Organic Scamon – The Greenwashing of Toxic Farmed Salmon (May 2012)

The integrity of the global 'organic' brand was dealt a fatal blow late last week when salmon farmed in open net cages in Canada were given the green light for certification. 'Organic' salmon farmed will "be able to be certified in a year" according to the new standards released on Thursday (10 May).

Farmed & Dangerous reported (9 May) that: "The Canadian so-called 'Organic' Aquaculture Standard allows:

- The use of synthetic pesticides;
- The continued, uncontrollable spread of disease and parasites to wild fish;
- Uncontrolled disposal of fish feces into the ocean;
- Escapes of farmed fish that compete or interbreed with wild fish;
- Entanglement and drowning deaths of marine mammals;
- The unrestricted use of feed from non-organic, potentially unsustainable sources, as opposed to the 100 per cent organic feed requirement currently in place for all other organic livestock;
- The unlimited use of wild fish in feed. Since operations use substantially more wild fish in feed than farmed salmon produced, this allows farmed fish to be certified "organic" despite contributing to a net loss of marine protein and a drain on already strained global fish stocks."

A previous draft of the standard is available online here – the final standard is currently not available online but should be available online here.

The move to certify Canadian farmed salmon as 'organic' comes as the deadly disease Infectious Salmon Anaemia (ISA) rages on the East coast of Canada in Nova Scotia and has been reported (along with piscine rheovirus - associated with Heart & Skeletal Muscle Inflammation) at an 'organic' salmon farm in the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in British Columbia.

The shocking decision by the Canadian General Standards Board was met with vocal criticism. Living Oceans Society told The Edmonton Journal (10 May) that the standard "has as many holes as a net pen."

"It was biased from the start," said Kelly Roebuck of Living Oceans Society in British Columbia in an interview with The Vancouver Sun (10 May). "This was really a standard that was created by the government and industry to be able to okay the status quo in conventional aquaculture practices."

"In fact the standard sponsor, Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) has been a major driver for obtaining an organic standard for open net pen farmed salmon," continued Roebuck.

Read more via 'Organic Aquaculture Standard deemed 'dangerous' by green groups'

To illustrate the bias, the chairman of the Canadian General Standards Board's organic aquaculture committee (Justin Henry) was general manager of Target Marine – a member of the BC Salmon Farmers Association. "The focus is to provide an environment to prevent any disease from happening, thereby negating the requirements for antibiotics," said Mr. Henry who runs a fish farm near Sechelt in an interview with Postmedia News (9 May). "Nevertheless, if you treat, then those fish have to come out of the organic chain."

Alarmingly, the BCSFA's 'Fish Health Database' published by the BC's Ministry of Agriculture reveals significant disease problems at salmon farms across British Columbia. Moreover, evidence presented at Canada's salmon inquiry (the Cohen Commission) in

December 2011 revealed that BC's leading 'organic' salmon farmer, Creative Salmon, is suffering from Infectious Salmon Anaemia and "an emerging deadly virus called Heart and Skeletal Muscle Inflammation."

Fish Flu Found in Clayoquot Salmon
Dr. Kristi Miller finds ISA virus in Creative Salmon farms

Tofino BC — Evidence surfaced December 15th at the Cohen Commission in Vancouver that Infectious Salmon Anemia (ISA) virus is present in Clayoquot Sound at Creative Salmon's chinook salmon feedlots. A newly emerging deadly virus called Heart and Skeletal Muscle Inflammation (HSMI) is also present in Creative's farmed salmon.

HSMI was first identified in 1999 on a Norwegian salmon farm. The virus is often fatal, and the original outbreak has been followed by hundreds of other outbreaks in Norway and the United Kingdom. This year the virus was found in Chilean fish farms for the first time. HSMI has also been found in wild fish where salmon farms operate.

"The news that these viruses are here in the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Reserve is chilling" said Bonny Glambeck, Friends of Clayoquot Sound campaigner, "This virus puts at risk not only the wild salmon, but the ancient rainforest for which this region is renowned."

Read more via 'Fish Flu Found in Clayoquot Salmon: Dr. Kristi Miller finds ISA virus in Creative Salmon farms'

"By including open-net pen finfish in to the organic aquaculture standard, the standard fails miserably at one of its claimed principles, to 'Protect the environment, minimize benthic degradation and erosion and water quality degradation, decrease pollution, optimize biological productivity and promote a sound state of health'," reported Farmed & Dangerous (9 May).

"The finfish standards would allow conventional open net pen farmed salmon to be certified organic despite the large body of scientific evidence linking this farming practice to detrimental impacts on wild salmon and on the marine environment," stated Matt Abbott from the Conservation Council of New Brunswick. "Organic producers and customers should be concerned as this weak aquaculture standard threatens the integrity of all organic labels," concluded Abbott.

"With growing consumer interest in sustainable, local and organic food – this organic labelling will undermine public confidence in all organic and sustainable labels," stated Rob Johnson of the Ecology Action Centre. "With this standard for open net pen fish, we're seeing greenwashing being taken to an entirely new level."

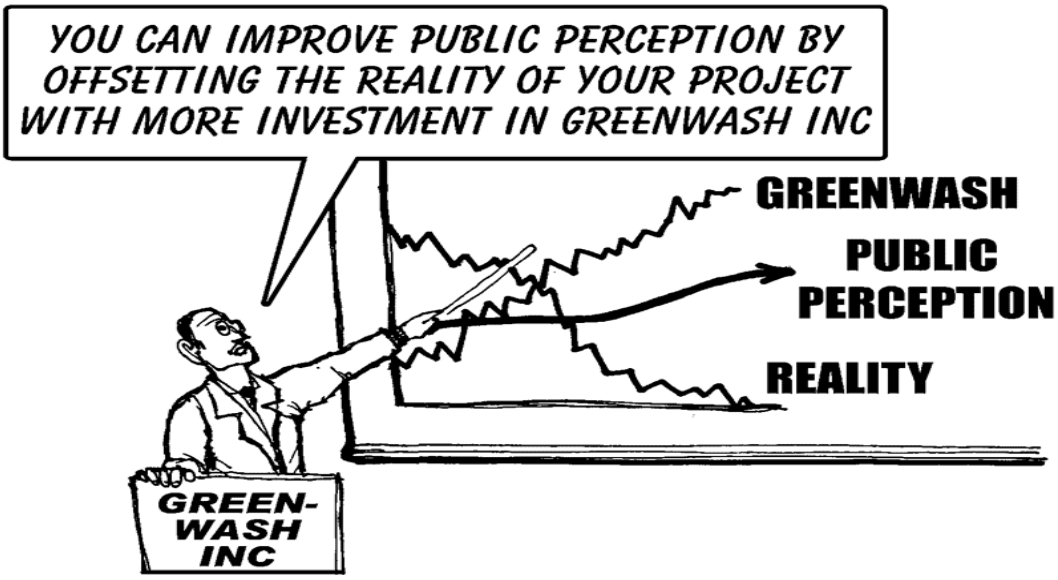
Read more via ‘New Canadian ‘Organic’ Aquaculture Standard Fails to Meet True Organic Principles’

The positive reaction from the BC Salmon Farmers Association (BCSFA) said it all.

“This is a strong standard that will meet the consumers’ confidence in organic designations, while providing an opportunity to some of our farmers interested in achieving this certification,” said Mary Ellen Walling, Executive Director of the BCSFA, in a press release (10 May). “Any certification process which encourages high standards and continuing improvement of our business is a positive step. It’s great to see ocean farming included in the organic menu – it’s important to some consumers and is a demand some of our farmers would like to meet.”

Read more via ‘New organic standard offers opportunity for farmers’

“The industry works hard to maintain its high standards,” claimed Ruth Salmon, executive director of the Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance (CAIA) in an interview with Canada Newswire (10 May), “and organic certification will provide an opportunity for some of our farmers to apply organic standards to their methods of production.”



“Until now, organic claims could show up on aquaculture products from outside the country and consumers wouldn't know whether the claims were trustworthy or what standards they met,” said Matthew Holmes, Executive Director of the Canada Organic Trade Association. “Now we have a made-in-Canada standard that clearly and verifiably defines the environmental and husbandry requirements, and meets consumers' expectations for a high-water mark for this quickly-growing Canadian sector.”

A petition signed by over 2,000 people sadly fell on deaf ears with the pro-salmon farming power brokers at the Canadian General Standards Board.

Read more via ‘"Organic" Farmed Salmon Must Meet Organic Standards’

“Organic farmed salmon is a fraud,” said Kurt Oddekalv, leader of the Green Warriors of Norway speaking from Bergen (12 May). “Farming salmon in open net cages in the sea is the antithesis of the basic organic principle of recycling. How can discharging untreated contaminated wastes including toxic chemicals, infectious diseases and sea lice ever be considered ‘organic’?”

“Organic my ass!” posted Sarah King of Greenpeace Canada on her Facebook page (12 May). “BUYER BEWARE: don't be fooled by any alleged organic farmed salmon in your supermarket, the only thing that's organic is the label.”

Last year, Greenpeace Canada visited Creative Salmon’s disease-ridden ‘organic’ operations in the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. “Our oceans are in crisis and with all that’s so clearly wrong with the practice of farming salmon in net-pens, it’s no shocker that farmed salmon is found on Greenpeace’s Redlist,” said Greenpeace Canada. “We’re urging supermarkets to remove it from sale and consumers to avoid buying it. Momentum is building and retailers across the border and here in Canada are starting to realize that this product undermines their attempts to green their seafood sections. If ever there was a time to take a stand against net-pen farmed salmon, it’s now.”

