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Animal Concern Advice Line (ACAL) is a recognised Scottish charity: No. SC030982.
Animal Concern Advice Line was established in 2001 to take on the charitable work of Animal
Concern which was founded as the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society in 1876.
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Co-op Group
Customer Careline
Freepost MR 9473
Manchester M4 8BA

FTAO: Steve Murrells (Chief Executive), Allan Leighton (Board Chairperson) and Jo
Whitfield, (Chief Executive, Food).

Dear Mr. Murrells,

I'd be grateful if you would copy this message to Mr. Leighton and Ms Whitfield as I
cannot find e-mail details for them.

I write concerning the use of the word "sustainable" when referring to salmon
products sold in Co-op Food outlets. In the last couple of weeks I read the following
on some sandwich packs for sale in two Scottish Co-op Food stores.

On a Well & Good range tuna and cucumber sandwich pack it was stated; "We make
our sandwiches using responsibly sourced fish and shellfish. That means pole and
line caught tuna and prawns and Scottish smoked salmon from sustainable
sources."

On a prawn and mayonnaise sandwich pack it was stated; "We make our
sandwiches and wraps using responsibly sourced fish and shellfish. That means
pole and line caught tuna and prawns and Scottish smoked salmon from sustainable
sources."

I have been monitoring the Scottish salmon farming industry for over 30 years and I
have yet to find a farm which has found a way to raise salmon sustainably. To
produce one tonne of saleable salmon product you need to feed the farmed fish
anything between two and a half and five tonnes of wild-caught fish which results in
depletion of already scarce wild fish stocks. This conversion rate does not take into
account the problem of huge numbers of morts caused by disease, parasites and
poor handling. In one year this has amounted to over 10 million dead fish. The
Scottish salmon farming industry have to transport these casualty fish to toxic waste

disposal facilities which can be well over a hundred miles from where the carcasses are brought ashore.

There are also sustainability issues over the way salmon farms deal with parasites such as sealice which cause extreme suffering and death by literally eating farmed salmon alive. These lice accumulate in unnaturally huge numbers due to the unnatural high concentration of salmon within the cage nets on the farms.

The lice not only attack caged salmon, they also feed on migratory wild salmon and seatrout as they pass close to or underneath the salmon cages. This is a particular problem for young salmon and seatrout as they migrate to sea for the first time. Infestation by sealice related to salmon farming is thought to kill large numbers of young salmon and seatrout and many people believe this is a major contributory factor in the vast depletion of wild salmon and seatrout which started with the introduction of salmon farming in the 1970s and has increased substantially as the salmon farming industry has greatly expanded.

To counter the sealice problem salmon farmers have two main weapons. One is the use of various pesticides to kill the parasites. The problem with this is that those same pesticides can be lethal to creatures such as the spat of shellfish. This not only depletes shellfish numbers it damages the very bottom line of the marine food chain.

A greener method of dealing with sealice is to use cleaner fish such as wrasse to eat the lice. Sadly that has not proven to be as green a solution as it has been painted as tens of thousands of wild-caught wrasse have been imported live from the south of England and put into the salmon farm cages. This may be causing an imbalance in the marine ecosystem off the southern English coast. Many of these imported wrasse have been seen dead amongst salmon morts, some apparently having succumbed to infestation by the sealice they were brought in to kill.

A third and newer technique for killing sealice is the Thermolicer. The idea being to heat the water around the salmon to circa 60c at which time the sealice die and drop off. Regrettably large numbers of salmon have been poached alive during such treatments.

Another problem is damage caused to the seabed under and adjacent to salmon farms. A large salmon farm can produce as much faeces as the population of a small town. Salmon excrement, perhaps containing chemicals and medications, does not get treated in a sewage farm. It drops to the seabed where it accumulates and kills off any natural flora and fauna.

A major salmon farming company recently decided to stop referring to its Scottish produce as “sustainable”. This followed intervention by the Advertising Standards Authority. You will find full details here:

<https://theferret.scot/loch-duart-sustainable-advertising/>

If Co-op Food have in fact discovered the Holy Grail of aquaculture, a salmon farm in Scotland providing a truly and provably sustainable product, I would be grateful if you would provide me with full details.

If not I, as a long-time supporter of the co-operative movement, ask you to take immediate steps to remove any reference to sustainability from your salmon products.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,
Animal Concern Advice Line