

RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

SALMON FARMING IN SCOTLAND

SUBMISSION FROM MARK NORTH

Salmon Farm Employee

I live on a remote Orkney island and work for an organic salmon producing farm. I have been working on these sites for a little over 8 years. Since arriving to the island some 10 years ago I have witnessed first hand the benefits to the local community of the expansion of fish farming operations in our waters. A large percentage of our population are now involved both directly and indirectly with fish farming operations, we are soon to expand further into deeper waters and again there will be further employment opportunities. These jobs without doubt have had a positive knock on effect to the islands other businesses with the decent wages that are spent locally, without which there would certainly be a proportion of employers no longer operating, or at reduced manpower at the very least.

As for the farming sites themselves I have regularly witnessed visits from many species of marine wildlife and birdlife. Whales and dolphins are frequent visitors to our local waters and are often seen close to or around our sites. Wild fish stocks are clearly seen around our sites and also our contracted divers note large numbers of different mollusks on our sea beds. Our cages are used daily by Shags, Cormorants, Divers, Long-tailed and Eider ducks, to name the more common, as roosts between fishing / hunting forays. We are one of few sites that haven't needed to medicate or treat for sea lice and, personally I believe that this is down to the low density of other fish farming operations within close proximity to our own. All this being said, I strongly believe that proper and stringent environmental controls are vital for the long term sustainability of this industry. The 'old ways' of fish farming are no longer acceptable and the environmental controls continually evolving have improved things dramatically. If salmon farming operations are to increase throughout Scotland and the product is to retain its recognised 'quality brand' there needs to be close cooperation with environmental agencies / ngo's to develop further improvements and, in doing so, increase consumer perception of an environmentally friendly, high welfare farmed product. If we can begin to lead the way through the latter then I believe it would further enhance our 'quality brand' globally.

Mark North
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