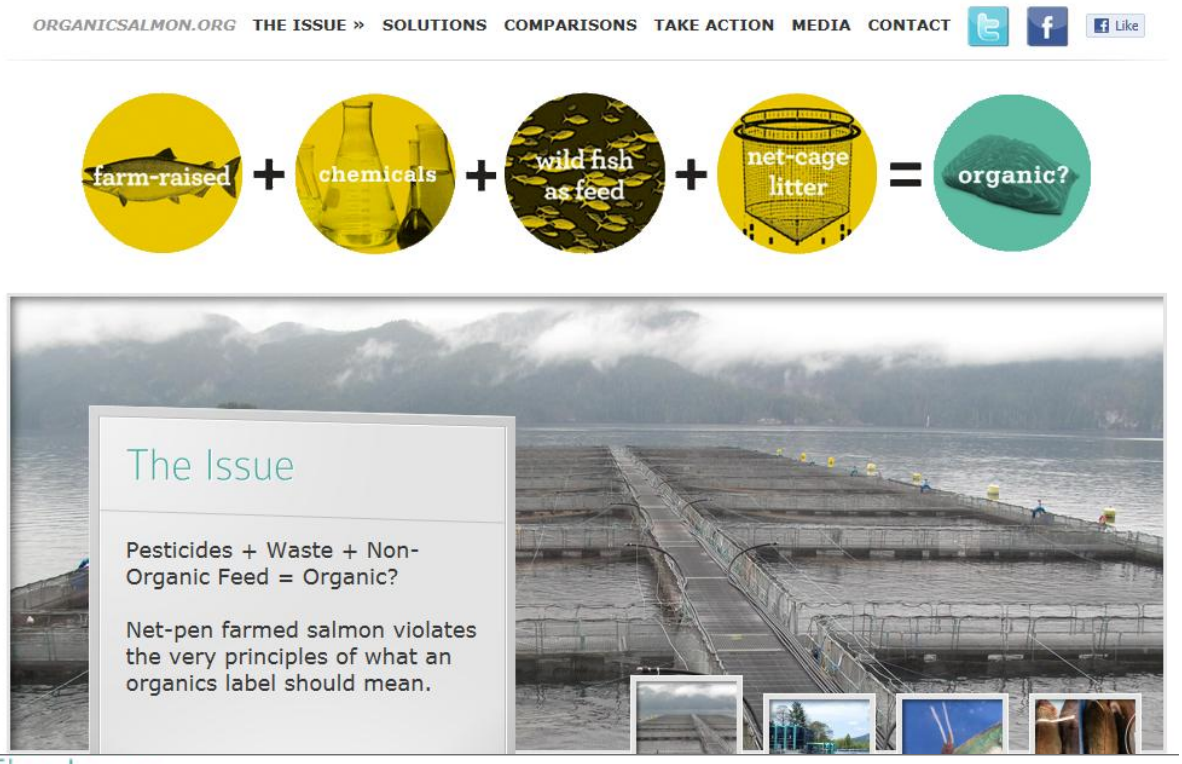
Read more via '[The Farmed Salmon Horror Show]'

"The proposal by the Canadian General Standards Board and organic aquaculture working group at Fisheries and Oceans Canada to [give the organic stamp of approval to BC farmed salmon raised in open net-pens] is nothing short of Orwellian," wrote Chris Genovali of the Raincoast Conservation Foundation in [The Huffington Post] in 2010. "Among the many practices that should be considered antithetical to the spirit and intent of organic certification, the fish farm industry in BC relies on the [application of the agricultural drug SLICE] to their "salmon feedlots" in order to address chronic sea lice outbreaks."

"Promoters of the aquaculture industry are counting on health-conscious consumers flocking to farmed salmon once it is certified organic," continued Genovali. "But those American consumers might want to think again. Take some pellets with fish meal produced from fish stocks at the base of the food chain in the southern hemisphere's oceans, add a dash of [pink chemical pigments], sprinkle with antibiotics, decorate with a startling array of bacteria and viruses, glaze with [PCB's] and you have your average farmed salmon fillet from your grocer or local restaurant."

Read more via '[Just Say No To 'Certified Organic' Farmed Salmon]'

To counter the bullshit from the salmon farming industry, a new web-site –'[Organic Salmon]' – takes issue with the certification of farmed salmon:



The Issue

There is a cloud of mystery and a fair amount of 'greenwash' swirling around the topic of organic certification of open net-pen reared farmed salmon. Let's cut the confusion. Is such a thing possible?

No. Net-pen salmon farming violates the very principles associated with 'organics'.

In spite of this, Canadian 'organic' salmon will soon be appearing on supermarket shelves and restaurant menus due to the recent creation of an organic aquaculture standard sponsored by Fisheries and Oceans (DFO).

While some types of farm-raised seafood can meet organic principles, there are too few substantial differences between conventional farmed salmon and what will be labeled as "organic" to adequately protect the health of our environment.

Open net-pen salmon farm

Some of the inherently unsustainable practices involved in raising net-pen farmed salmon that the 'organic' standard allows are:

- The use of synthetic pesticides;
- The unlimited use of wild fish in feed. Since operations use substantially more wild fish in feed than farmed salmon produced, this allows farmed fish to be certified "organic" despite contributing to a net loss of marine protein and drain on already strained global fish stocks;
- The unrestricted use of feed from non-organic, potentially unsustainable sources, as opposed to the 100 per cent organic feed requirement currently in place for all other organic livestock;
- The potentially uncontrollable spread of disease and parasites to wild fish;
- The uncontrolled disposal of fish feces into the ocean;
- Escapes of farmed fish that compete or interbreed with wild fish; and
- Entanglement and drowning deaths of marine mammals.

Organic principles call for the protection of the environment from degradation, erosion and pollution. So why is an industry that is associated with environmental degradation, species and habitat erosion and pollution included in the aquaculture standard? An organic standard that codifies a low-bar of environmental performance also detracts from others' efforts to produce truly organic or sustainable products.

Fair is Fair. So 'no' to "organic" net-pen farmed salmon.

Organic standards compare badly even with other green-washing schemes such as the Global Aquaculture Alliance, Friend of the Sea and Aquaculture Stewardship Council. A report released last year - How Green is Your Eco-Label? Comparing the Environmental Benefits of

Marine Aquaculture Standards - identified the Canadian Organic Standard as one of the poorer-performing organic standards.

Benchmarking the standard against conventional net-pen salmon farm industry practices, to identify whether or not the standard resulted in a better performance, the report concluded the standard resulted in a neutral or zero performance over industry norms.

Read more via 'The Abominable Salmon Council – Buyer Beware!'

The Canada General Standards Board now joins a long list of corporate green-washers certifying farmed salmon as "organic".

In Europe, the world's largest salmon farming company Marine Harvest is certified as 'organic' in Ireland by the German certifier Naturland. In United Kingdom, the Soil Association also certifies dozens of Scottish salmon farms as 'organic'.

In Norway, Debio certifies salmon farms as 'organic' including salmon farming company Villa Organic.

Read more via '[European Organic Aquaculture Certification]'

However, the organic designation does not stop salmon farms spreading infectious diseases, sea lice, water pollution or escapes. A 2007 report – '[Scottish Farmed Salmon Exposed]' – from the Pure Salmon Campaign blew out of the water the green claims of 'organic' salmon farms.

'Organic' salmon farms in Ireland and Scotland not only used toxic chemicals but they were guilty of breaching pollution limits and spreading sea lice.

Nor did the 'organic' certification eliminate escapes.

Moreover, waste discharges, mortalities and chemical use associated with ‘organic’ salmon farms were significant.

“Organic” Scottish Farmed Salmon

Waste Discharges & Morts for those Sites Certified by the Soil Association as Organic

Organic Food Federation refused to give data on sites

Company	# Exceedances	Feed (kg)	Nitrogen (kg)	Phosphorous (kg)	Organic Carbon (kg)	Mortalities (kg)
Balta Island SeaFare	**0**	**242,663**	**12,230.22**	**1,688.93**	**39,238.60**	**946**
Baltasound Habour, Unst, Shetland Islands*	0	66,944	3,373.98	465.93	10,824.84	885
Huney,Shetland Islands (trout)	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0
Swarta Skerry, Unst, Shetland Islands	0	159,232	8,025.29	1,108.25	25,747.81	9
Balta (North & South), Shetland Islands (trout)	0	16,487	830.95	114.75	2,665.95	52
Lewis Salmon	**0**	**155,150**	**7,819.56**	**1,079.84**	**25,087.76**	**1,110.50**
Arbhair	0	155,150	7,819.56	1,079.84	25,087.76	1,110.50
Mainstream Scotland, Orkney	**1**	**885,798**	**44,644.20**	**6,165.15**	**143,233.46**	**253,533**
Bay of Ham Site, Rousay	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0
Bay of Vady Site, Egilsay	0	454,492	22,906.40	3,163.26	73,491.28	171,129
Kirk Noust Site, Rousay	1	431,306	21,737.80	3,001.89	69,742.18	82,404
Mainstream Scotland, Shetland	**0**	**601,838**	**30,332.60**	**4,199.79**	**97,317.20**	**33,674**
Bunya Sand Site, Mid Yell Voe	0	601,838	30,332.60	4,199.79	97,317.20	33,674
West Minch/Atlantic West	**5**	**2131099**	**107407.42**	**14832.45**	**344598.704**	**80081**
Upper Loch Laxadale, Harris	**	**	**	**	**	**
Loch Marulaig, South Uist	**	**	**	**	**	**
Loch Kearinish, South Uist	**	**	**	**	**	**
Loch Duin Na Cille, South Uist	**	**	**	**	**	**
Petersport, Benbecula	**	**	**	**	**	**
Uiskevagh, Benbecula	0	508,800	25,643.52	3,541.25	82,272.96	6,999
Meanarvagh, Benbecula ***	0	310,420	15,645.20	2,160.52	50,194.91	47,824
Mult, North Uist	0	0	0	0	0	0
Treany, North Uist	0	0	0	0	0	0
Loch Grosebay, Harris	5	198,079	56,135.52	7,752.05	180,101.46	19,189
Loch Stockinish, Harris	0	1,113,800	9,983.18	1,378.63	32,029.37	6,069
Westray Salmon	**0**	**355,150**	**17,939.04**	**2,471.84**	**57,427.76**	**907**
Scaffall Point, Pierowall	0	31,800	1,602.72	221.33	5,142.06	8
Bay of Cleat (South)	0	76,350	3,848.04	531.40	12,345.80	868
Bay of Cleat (North)	0	247,000	12,488.28	1,719.12	39,939.90	31
TOTAL	**6**	**4,371,698**	**220,373**	**30,438**	**706,903**	**370,252**

"Organic" Scottish Farmed Salmon

Chemical Use for those Sites Certified by the Soil Association as Organic

Organic Food Federation refused to give data on sites

Company	Slice (g)	Copper (kg)	Zinc (kg)	Additional Chemical Use Reported
Balta Island SeaFare	**0**	**0.535**	**12.184**	Iodophor, Para Bleach, Sodium Hypochlorite, Tegodyne
Baltasound Habour, Unst, Shetland Islands*	0	0.159	3.361	Iodophor, Para Bleach, Sodium Hypochlorite
Huney, Shetland Islands (trout)	0	0	0	n/a
Swarta Skerry, Unst, Shetland Islands	0	0.338	7.995	Iodophor, Para Bleach, Sodium Hypochlorite
Balta (North & South), Shetland Islands (trout)	0	0.039	0.828	Tegodyne, Para Bleach, Sodium Hypochlorite
Lewis Salmon	**40**	**0.368**	**7.790**	Iodophor, MS-222
Arbhair	40	0.368	7.790	Iodophor, MS-222
Mainstream Scotland, Orkney	**0**	**2.099**	**44.475**	None reported
Bay of Ham Site, Rousay	0	0	0	n/a
Bay of Vady Site, Egilsay	0	1.077	22.820	None reported
Kirk Noust Site, Rousay	0	1.022	21.655	None reported
Mainstream Scotland, Shetland	**26,500**	**1.426**	**30.218**	None reported
Bunya Sand Site, Mid Yell Voe	26,500	1.426	30.218	None reported
West Minch/Atlantic West	**0**	**5.042**	**96.8826**	
Upper Loch Laxadale, Harris	**	**	**	**
Loch Marulaig, South Uist	**	**	**	**
Loch Kearinish, South Uist	**	**	**	**
Loch Duin Na Cille, South Uist	**	**	**	**
Petersport, Benbecula	**	**	**	**
Uiskevagh, Benbecula	0	1.200	25.455	None reported
Meanarvagh, Benbecula ***	0	0.735	5.565	None reported
Mult, North Uist	0	0	0	n/a
Treany, North Uist	0	0	0	n/a
Loch Grosebay, Harris	0	2.638	55.923	FAM 30, Oxofoam
Loch Stockinish, Harris	0	0.469	9.940	MS-222, FAM 30
Westray Salmon	**0**	**0.841**	**17.830**	None reported
Scaffall Point, Pierowall	0	0.075	1.597	None reported
Bay of Cleat (South)	0	0.181	3.833	None reported
Bay of Cleat (North)	0	0.585	12.400	None reported
TOTAL	**26,540**	**10**	**209**	See above

Shockingly, levels of sea lice infestation were even higher at 'organic' salmon farms than conventional ones!

