

RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

SALMON FARMING IN SCOTLAND

SUBMISSION FROM THE BRITISH TROUT ASSOCIATION

The British Trout Association (BTA) is pleased to have the opportunity of submitting its views to the Committee's enquiry on Salmon farming in Scotland.

The marine farming sector of the trout industry is clearly significantly smaller in scale than the salmon farming sector, however although some of the issues facing both species are shared, there are equally considerable differences.

The salmon farming sector has grown significantly over recent decades, continually improving its efficiency and reducing its environmental impact, a positive record of progress whilst expanding production volumes to around 170,000 tonnes per year. Both sectors operate to the standards of the Code of Good Practice which addresses compliance to the high standards required by customers around the world – the trout sector in addition has its own quality assurance scheme, QT UK.

Focusing on fish health, trout do not suffer from all the same diseases as affect salmon and are more tolerant of sea lice. In general, Scottish trout farms are owned and operated by locally based SMEs, companies that operate their farms with more caution, including normally lower stocking densities and volumes of fish which helps to reduce stress on the fish, lower disease and parasite issues and reduce the impact of the farms on the environment. In summary, marine trout farming does not face the same range of fish health and environmental challenges as the salmon farming sector.

Rainbow trout cannot cross breed with either Brown trout or salmon, which removes the possibility of genetic contamination of native stocks. Escapes from the trout farming sector are limited, with only 12,099 fish lost from 7 incidents recorded in the Marine Scotland annual production survey over the past 5 years. The only possible issue of concern might be that of competition for food in the immediate locality as Rainbow trout are not migratory.

Although not of the same scale as the salmon sector, as noted above, marine reared trout has a niche position in Scottish aquaculture and enjoys a 'demand-led' market situation – we expect production to expand from around 4,000 tonnes/year to some 10,000 tonnes/year by the 2020-30 period, with a first sale value of c. £50 - £70 million and providing 300 – 500 direct jobs, a not insignificant contribution both to rural communities and through the multiplier effect to the wider Scottish economy. In order to achieve this ambition, the marine trout sector will require access to additional sites, and this in turn will require improvements to the current permitting and regulatory processes.

The British Trout Association
April 2018