

## **RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE**

### **SALMON FARMING IN SCOTLAND**

#### **SUBMISSION FROM WESTER ROSS FISHERIES LTD**

**Wester Ross Fisheries Ltd. are founder members of the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation and fully support their submission. Our contribution reflects our views only, and are in addition to the views expressed in the SSPO submission.**

#### **Background**

Wester Ross has been the largest private-sector employer in Ullapool for over 30 years; we employ a total of 55- 60 staff in Ross-shire. Currently exporting 73 % of our annual sales, and most of our remaining UK sales are within the Highlands & Islands, mainly selling to salmon smokers; who are all adding significant value to the Highlands & Islands economy.

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

The Salmon Farming is an outstanding economic success story; which the Scottish Government can be very proud of; and it is important that this Enquiry creates a regulatory environment which encourages Scottish Salmon Farming to reach it's full potential. Scotland's salmon farming industry is ideally placed to support the Scottish Government's global ambitions. Scotland has the opportunity to be at the forefront of this leading global industry; this enquiry needs to assist salmon farmers to reach their full potential.

A former chairman of the Highlands & Islands Development Board credited Scottish Salmon Farming with achieving the greatest ever return on public sector investment; Scottish Government support can build on this excellent start.

Since 2016, the sales value of Scottish Salmon has been greater than the landed value of the whole UK fishing industry; a truly remarkable achievement in less than 50 years.

#### **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?**

We welcome an appropriate level of regulation which addresses legitimate evidence-based environmental concerns. Salmon farming in Scotland is a relatively young industry, and it's development must not be hindered by a costly regulatory framework which will adversely affect our competitive position in world markets. Our export activity is strongly supported by Scottish Development, and their 32 overseas offices; and the domestic policy must support the industry's ambition and potential to meet this increasing global demand.

**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?**

Since the early 1970's the industry has always been challenged by issues, largely as a result of rising seawater temperatures and the emergence of new diseases. The industry have always found sustainable solutions; as a result of considerable investment and innovation. It is crucial this enquiry allows the regulatory regime for this to continue, encouraging solutions to be identified which allow improved overall performance, and industry growth. The more recent challenges the industry has faced are more linked to environmental changes in the oceans, so the industry needs to have access to many different approaches.

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

Yes – provided the regulators take an accurate holistic approach when making decisions based on all the available farm data.

Since the Freedom of Information Act 2000 was implemented, the critics and concerned parties have been able to access an unprecedented level of salmon farming data, which in many cases has been misinterpreted and cited as evidence to support the many anti-salmon farm campaigns.

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

Regulation of the salmon farming sector is very robust, and this helps to give our valued customers even more confidence in our salmon; Scotland is leading the world in regulation; however the cost v benefit must always be considered in future proposed regulation. We would encourage a more holistic approach to regulation, combining a number of the required licences to promote more joined up regulation. Over reliance on the precautionary principle needs to be avoided in the regulatory regime.

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

In any future trade agreement with the EU it is essential that UK immigration policy reflects the need to safeguard current EU nationals in our industry and continues to allow recruitment of the people and skills required; 95 % of our processing staff originate from Eastern Europe, and we have experienced significant recruitment challenges since the referendum vote, in common with all food processing businesses in Scotland.

Wester Ross Fisheries Ltd  
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