Irish Sea Lice Data

Total Sea Lice Loads on Salmon and Trout Farms (Nov 2006)

Company	Farm Site	Species	F + eggs	Total
Mannin Bay Salmon Co Ltd. (ORGANIC)	Corhounagh	Atlantic salmon, 2005	17.30	85.93
Marine Harvest		Atlantic salmon, 2005	8.65	51.61
Mannin Bay Salmon Co Ltd. (ORGANIC)	Hawks Nest	Atlantic salmon, 2006	1.34	50.18
Marine Harvest	Cranford A	Atlantic salmon, 2006 S 1/2	8.48	31.04
Muirachumhainni Teo (ORGANIC)	Daonish	Atlantic salmon, 2006 S 1/2	3.93	27.05
Marine Harvest	Millstone	Atlantic salmon, 2006 S 1/2	1.00	11.32
Eany Fish Products Ltd	Inver Bay	Rainbow trout 2006 (2)	2.83	9.25
Marine Harvest	Millstone	Atlantic salmon, 2005	1.61	7.33
Eisc Ui Flathartha Teo	Ardmore	Atlantic salmon, 2006	1.19	6.88
Marine Harvest	Glinsk	Atlantic salmon, 2006	0.31	6.79
Celtic Atlantic Salmon (Killary) Ltd	Inishdeighil	Atlantic salmon, 2006	0.65	6.46
Bifand Ltd	Fraochoilean	Atlantic salmon, 2006 S 1/2	0.47	6.26
Muir Gheal Teo (ORGANIC)	Cnoc	Atlantic salmon, 2006 S 1/2	1.46	5.19
Clare Island Seafarms Ltd (ORGANIC)	Seastream Inner	Atlantic salmon, 2005	0.88	4.71
Curran Fisheries Ltd.	Curraun	Rainbow trout 2006 (2)	0.50	3.60
Marine Harvest	Cranford C	Atlantic salmon, 2007 S 1/2	0.00	3.50
Muirachumhainni Teo (ORGANIC)	Golam	Atlantic salmon, 2007 S 1/2	0.00	3.40
Curran Fisheries Ltd.	Curraun	Rainbow trout 2006 (1)	0.32	3.18
Silver King Seafoods Ltd.	Roancarraig Smolt site	Atlantic salmon, 2006 S1/2	0.20	2.40
Marine Harvest	Milford	Atlantic salmon, 2006	0.41	2.23
Clare Island Seafarms Ltd (ORGANIC)	Portlea	Atlantic salmon, 2006	0.28	1.70
John Power Ltd.	Waterfall	Rainbow trout 2006 (1)	0.11	0.97
Muirachumhainni Teo (ORGANIC)	Cuigeal	Atlantic salmon, 2006	0.29	0.97
Silver King Seafoods Ltd.	Roancarraig Smolt site	Atlantic salmon, 2006	0.27	0.87
Lasingers	Cuan Baoi Seafarms Ltd	Atlantic salmon, 2006	0.00	0.00
Lasingers	Cuan Baoi Seafarms Ltd	Atlantic salmon, 2005		Harvested out

This detailed data has not yet been made available from Scotland, Norway, Chile, or BC

In 2006, BBC Newsnight lambasted ‘organic’ salmon standards in Scotland.

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Concern over organic salmon farms

The licensing of salmon farms by the Soil Association has led to some within the UK's organic movement to voice concerns that standards are slipping.

The study highlights the possibility some fish could escape

A confidential study for the UK's top organic body highlighted gaps between its principles and the standards it accepted, BBC Newsnight reported.

The study said farmed fish could escape and carry sea lice, and waste from fish farms was not captured or recycled.

"Salmon farming in cages has nothing at all to do with organic principles," said Lawrence Woodward, former chairman of the Soil Association's standards committee. "It is very regrettable that the Soil Association has gone down this line of trying to certify something that is so distant from the principles."

Writing in the Observer Food Monthy in October 2006, food writer Joanna Blythman said:

theguardian

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Environment › Food

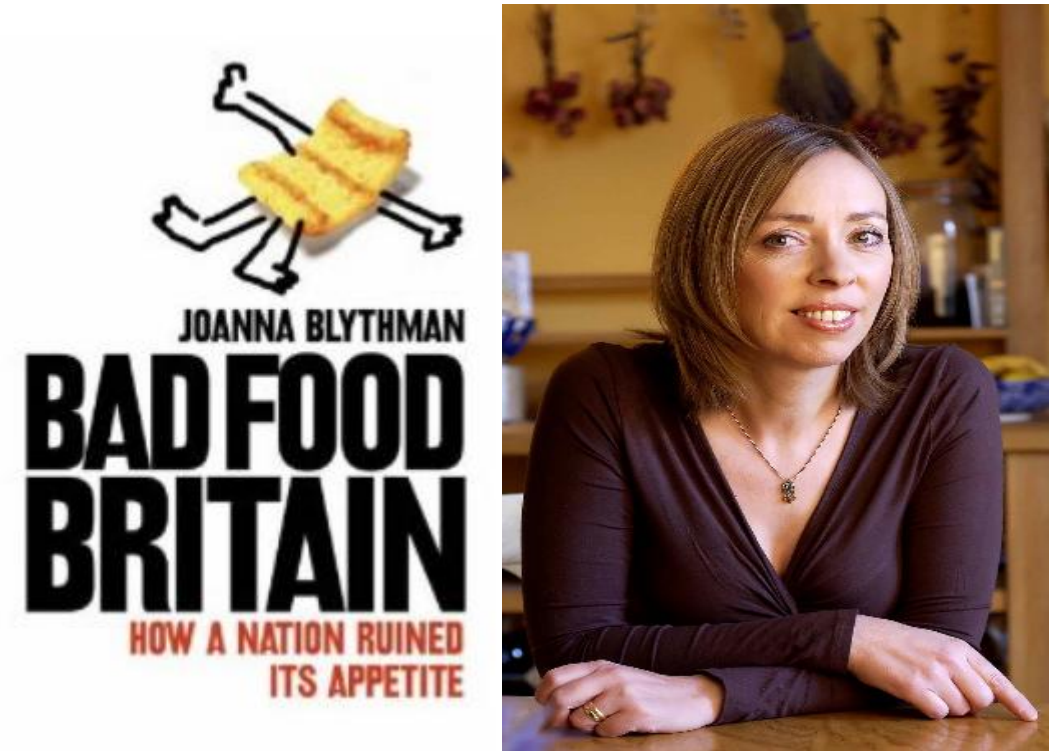
Why organic salmon is causing a nasty smell

What's the difference between organic farmed salmon and the much-demonised variety that's kept in cages, stuffed with colours and pesticides, doomed to swim in its own faeces and prematurely slaughtered? Surprisingly little, discovers Joanna Blythman

Joanna Blythman
Observer Food Monthly, Sunday 22 October 2006

I'm eyeing up a fillet of farmed Scottish organic salmon and, to be honest, it doesn't look too enticing. Its colour is pallid pinkish grey, a bit like an old sticking plaster. That doesn't bother me too much because I've been told that organic salmon doesn't contain colouring - a disputable statement, but more of that later - and that the dingy pink is just the price I have to pay for its more natural diet. What does bother me, however, is its herringbone mesh of creamy fatty veins. Palpating the uncooked flesh, it has all the floppy-flaccid muscle tone of a 20-stone couch potato. To remind myself of what wild salmon is like, I've bought a fillet of wild Alaskan silver salmon, not a totally fair comparison since it is a different breed, but it is enough to remind me of the wild Scottish Atlantic salmon and sea trout I ate back in July: firm-fleshed and toned like a prima ballerina.

“Here's the nub of the problem with organic salmon: it doesn't deliver the radical difference in production methods that consumers have come to expect from other categories of organic food. To make a very unsubtle joke, there just isn't enough clear blue water between conventional salmon farming - condemned by its critics as the biggest environmental disaster to afflict the west coast of Scotland in living memory - and the organic alternative.



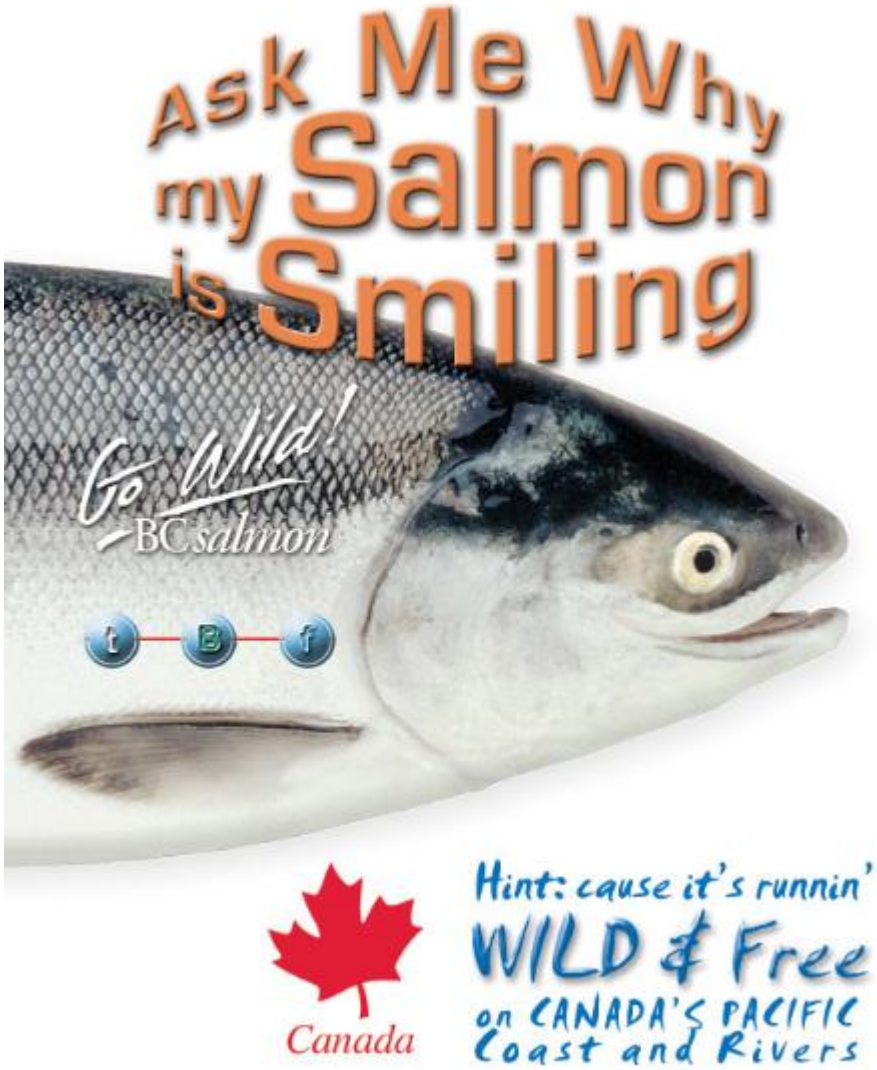
“Indeed, delve into the supposed differences between the two and the water looks rather murky; so murky, in fact, that even some long-standing advocates of organic farming won't have any truck with it. As Iain Tolhurst, a highly respected organic grower and a key figure in the foundation of the modern British organic movement puts it: 'If the public was given the full facts about organic salmon, they would demand something better. So-called "organic" salmon is making a mockery of organic standards.'”

