

RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

SALMON FARMING IN SCOTLAND

SUBMISSION FROM CHRISTOPHER COX

I am a recreational angler and travel from South Africa to Scotland annually. I rent a car, stay in hotels/B&B's, pay fishing fees, pay for a ghillie and contribute approximately GBP 10'000 annually to the Scottish economy. Given the state of salmon farming in Scotland, I have decided to stop this holiday from 2018 and will look for alternative fishing destinations to spend money and time on my passion.

1. Do you have any general views on the current state of the farmed salmon industry in Scotland?

The evidence for the environmental damage caused by commercial salmon fishing is overwhelming and the obfuscation has to stop. The only sustainable way forward is to on-shore the farms and contain the chemical and parasitic fall-out from farms.

2. There have been several recent reports which suggest how the farmed salmon industry might be developed. Do you have any views on action that might be taken to help the sector grow in the future?

High density farming practices require more hormones and antibiotics than more "extensive" type farms. The health benefits from farmed salmon are a myth – in fact farmed fish contain many carcinogenic compounds and several countries have banned the import of farmed Scottish salmon. It seems that only the demand from China is keeping this disastrous practice from continuing.

3. The farmed salmon industry is currently managing a range of fish health and environmental challenges. Do you have any views on how these might be addressed?

The steady decline of wild salmon numbers is a clear indication that something has to change – and it is very clear that this has to involve on-shoring of farms leading to lower chemical inputs leading to a better product.

4. Do you feel that the current national collection of data on salmon operations and fish health and related matters is adequate?

No! There is no independent verification, or consistency in any of the statistics released by government, or salmon farm sponsored research. Only until independently verified statistics will there be any credibility to the numbers.

5. Do you have any views on whether the regulatory regime which applies to the farmed salmon industry is sufficiently robust?

There is currently no effective regulatory regime, and the fact that privately raised funds are tackling this issue underscores how ineffective any regulation has been.

6. Do you have any comments on how the UK's departure from the European Union might impact on the farmed salmon sector?

No idea.

In conclusion, the decline in wild salmon numbers is inescapable and the consequence of this is that the industry has to change – if it is not too late, it is getting close to being so.

Christopher Cox
April 2018