

RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

SALMON FARMING IN SCOTLAND

SUBMISSION FROM JOHN WILLIAMSON, GENERAL MANAGER SKRETTING UK LTD

I firmly believe that the rhetoric surrounding the impact of salmon farming and sea lice on wild salmon and sea trout populations on the West Coast of Scotland is a convenient reaction or excuse, without any scientific basis to a long term trend (pre-dating commercial fish farming) of declining wild fish numbers.

Salmon farming is an integral part of the community infrastructure on the West Coast of Scotland supporting not only direct and indirect employment, but also schools and other community services.

The simple facts surrounding the Scottish salmon farming are as follows:-

- Scottish Salmon production is >160k tonnes per annum
- Salmon is Scotland and the UK's largest food export, valued at £600m in 2017
- Scottish salmon farming supports >10,000 jobs in Scotland and the rural Highland communities, providing an income of >£270m per annum
- Investment in new technology and R&D is being supported across the wider supply chain to meet industry growth objectives and challenges

Indeed, Skretting UK Ltd, based at Invergordon, Ross-shire is a major feed producer for the salmon aquaculture industry as well as other fish species. The feed mill provides direct employment for 60 employees and many more indirect jobs in the transport, engineering and service industry sectors. We are actively involved in the local community supporting educational initiatives at the Invergordon Academy to promote a wider understanding of the industry we are committed to and support.

As a business we have invested millions of pounds to provide both technological and performance improvements in feed to drive improvements in fish performance and fish health to support the Scottish aquaculture industry's sustainable growth strategy.

As the Scottish aquaculture industry is still relatively young and has had to overcome many challenges to achieve the global reputation it has today. To achieve this there has been significant investment to drive husbandry improvements in feeding and feed delivery technology, pen design, vaccine development and pathogen control to optimise performance and environmental impact.

There will always be a vocal brigade who oppose the salmon farming industry for the decline in wild fish, but the fact remains that salmon farming in Scotland has transformed the rural communities on the West Coast of Scotland and it is therefore of vital importance that all parties work together to support the sustainable development and future growth of aquaculture in Scotland.

John Williamson, General Manager Skretting UK Ltd
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