Read more via ‘Why Organic Salmon is Causing a Nasty Smell’

“The Soil Association’s decision to adopt formally standards for “organic salmon” has upset many people committed to organic principles and production, including us,” wrote Elm Farm Research i 2006. “It is not simply that caged salmon so obviously do not comply with organic principles; it is that this issue has emphasised just how far away the “certified organic” market has moved from any notions of a deep, underlying, organic philosophy.”

Read more via ‘A Leap Too Far: Pushing Standards Over the Edge’

Organic’ farmed also failed the taste test in an article in The Washington Post published in 2004. “When both organic and conventional farm-raised salmon were seared and sampled with wild, there was little distinction in appearance, texture or flavor between the two varieties of farm-raised. They both paled compared with wild salmon.”



Why wild salmon – a truly ‘natural’ resource which literally recycles nutrients back to the ‘Salmon Forest’ feeding bears, eagles, orcas, wolves and fishermen – is not labelled as organic is another fishy tale of ‘the one that got away’.

Sadly, one of the few wild salmon products labelled as ‘organic’ may be Fish Tale’s ‘Organic Wild Salmon Pale Ale.’

“Well, grab your cup of grog and pull up a stool, me maties, and I'll tell you the tale of the Wild-Eyed Salmon Farmers and the Organic Standard,” reported Grinning Planet in 2004. “Wild salmon, though they are an excellent dining choice, are unlikely to ever qualify for the organic label because they are not raised in a controlled, certifiable environment..... For now,

it's buyer beware, and we are left only with those two scary Latin words, "caveat emptor." Long live the emptor!"

Read more via '"Organic Salmon – Just Another Fish Story: Is "Organic Salmon" a Certified Sham?'

"To the dismay of some fishermen — including many in the Alaskan salmon industry — this means that wild fish, whose living conditions are not controlled, are not likely to make the grade," reported The New York Times in 2006. "And that has led to a lot of bafflement, since wild fish tend to swim in pristine waters and are favored by fish lovers."

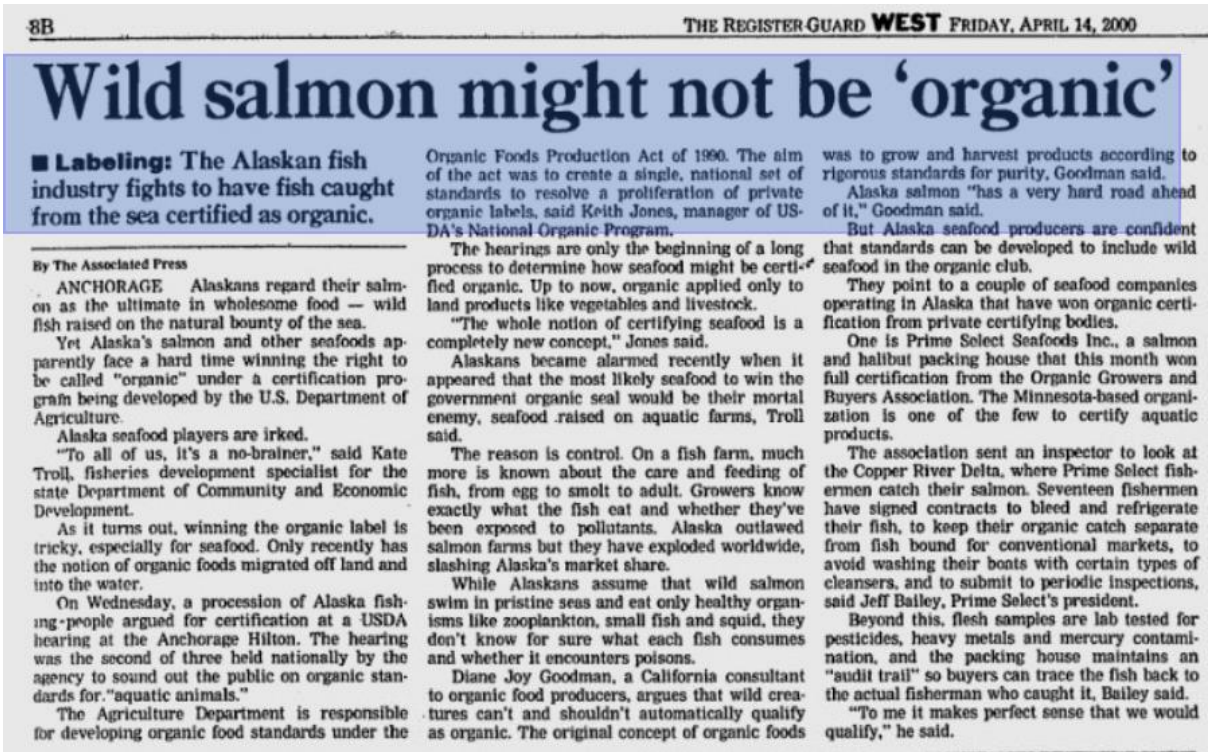
"If you can't call a wild Alaska salmon true and organic," asked Senator Lisa Murkowski from Alaska, "what can you call organic?"

"When it comes to carnivorous fish, it seems to be a complete deception of what organic means," said Andrea Kavanagh, director of the Pure Salmon Campaign."

Read more via 'Free or Farmed, When Is a Fish Really Organic?'

The battle to label farmed not wild salmon as 'organic' dates back to the 1990s when the US Government, backed by corporate interests, hijacked organic certification.

"To all of us, it's a no-brainer," said Kate Troll of Alaska's Department of Community and Economic Development in 2000.



8B THE REGISTER-GUARD **WEST** FRIDAY, APRIL 14, 2000

Wild salmon might not be 'organic'

■ Labeling: The Alaskan fish industry fights to have fish caught from the sea certified as organic.

By The Associated Press

ANCHORAGE Alaskans regard their salmon as the ultimate in wholesome food — wild fish raised on the natural bounty of the sea.

Yet Alaska's salmon and other seafoods apparently face a hard time winning the right to be called "organic" under a certification program being developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Alaska seafood players are irked.

"To all of us, it's a no-brainer," said Kate Troll, fisheries development specialist for the state Department of Community and Economic Development.

As it turns out, winning the organic label is tricky, especially for seafood. Only recently has the notion of organic foods migrated off land and into the water.

On Wednesday, a procession of Alaska fishing people argued for certification at a USDA hearing at the Anchorage Hilton. The hearing was the second of three held nationally by the agency to sound out the public on organic standards for "aquatic animals."

The Agriculture Department is responsible for developing organic food standards under the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990. The aim of the act was to create a single, national set of standards to resolve a proliferation of private organic labels, said Keith Jones, manager of USDA's National Organic Program.

The hearings are only the beginning of a long process to determine how seafood might be certified organic. Up to now, organic applied only to land products like vegetables and livestock.

"The whole notion of certifying seafood is a completely new concept," Jones said.

Alaskans became alarmed recently when it appeared that the most likely seafood to win the government organic seal would be their mortal enemy, seafood raised on aquatic farms, Troll said.

The reason is control. On a fish farm, much more is known about the care and feeding of fish, from egg to smolt to adult. Growers know exactly what the fish eat and whether they've been exposed to pollutants. Alaska outlawed salmon farms but they have exploded worldwide, slashing Alaska's market share.

While Alaskans assume that wild salmon swim in pristine seas and eat only healthy organisms like zooplankton, small fish and squid, they don't know for sure what each fish consumes and whether it encounters poisons.

Diane Joy Goodman, a California consultant to organic food producers, argues that wild creatures can't and shouldn't automatically qualify as organic. The original concept of organic foods was to grow and harvest products according to rigorous standards for purity, Goodman said.

Alaska salmon "has a very hard road ahead of it," Goodman said.

But Alaska seafood producers are confident that standards can be developed to include wild seafood in the organic club.

They point to a couple of seafood companies operating in Alaska that have won organic certification from private certifying bodies.

One is Prime Select Seafoods Inc., a salmon and halibut packing house that this month won full certification from the Organic Growers and Buyers Association. The Minnesota-based organization is one of the few to certify aquatic products.

The association sent an inspector to look at the Copper River Delta, where Prime Select fishermen catch their salmon. Seventeen fishermen have signed contracts to bleed and refrigerate their fish, to keep their organic catch separate from fish bound for conventional markets, to avoid washing their boats with certain types of cleansers, and to submit to periodic inspections, said Jeff Bailey, Prime Select's president.

Beyond this, flesh samples are lab tested for pesticides, heavy metals and mercury contamination, and the packing house maintains an "audit trail" so buyers can trace the fish back to the actual fisherman who caught it, Bailey said.

