, supplies Stein's Seafood Restaurant in Padstow, Cornwall, and Ramsay's Maze in London — 68% were unsatisfactory.

The Salmon and Trout Association (STA), which obtained the surveys under freedom of information laws,

  
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said the industry's expansion in Scotland was a concern.



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Salmon & Trout Association, 5 September 2012



### **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 FOI, 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 practised 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.....minimise 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.

ENDS

**Attached:** [S&TA Organic Pollution Report August 2012 pdf](#)

Issued on behalf of the Salmon & Trout Association Scotland by Andrew Graham-Stewart (telephone 01863 766767 or 07812 981531).

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## **Note to Editors**

The Salmon & Trout Association (S&TA) was established in 1903 to address the damage done to our rivers by the polluting effects of the Industrial Revolution. For 109 years, the S&TA has worked to protect fisheries, fish stocks and the wider aquatic environment on behalf of game angling and fisheries. S&TA has charitable status in both England and Scotland. S&TA's charitable objectives empower it to address all issues affecting fish and the aquatic environment, supported by strong scientific evidence from its scientific network. Its charitable status enable it to take the widest possible remit in protecting salmonid fish stocks, and the aquatic environment upon which they depend. [www.salmon-trout.org](http://www.salmon-trout.org)

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[http://www.salmon-trout.org/news\\_item.asp?news\\_id=227](http://www.salmon-trout.org/news_item.asp?news_id=227)