

Salmon farming causes negative environmental impacts, but the exact nature and degree of this is sometimes unclear due to the lack of reporting of data or a lack of transparency and accessibility to that data. The Best Fishes project highlights the environmental impact of Scottish salmon farming, from the use of chemical treatments to the waste products of the fish. Increased monitoring, reporting and transparency, is needed to inform and drive action to minimise the impact of salmon farming practices on the marine environment.

Fidra acknowledges that there has been progress to establish responsible sourcing processes in Scottish salmon farming conducted between government, industry and retailers in the UK. However, consumers are often left out of this conversation. In Scotland there is an extensive amount of data publicly available on salmon farming, however this data needs to be more accessible

Consumer Research

Consumer research shows that **most consumers look for the supermarket's own 'responsibly sourced' labels/certification logos when considering which salmon product to purchase**¹ (43%). Possible reasons for this include (a) the consumers not only trust but believe the responsibility of certification lies with the retailer, or/and (b) the consumer is not aware of what the other certification schemes mean, or/and (c) certification logos and other important information are not visible on packaging. Some retailers stated they do not include other certification scheme logos on their own brand salmon products, even if the farm they are sourcing from has multiple accreditations. Therefore, consumers are relying solely upon information of product quality and value provided by retailers. Further to this, in the UK retailer's own brands are mature and cover a large range of price points making them a significant influencer across the market². Therefore, it is disappointing that **only 6% of consumers know Scottish salmon is farmed in the UK**¹.

Consumers want more information to be available to them; 83% of consumers wanting the Scottish salmon farm on the label of products¹.

Price is continuously valued as one of the most important factors when making a purchasing choice^{1,3,4}. This is one of the reasons retailers believe consumers don't want more transparent information on the products they purchase^{4,5}. However, most research fails to consider the psychological influence of a variety of environment cues, which has an influence on the consumers product selection^{3,6,7}. For example, Deloitte's most recent survey on sustainable consumer's found affordability (52%) as a primary reason why people have not adopted a more sustainable lifestyle⁷. Whilst 48% of consumers felt they did not have enough information to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle. Further to this, sociodemographic factors, particularly age and household income influence decision making^{6,7}. In the UK since COP26 took place, consumers are more aware than ever of their purchasing decisions⁸. A European wide survey (>17,000 consumers) found that despite price often seen as the most important parameter dictating consumer choice it was less important than health. The study found on average 60% of consumers would choose health over affordability⁹.

Trust in retailers could disappear without transparency as consumers begin to rely more on the

internet and social media for their news¹⁰, brand¹¹ and health information¹². Consumers have quick access to information regardless of its credibility, retailers are in a unique position to share reputable information. Seventy percent of consumers expressed a desire to have more information on health and environmental impacts accessible via food packaging¹. Fidra is supportive of retailers who are promoting more transparent practices; however, more must be done.

Conclusion & recommendations

To support consumers and to ensure the industry is accountable across the supply chain, retailers must be proactive in improving traceability, transparency and reducing the environmental impacts of Scottish salmon farming:

1. **Retailers label all own brand Scottish salmon products with the name of the source farm, regardless of price point.** Having the name of the source farm on the label and/or a QR code, barcode or equivalent link through to more information to farm level
2. **Show support for a real time salmon farming dashboard that provides information to consumers down to farm-level.** Accessible, transparent, real-time information on environmental and sustainability issues available on a farm-by-farm basis online, would enable all to make informed choices.
3. **A commitment to all transparency schemes.** With Sustainable Seafood Coalition members to actively report/show they are working towards best practice.
4. **Retailers ensure they source their salmon from producers that meet the strictest regulatory and certification standards.** Salmon should at minimum have an Excellent regulatory compliance record including Good or Excellent benthic survey results. Retailers should also be striving to source products that meet all the strictest criteria available through certification.
5. **Up to date and accessible information on retailer websites.** This promotes the retailers' efforts to ensure best practice from their suppliers as well as themselves.
6. **Retailers must support calls for the Scottish salmon farming industry to reduce its environmental impacts.** These issues are important to consumers, which needs to be reflected by farming practices. Central to this is reducing chemical treatments known to impact wildlife and antibiotics, moving towards more enclosed structures for treatment and waste capture, closing or moving poorly performing farms, and using more sustainable feed (including alternatives to marine ingredients).

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