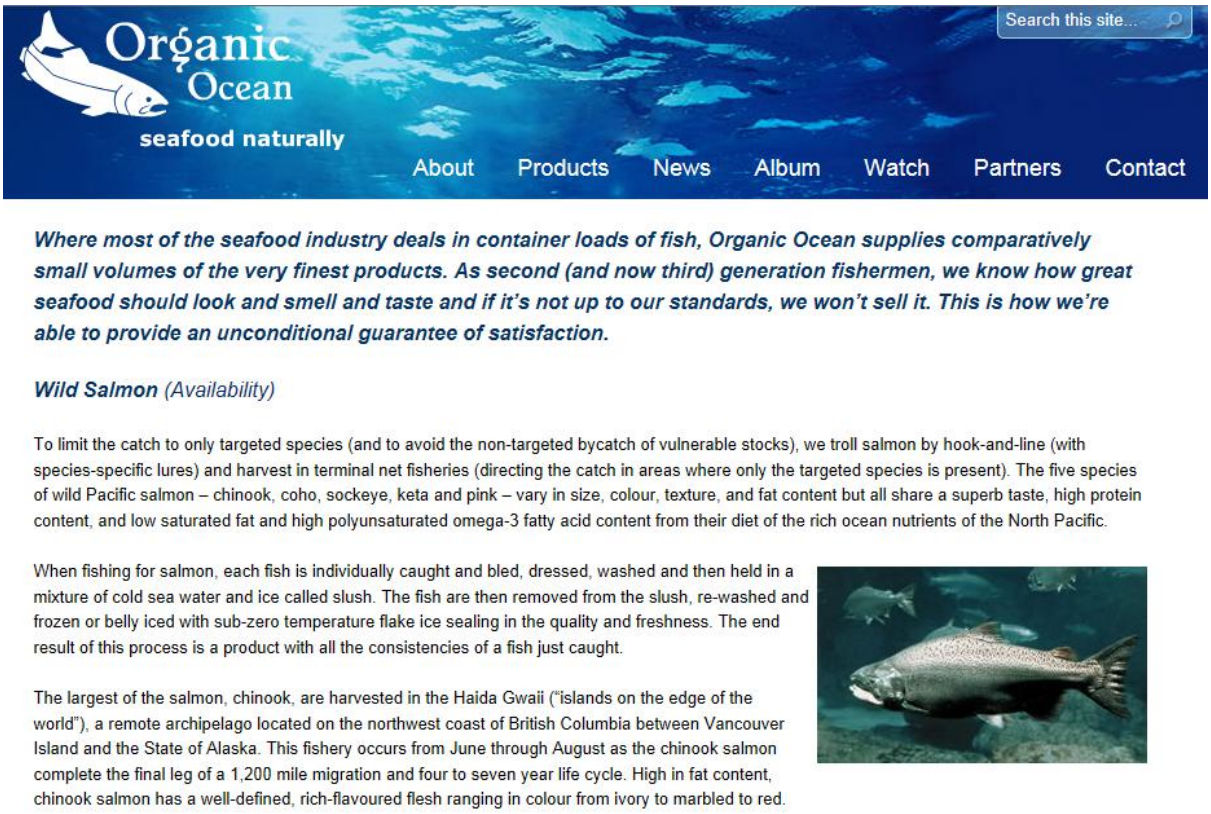
"To me it makes perfect sense that we would qualify," he said.

"That organic standards have accepted factory farmed salmon rather than its distant wild relative shows the inherent anomaly in the current system and threatens to devalue the whole organic brand," stated an article published in Organic Standard magazine in 2001. "Common sense dictates that there has to be a line beyond which 'organic' is out of reach. Whilst wild

salmon and shellfish are logical candidates for inclusion, ‘organically farmed salmon’ is surely an oxymoron.”

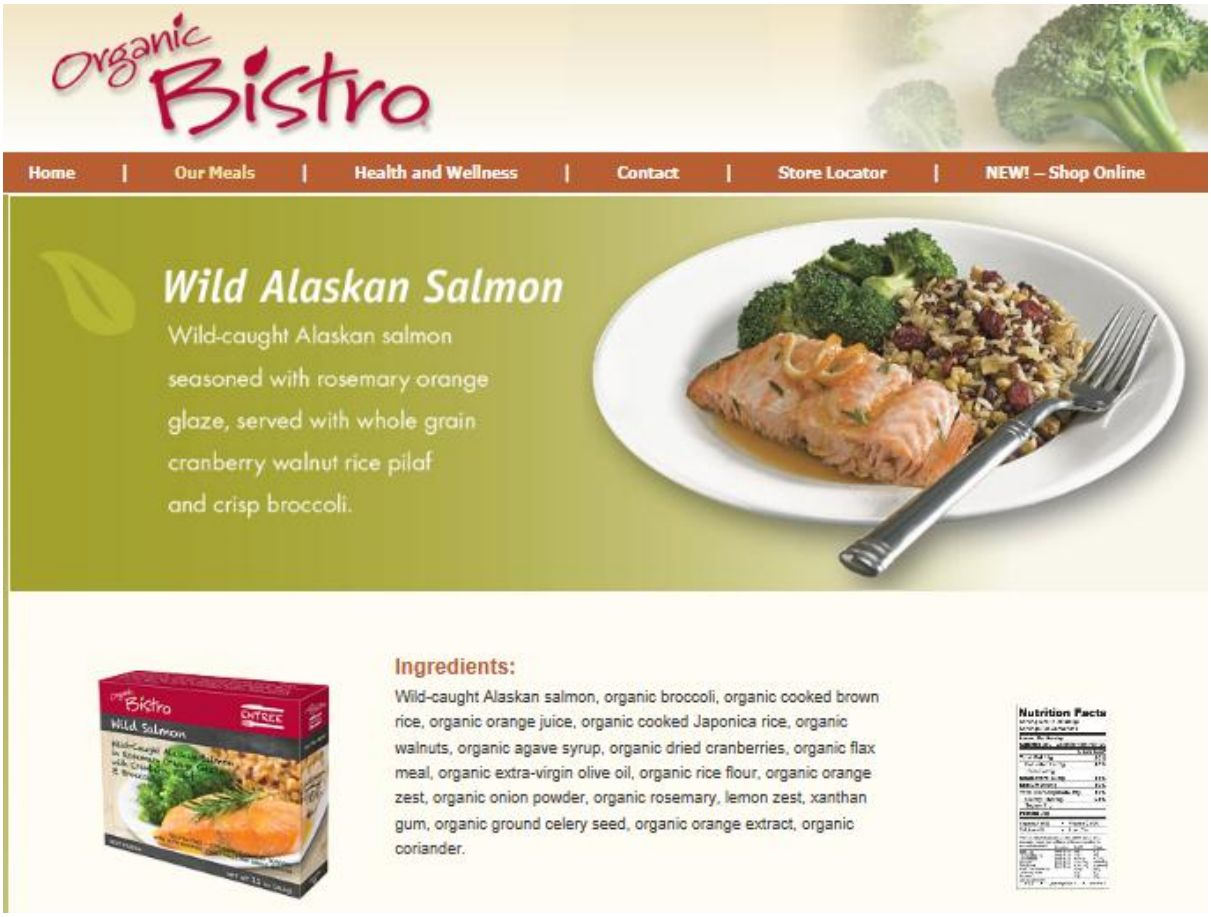
Read more via 'Organically Farmed Salmon is an Oxymoron'

Thankfully, some wild salmon advocates are clever enough to still market wild salmon as ‘organic’. BC-based ‘Organic Ocean’ sell wild Pacific salmon not farmed Atlantic salmon.



“The standard of open net-pen salmon farming remains an ecological concern because of the risks of escapement (in which the non-native Atlantic salmon can push the local wild salmon out of their habitat), disease and parasite transfers to the wild stocks, waste build-up and siltation,” says Organic Ocean. “To contend with these risks, the salmon farming industry is being pressured to transition to land-based closed containment systems. Currently, Ocean Wise recommends only wild fish from British Columbia or Alaska as a best choice for salmon.”

‘The Organic Bistro’ also uses wild Alaskan salmon not farmed Alaskan salmon in their salmon products.



The battle to protect the integrity of 'organic' standards by not allowing salmon farming to pollute the global brand has raged for over a decade – on both sides of the Atlantic. A protest outside supermarkets in London in 2003 made it clear that putting an 'organic' label on farmed salmon was like putting lipstick on a pig.

Dr. Roderick O'Sullivan, one of the protestors (pictured above), said: "Organic' salmon? Don't make me laugh: food-dye to pink its flesh; x-rays for sterilisation; hormones to

eradicate sex-drive; sprayed with medicament and pesticide; dosed with antibiotics; imprisoned in packed cages; vaccinated; genetically manipulated. The faeces of the hobbyhorse and 'organic' farmed salmon share a common attribute – you're unlikely to find either."

Read more via 'Organic Farmed Salmon'

"THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS ORGANIC SALMON. PERIOD!!!," said former organic farmer Richie Gerber in 2009. "So when I am at the store I try to go to the wild side and avoid the "Organic" hype in the fish case. If you remember three things you will never be thought of as gullible or dumb. 1) There is no Santa Clause. 2) There is no Tooth Fairy. 3) And there ain't no such thing as "Organic Salmon"."

Organic Salmon: The Not So Fresh Catch of the Day

June 15, 2009 by Cousin Richie

The waiter opens with, "Tonight's seafood special is a fillet of lightly grilled Organic Maine Salmon in a USDA Organic Reduction Sauce consisting of the essence of Organic Lemon and Organic Artisanal Extra Virgin Olive Oil from the Messina region of north east Sicily and finished in the oven..." I stopped listening at the Organic Salmon part. "What is Organic Salmon and who says its Organic?" I ask. He replies, "our highly renowned fishmonger, of course". I placed my order for the "Organic Salmon" all the while questioning myself on how a fish could be certified as organic.

Read more via 'Organic Salmon: The Not So Fresh Catch of the Day'

"We find it to be a crock," said Tom Worthington at Monterey Fish in an article – "Organic Label Muddies the Waters" – published in The San Francisco Chronicle in 2004.

Organic label muddies the waters

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These "organic" salmon steaks, from Tower Market, are actually farmed king salmon from British Columbia. Chronicle photo by Chris Hardy

“This salmon was raised on a farm,” said Marjie Hill, a health-conscious shopper in Spokane, Washington, in a 2006 article published in Alaska Report. “How can it be organic? Thanks, but no. Farm-raised is as far away from organic salmon as I can think of.”

Jeff Egger of Egger's Better Meats and Seafood, who refused to sell ‘organic’ farmed salmon, said: “I've laughed whenever I hear people say 'organic seafood' because farm-raised salmon is not organic. They're still in pens and their diets are controlled. That's not natural.”

Read more via ‘Fish farms trying to confuse customers with "Naturally raised" salmon’

A 2005-2009 lawsuit involving Creative Salmon, an ‘organic’ salmon farming company in British Columbia, focussed on the issue of ‘organic’ farmed salmon, antibiotic use and contamination with the carcinogen malachite green.

