



organic farmed salmon?

Increasingly conscientious chefs and consumers are choosing organic products as a way to ensure their health and the environment are protected. Unfortunately, when you see the term organic on farmed salmon you cannot be sure that you are making a better choice.

In Canada and the United States organic standards for fish such as salmon that are raised in open net-cages and require wild fish in their feed have not been accepted by national organic programs.¹ Without national approval farmed salmon should not be sold as organic.

However, “organic” farmed salmon is appearing in restaurants and supermarkets in both the US and Canada. These products are either making unsubstantiated claims or are being imported from countries that allow certain practices, such as the use of open net-cages and the administra-

tion of chemicals to control parasites and diseases, that do not meet consumer expectations of what the organic label should mean.

While some types of farm-raised seafood can meet organic principles, there are too few substantial differences between conventional farmed salmon and that labeled as “organic”.²

Does this sound organic to you?

- No control over inputs entering the farm;
- No waste control mechanisms, waste is indiscriminately dispersed into the ocean;
- Transfer of sea lice from farmed and wild fish known to put wild salmon at risk;³
- The entanglement and drowning of dolphins, seals and sea lions in fish farm nets;⁴
- Carnivorous fish that use more wild fish for feed than farmed fish produced, increasing the pressure on already diminishing global wild fish populations; and
- Innate migratory behaviour being denied.

COASTAL ALLIANCE FOR AQUACULTURE REFORM

David Suzuki Foundation • Friends of Clayoquot Sound • Georgia Strait Alliance • Living Oceans Society
Musgamagw Tsawataineuk Tribal Council • Raincoast Conservation Society • Raincoast Research
T. Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation • Watershed Watch Salmon Society
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In the United Kingdom, the Soil Association chose to permanently certify farmed salmon using standards that still allowed all of the problems listed above to persist. In response, the chairman Lawrence Woodward resigned from his position stating: “Salmon farming in cages has nothing at all to do with organic principles. It is very regrettable that the Soil Association has gone down this line of trying to certify something that is so distant from the principles.”⁵



Questioning organic farmed salmon in London, England.
Photo: The Salmon Farm Protest Group, Scotland

Rather than modifying organic standards to fit the needs of salmon farming, the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform is working to improve the sustainability of the industry as a whole by fostering a transition from open net-cages to closed containment systems. Closed containment technology would eliminate many of the environmental problems associated with open net-cage fish farms such as escapes, spread of sea lice, and interactions with marine predators that organic aquaculture standards cannot adequately address.



¹ In a vote 13 to 1, the United States Department of Agriculture’s National Organic Standards Board voted on March 29, 2007 to temporarily exclude from US organic standards fish raised in open net-cages and farmed fish that eat wild fish feed.

² Data obtained from the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency by the US-based National Environmental Trust reveals that all “organic” salmon farms discharged significant quantities of untreated waste and some used chemicals and experienced fish escapes.

³ cf. Krkosek, M., M.A. Lewis, A. Morton, L.N. Frazer and J.P. Volpe. (2006). Epizootics of wild fish induced by farmed fish. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA*. 103:15506-15510.

⁴ A total of 110 sea lions drowned from January to April of 2007 in the nets of Creative Salmon located in Clayoquot Sound, British Columbia.

⁵ British Broadcasting Corporation News. (2006). *Concern Over Organic Salmon Farms*. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/5409434.stm>

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