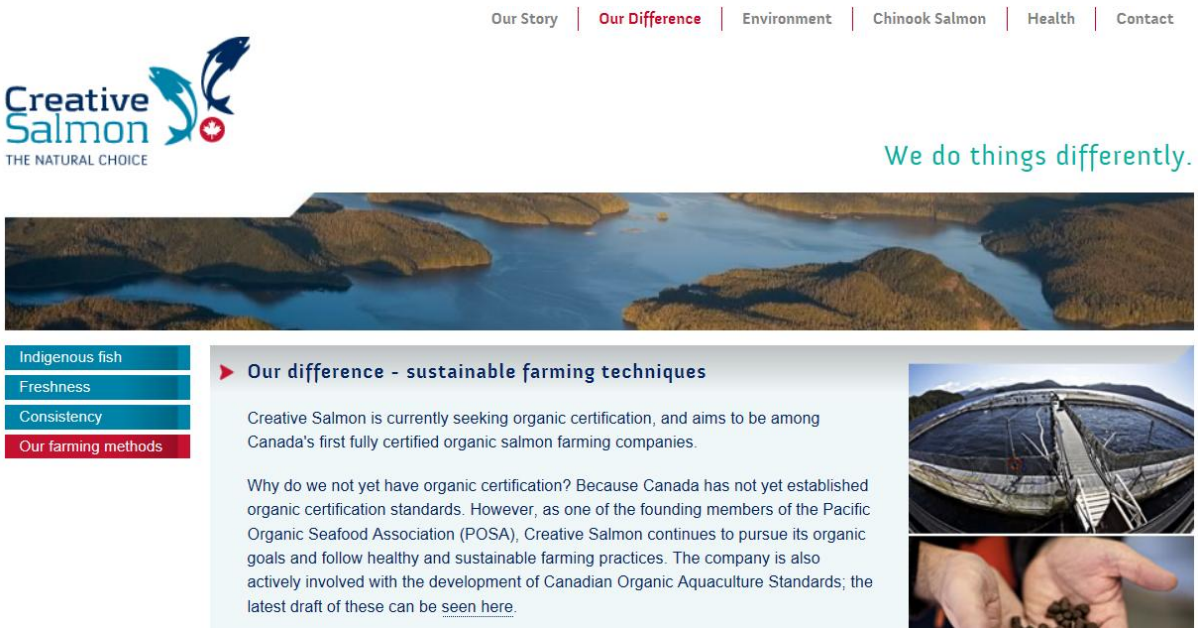
“Japanese-funded Creative Salmon is being dangerously creative in its definition of 'organic' salmon farming,” said Friends of Clayoquot Sound aquaculture campaigner Don Staniford in 2005. “Last week, Creative's 'green' credentials were exposed when its Tofino-based factory closed because of malachite green contamination. And now its reputation has been well and truly shattered with the Ministry of the Environment's damning revelations of antibiotic use. If Creative Salmon is telling such blatant lies, how is the public expected to believe the company's claims to be 'organic'?”

Creative Salmon have long-indulged in creative thinking when it comes to ‘organic’ farmed salmon – publishing an ‘organic’ section on their web-site for many years. “This is not an attempt to mislead or 'scam'. Our website is designed with a focus in part on marketing towards potential customers and information for current customers of Creative Salmon,” said Creative Salmon’s general manager Spencer Evans in 2005 following a ‘Deceptive Marketing Practices’ complaint filed by Friends of Clayoquot Sound.

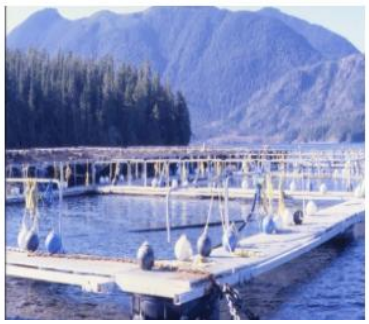
“Claiming to be “organic” does not address environmental impacts caused by open net cage salmon farms, and this should be even more apparent by the 12 sea lions that were killed in Creative Salmon farm predator nets just a month ago,” said Dom Repta of Friends of Clayoquot Sound in 2006.

Read more via ‘Creative's 'Organic' Antibiotic Salmon Scam’

A web re-design following the lawsuit sees Creative Salmon now claiming that: “Creative Salmon is currently seeking organic certification, and aims to be among Canada's first fully certified organic salmon farming companies.”



Creative Salmon definition of "healthy and sustainable farming practices" and "environmentally responsible" should alarm consumers. Data obtained from the Ministry of Environment revealed that in 2004 Creative Salmon used nearly a quarter of a tonne of antibiotics (245.01 kg) in Clayoquot Sound. Creative Salmon's Dawley Pass farm used 35.28 kg of oxytetracycline; Eagle Bay used 63.31 kg and Indian Bay used 146.42 kg.



The following are examples of Creative Salmon's activities that impact the wild ocean ecosystem in the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Reserve :

- In the first 4 months of 2007, Creative Salmon reported 110 sea lions drowned in its fish farm nets.
- In 2006, Creative Salmon reported 46 sea lions drowned in its fish farm nets.
- Information obtained by FOCS from the BC Ministry of Environment in June 2005 reveals that in 2004 Creative Salmon used nearly a quarter of a tonne of antibiotics (245.01 kg) in Clayoquot Sound. Creative Salmon's Dawley Pass farm used 35.28 kg of oxytetracycline; Eagle Bay used 63.31 kg and Indian Bay used 146.42 kg.

Click farm name for records: Eagle Bay, Indian Bay, Dawley Pass

245 kg of oxytetracycline is the equivalent of 2.45 million pills (at 100 mg strength, which is a standard human dosage)

Read more details via 'Creative Salmon in Clayoquot Sound'

Sea Lions Shot By Creative Salmon

Creative Salmon shot and killed sea lions and disposed of them in mass graves in 2000. Friends of Clayoquot Sound took photos and a video of this incident which was featured in National Geographic magazine and in many other publications.

In 2007, over 100 sea lions were reported drowned in their 'organic' operations in Clayoquot Sound. In 2008, Creative Salmon tested positive once again for the carcinogen malachite green as well as the antibiotic florfenicol.

canada.com

Traces of carcinogen found at Tofino salmon operation

Tests by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration that found traces of the chemical malachite green in fillets of chinook salmon from the Creative Salmon Company in Tofino have flabbergasted the company's general manager.

BY TIMES COLONIST (VICTORIA) JANUARY 10, 2008

Tests by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration that found traces of the chemical malachite green in fillets of chinook salmon from the Creative Salmon Company in Tofino have flabbergasted the company's general manager.

"I am at a complete loss as to how the fish fillet became contaminated," said Spencer Evans.

"We have never used malachite green. ... It is not used in any part of our farming operation, including our contract hatchery, feed supplier and processor."

Fillets from the Creative Salmon farm were randomly tested at the border Dec. 4 and the company was told Dec. 27 that the carcinogen had been found in the fish.

Read more via 'Organic Salmon?'

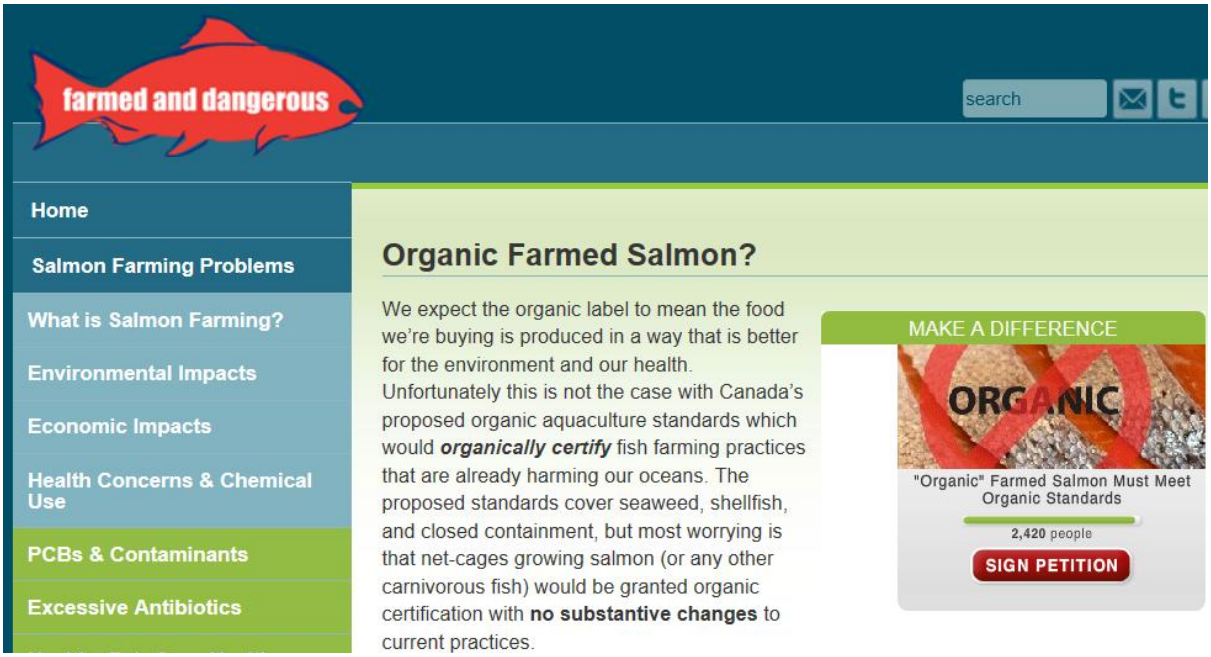
"The enviros, including the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR) – especially CAAR – have gotten into the [organic-certification] process and hijacked it entirely, both in Canada and the U.S.," said Creative Salmon's general manager Spencer Evans in a 2008 interview with BC Business magazine. "This is their Waterloo. They have to stop farmed salmon from becoming certified organic. It's very important for their overall anti-salmon-farming campaign. They are throwing a lot of time and money at it to make sure it doesn't happen. And they are winning."

Read more via 'BC Fish Farmers' Organic Battle'

How Creative Salmon will now obtain 'organic' certification for their disease-ridden operations remains unclear – but it is certain that the fight against organic certification of farmed salmon will continue.

In 2011, 61 concerned organizations, businesses and fishermen from Canada and the United States signed a letter opposing the certification of farmed salmon by the Canadian Government (read letter in full online here). According to CAAR:

"Net-cages have no place in organic aquaculture standards as they violate the very principles of what an organics label should mean, and negate others' efforts to produce truly organic products."



For more background listen online to 'Organic Salmon?' and read 'Organic Farmed Salmon?'

In the United States, there's also has been a fierce fight to protect the integrity of organic standards and prohibit the inclusion of salmon farms. "There is no such thing as USDA certified organic fish," wrote food writer Barry Estabrook in 2009. "Since 2001, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), the body that advises the USDA on matters related to certification, has been trying to set standards for aquaculture. Last fall, it issued a set of guidelines, but the USDA has yet to enact them."

"Meanwhile, there is a large loophole in the USDA's policy," continued Estabrook. "Lacking its own organic standards for aquaculture, the administration nonetheless allows seafood certified by foreign agencies to be labeled as organic. The prize-winning cured

salmon is certified as organic by the U.K.'s Soil Association, which doesn't see any problem with net pens or using wild fish as feed."

Read more via 'Politics of the Plate: When Organic is Not Organic'

In 2007, 44 leading organizations within the organic, ocean conservation, animal welfare and food safety communities wrote to the National Organic Standards Board arguing that "the farming of carnivorous finfish in open net pen systems inherently contradicts organic principles". "Attempting to define organic standards for open net pens and wild fish as feed is like attempting to fit a square peg into a round hole – the principles and the practices are simply incompatible," stated the letter (read letter in full online here).

Read more via 'Organic Farmed Salmon: If You're Not Confused You Should Be'

"Organic salmon?" asked the Pure Salmon Campaign. "Chefs, retailers and seafood companies are trying to capitalize on the organic trend by selling 'organic' salmon. Don't be fooled. There is no such thing."

Read more via 'Fish Food Fight – Can Salmon Be Organic?'

In 2007, Consumers Union joined the Center for Food Safety and Food and Water Watch in filing a complaint with the USDA and Federal Trade Commission to protect consumers nationwide from misleading and mislabeled "organic" seafood products.

"It's a disservice to the organic program and to consumers that the NOSB is ready to undermine the organic marketplace which relies on a higher bar for environmental health practices being met," said Urvashi Rangan, Senior Scientist and Policy Analyst at Consumers Union, in 2008. "Fish labeled as 'organic' that are not fed 100 percent organic feed, come from polluting open net cage systems, or that are contaminated with mercury or PCBs any measurable level, fall significantly short of consumer expectations."

"Consumer trust in the integrity of the organic label is at stake," said Patty Lovera of Food & Water Watch. "But unfortunately, the NOSB wants to allow the farmed salmon industry to cash in on the organic label without meeting the basic tenets of organic production."

"In an effort to shoehorn every type of industrial fish farming into the organic label, the proposed recommendations create a dangerous loophole to get around the 100% organic feed standard by arbitrarily and capriciously defining wild forage fish feed as a 'supplement,' " said George Kimbrell, Staff Attorney for the Center for Food Safety. "Allowing such farmed fish to be labeled organic violates the spirit and letter of the law, is detrimental to the oceans and misleading to the public."

Read more via 'New Poll Reveals That Proposed "Organic" Standards for Fish Will Fail to Meet Consumer Expectations'

"Is organic farmed fish an oxymoron?" asked Chow in 2008. "It's already debatable whether *any* fish can, or should, be labeled organic. The USDA previously ruled out all wild fish: The *Chicago Tribune* explains the agency's logic: "The whole notion of 'wild' is at odds with the government's rigorous criteria for classifying organic livestock production. Wild, after all, can't be controlled." But somewhat perversely, the USDA says organic farmed fish can eat

fish meal that's made from wild fish. (Wild fish that aren't threatened species would be allowed to make up 25 percent of farmed feed.) That's angered the Consumers Union, which says that allowing partially nonorganic feed would set a lower standard for fish than other organic foods, amounting to what the CU calls "a dangerous precedent."

The controversy continues. The USDA's web-site currently states: "The legal status of using the organic label in the United States for aquatic species, and the future of developing U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) certification standards for organic aquaculture products and aquatic species, are **under review**."

According to a Consumer Reports magazine food labeling poll, some 74% of consumers are concerned about environmental pollution from "organic" fish. The poll also showed that 91% of consumers want contaminants in fish to be absent or present only at very low levels. Of course, consumers vote with their dollars for the products that are most valuable to them. Will consumers be able to discern their product origin and content from sound descriptive labeling, including perhaps "organic"?

Read more via 'The Organic Aquaculture Quandary'

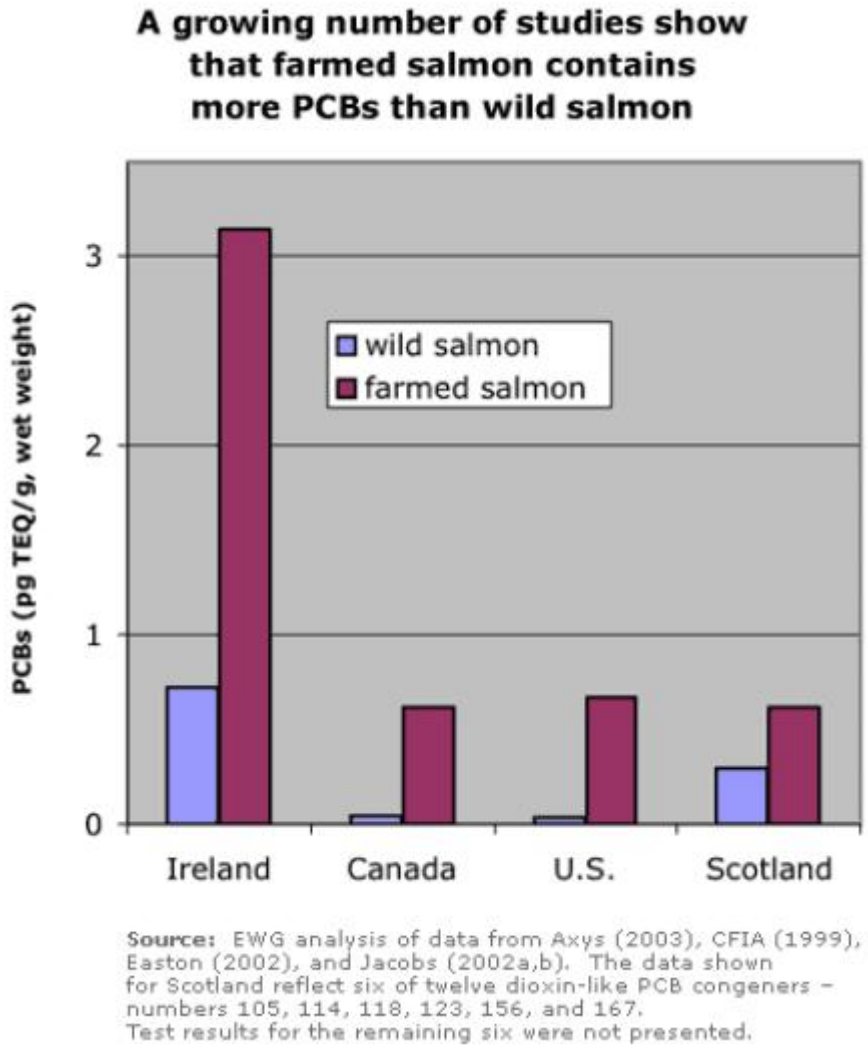
Nor will 'organic' farmed salmon ever be a safe and healthy choice for consumers. The Washington Post reported in 2004 that "there is no evidence to date that indicates the contaminant level of organic farmed salmon is less than that of conventional farmed salmon."

The UK's Observer newspaper also reported in 2004: "Don Staniford of the Salmon Farm Protest Group pointed out last week that the dioxin and PCB pollution the scientists highlighted could also be found in organically farmed fish. 'The reason there are high levels of cancer-causing dioxins and PCBs is because the feed used in farms is heavily contaminated,' he said. Carnivorous fish such as salmon were reared in captivity using pellets made of creatures caught in the polluted North Sea. This was the case whether or not the farms followed organic guidelines, added Staniford."

Shockingly, the Soil Association (who certify salmon farms in Scotland) admitted in 2004 that they do not even test for PCBs or dioxins and that some 'organic' fish feed may be more contaminated than conventional feeds!

"The myth that "organic" farmed salmon is safe, healthier and more nutritious than conventionally farmed salmon has been shattered," reported The Salmon Farm Monitor in

2004. “The Soil Association, one of the world´s leading certifiers of organic food, has admitted that not only do they not test for contaminants such as PCBs, dioxins, dieldrin and toxaphene in “organic” farmed salmon but also that levels are “likely to be similar” to conventionally farmed Scottish salmon. The Soil Association further concedes that their organic fish feed, sourced from more polluted European waters, may be “more contaminated than some feed used in conventional diets”.



The Soil Association currently concede on their web-site: “The Soil Association is aware of the problems of farmed fish being contaminated with PCBs, dioxins and other toxins (flame-retardants and mercury) that may pose a quite unacceptable health risk to consumers..... Because the fish element of organic feeds comes from Europe, this may mean it is more contaminated than some feed used in conventional diets - which would tend to counteract the effect of lower oil inclusion levels and the lower fat content of organic salmon and trout compared to conventional. Organic farmed salmon are likely to have similar levels of contamination to conventional.”

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What levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) have been found in organic fish?

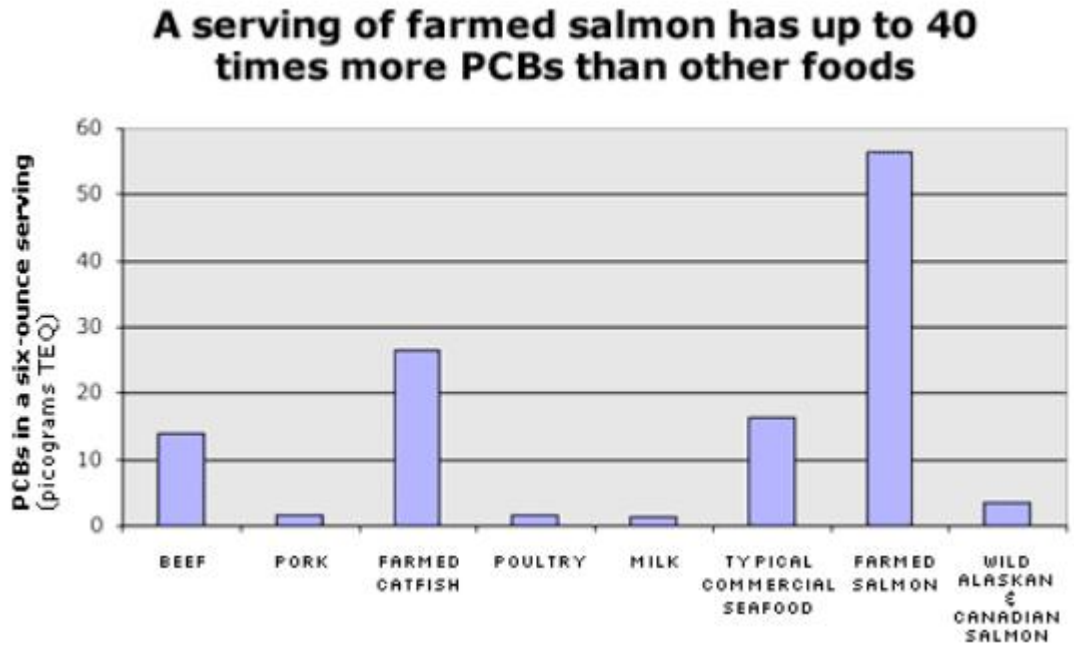
The Soil Association is aware of the problems of farmed fish being contaminated with PCBs, dioxins and other toxins (flame-retardants and mercury) that may pose a quite unacceptable health risk to consumers.

PCBs are present in all seafoods and are more frequently detected now than formerly because of more sensitive analytical techniques. Since the manufacture of PCBs was banned several decades ago, the level of PCB contamination in European diets is declining.

Any PCBs in organic fish diets are overwhelmingly contained in the marine-derived fish fraction of the diet - a by-product of fish caught for human consumption in the North Sea. PCBs and other chlorine-based pollutants (e.g. dioxins) are mainly carried dissolved in fat. Organic fish diets have lower levels of fat than conventional diets. Organic fish products are also usually lower in fat.

In fact, scientific research published in 2006 found that “organically farmed Norwegian salmon had the highest concentrations of PCBs.”

Slow Food pointed out in 2006: “On average, farmed salmon flesh contains ten times the toxin load of wild salmon. Ironically, "organic" farmed salmon has been found to contain even greater loads of pollutants.”



Read more via '[PCBs in Farmed Salmon]'

This is not surprising since fisheries in the Northern Hemisphere are much more contaminated than fish from the Southern Hemisphere. In 2000, for example, the European Commission's Scientific Committee on Animal Nutrition [reported] an eight-fold difference in dioxin contamination (i.e. fish in the North were eight times more contaminated than the South). Hence, if 'organic' salmon farms in Norway, Scotland and Ireland are using off-cuts and by-products of fish caught in the North Sea or the [Baltic Sea] (another hot spot of pollution) then it's logical that 'organic' farmed salmon bio-accumulates [cancer-causing contaminants].

Indeed, the only truly 'organic' thing about farmed salmon may be the fact that it contains unsafe levels of so-called '[organic contaminants]' including PCBs, dioxins, DDT, toxaphene, chlordane and dieldrin!

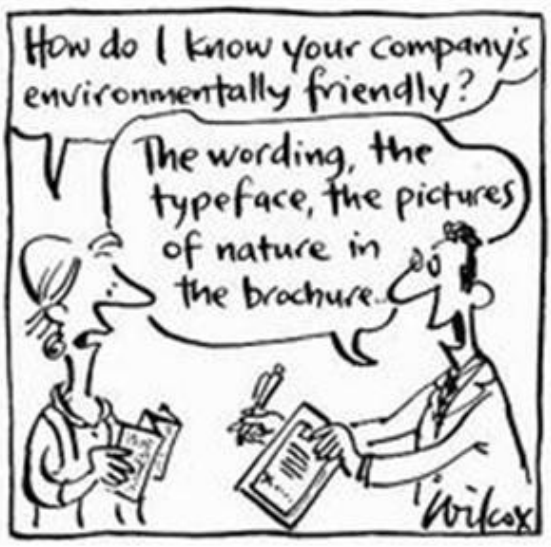
Global Assessment of Organic Contaminants in Farmed Salmon

Ronald A. Hites,[1*] Jeffery A. Foran,[2] David O. Carpenter,[3]
M. Coreen Hamilton,[4] Barbara A. Knuth,[5] Steven J. Schwager[6]

The annual global production of farmed salmon has increased by a factor of 40 during the past two decades. Salmon from farms in northern Europe, North America, and Chile are now available widely year-round at relatively low prices. Salmon farms have been criticized for their ecological effects, but the potential human health risks of farmed salmon consumption have not been examined rigorously. Having analyzed over 2 metric tons of farmed and wild salmon from around the world for organochlorine contaminants, we show that concentrations of these contaminants are significantly higher in farmed salmon than in wild. European-raised salmon have significantly greater contaminant loads than those raised in North and South America, indicating the need for further investigation into the sources of contamination. Risk analysis indicates that consumption of farmed Atlantic salmon may pose health risks that detract from the beneficial effects of fish consumption.

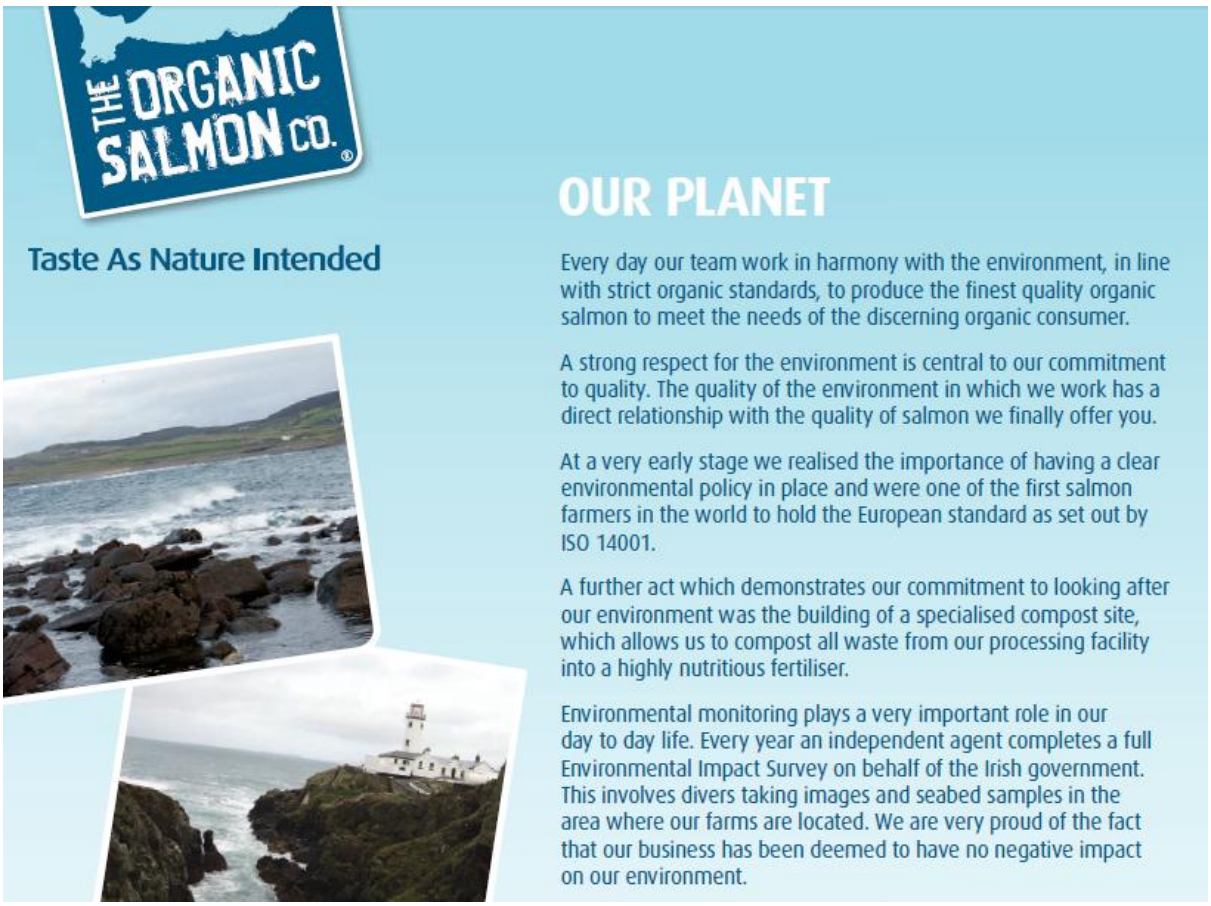
Read more via '[A Global Assessment of Organic Contaminants in Farmed vs. Wild Salmon]'

The world's largest salmon farming company, Marine Harvest, already farm "organic" salmon in Ireland with the marketing slogan - '[Taste as Nature Intended]' - but what's natural about cramming a migratory species such as the Atlantic salmon in a cage and feeding the captive on an artificial diet contaminated in toxic chemicals?

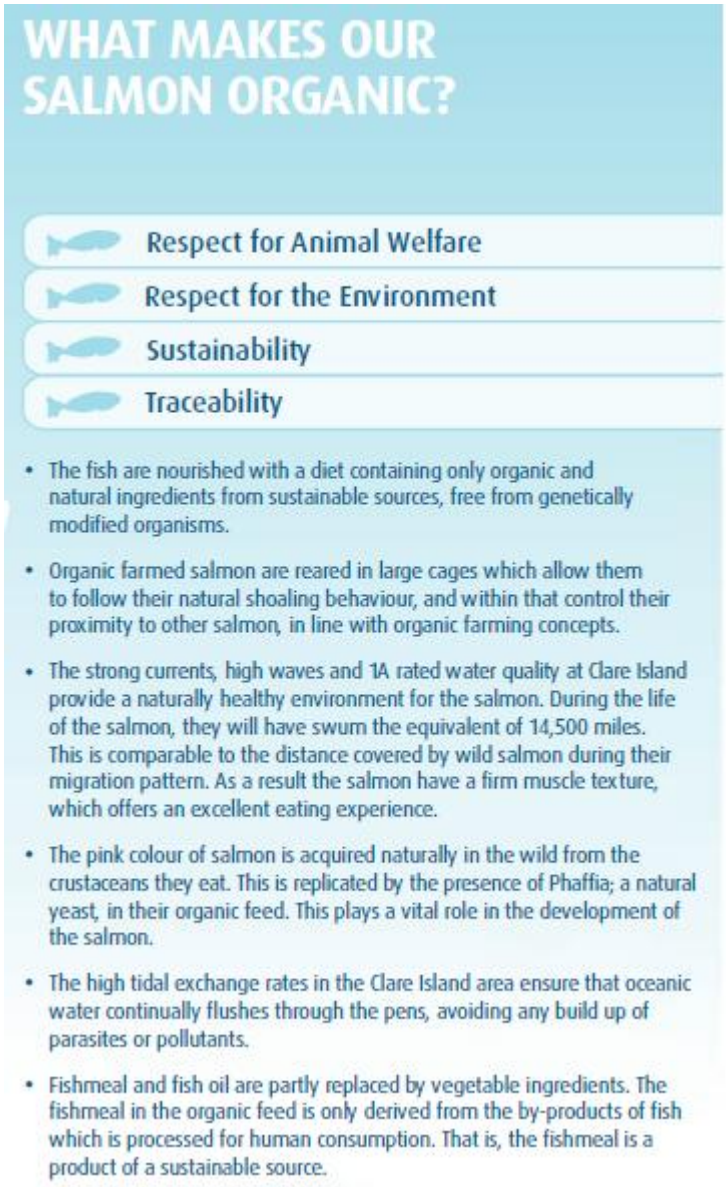


Marine Harvest claim in their brochure for '[The Organic Salmon Company]' that their farmed salmon is "100% Certified Organic Salmon."

Marine Harvest claims "no negative impact" of their operations and that they "work in harmony with the environment".

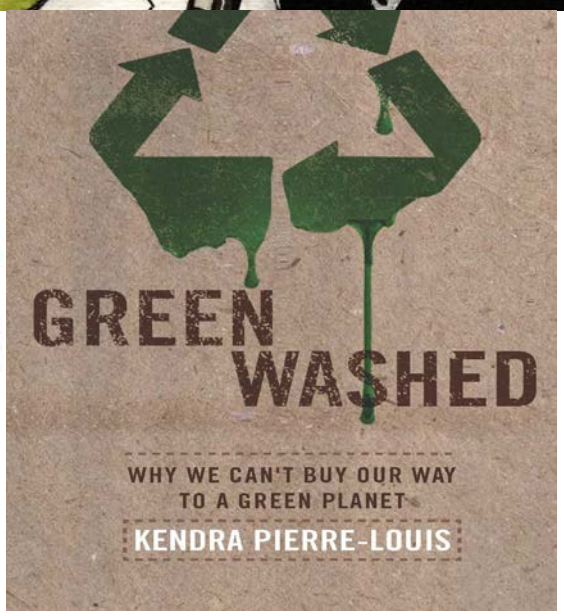


“What makes our salmon organic?” asks Marine Harvest who claim the strong tidal currents are key to “avoiding any build up of parasites and pollutants.”



“Marine Harvest’s ‘organic’ farmed salmon is 100% pure salmon shit!” said Don Staniford of the Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture speaking from Norway (13 May).

"All farmed salmon marketed as 'organic' is a sham, scam and consumer con. Go wild and natural not organic and farmed. Organically Farmed Salmon is an Oxymoron."



When it comes to 'organic' salmon it's clearly a case of caveat emptor – buyer beware.

Or, in modern parlance, the consensus seems to be that ‘organic’ salmon farmers are talking out of their ass!