The Abominable Salmon Council – Buyer Beware! (20 April 2012)

Be scared, very very scared: the horror show that is the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) is gearing up to unleash ‘responsible’, ‘environmental’, ‘honest’, ‘credible’ and ‘sustainable’ farmed salmon on an unsuspecting public.

Anybody who knows anything about the salmon farming industry understands that such words do not even belong in the same sentence let alone used to certify freaky farmed salmon.
Read more details via ‘The Farmed Salmon Horror Show – Not for the Faint of Heart’, ‘The Horrors of Intensive Salmon Farming’ and ‘Fish Farmageddon: The Infectious Salmon Aquacalypse’

Just last week it was revealed that over 95% of farmed salmon bought in supermarkets in Canada tested positive for a Norwegian virus. Moreover, the contamination of farmed salmon with dioxins, PCBs, DDT and other cancer-causing contaminants is well documented.
The spectre of farmed fish causing sickness in humans still looms following a scientific paper in the *Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease* linking fish farming with ‘Mad Cow Disease’. Only this week (18 April), a food blog advised consumers that: “Farmed salmon are less nutritious; Farmed salmon is destroying the environment; Farmed salmon contains high levels of toxins.”

Read more via ‘Eat With Your Dollars: Sourcing Your Salmon’

Yet the ASC clearly didn’t get the memo or are too busy counting the money flooding in to countenance common sense. This week, the ASC unveiled a shiny new “consumer label for responsibly farmed seafood.”

“The ASC label is complimentary to the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) label; which is used on certified and sustainably wild caught fish,” claimed a press release issued by the ASC (17 April). “With the introduction of the ASC certification program for farmed seafood, an important step is made towards being able to credibly demonstrate to consumers that all fish sold comes from producers who have worked to limit their impact on the environment.”

The ASC is the fish farming equivalent of the much maligned Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). But if you thought the MSC was the epitome of evil and a poster child of everything
that is wrong with certification, then think again. The ASC’s growing pains look as if the ASC is shaping up to be the MSC’s evil twin brother.

The awful truth is that the Aquaculture Stewardship Council ought to be renamed the Abominable Salmon Council.

Shock horror, it can be exclusively revealed that the ‘Abominable Salmon’ is so vital to the ASC’s nightmare vision that farmed salmon is predicted to account for over 50% of the ASC’s revenue stream.
Hank Cauley, currently serving on the ASC Supervisory Board, let the disease-ridden farmed salmon slip out of the bag in 2010 when he advised Pew Environment Group (where he works as a ‘Senior Officer’):

From: Hank Cauley
Sent: Thursday, April 22, 2010 6:04 AM
To: Don Stanford; *PCT-Aquaculture Group
Subject: RE: ASC "presents visual identity at Brussels Seafood Expo"

On salmon, yes, salmon and its certification under the ASC is immensely important as, ultimately, 5-7 years out, a slight majority of its label royalty stream will come from the certification of salmon. This is why getting the SAD stds in place on a timely basis is so important. Without salmon stds, the ASC won’t make it unless foundations are willing to foot the bill for a long time and that increasingly looks unrealistic.

Hank Cauley


In another email sent to the Pew Environment Group in April 2010, the ASC board member admitted that: “if you want to have a certification program for aquaculture then salmon is key.” In January 2009 he further suggested that: “it’s smoke and mirrors if it doesn't make sense economically.”
Mr. Cauley’s rabid support for the ASC landed him in hot water last year when all reference to the Pew Environment Group was removed from the ASC web-site.

[Photo: Hank Cauley promoting the ASC in 2011 at the Seafood Summit in Vancouver]

Read more via ‘Pew Environment Group “distancing” itself from ASC? Clarification about ASC Board membership coming’

Pew Environment Group’s Managing Director Joshua Reichert was forced to state publicly in February 2011 that: “The Pew Environment Group has no position regarding the ASC, either pro or con.”
However, in their ‘Comments on the final draft standard of the Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue’, Pew Environment Group made it clear that the ASC’s salmon standard was not worthy of support:

“In the final analysis of whether or not Pew Environment Group (PEG) can support the Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue (SAD) standard we return to our initial question of whether the standard sufficiently drives environmental improvement. Unfortunately, the answer is no.

While we support several individual requirements of the standard, its deficiencies in addressing major environmental impacts and risks such as the transfer of pathogens and the discharge of harmful chemicals are too significant to overlook. The fact that some performers in the industry are able to achieve stronger performance within these categories furthers our concern that the SAD standard is placing greater emphasis on strong industry adoption rather than strong environmental performance. PEG cannot support the standard until it is revised to more adequately address the negative impacts of smolt production in freshwater lakes in Chile; the use and discharge of antibiotics considered highly important to human health; the amplification of pathogens and transfer to wild fish; and the use and discharge of toxic parasiticides.”
Mr. Cauley knows the certification game all too well and was the architect of another fake certification scheme – the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). As Executive Director of the FSC from 1999 to 2002 he presided over “incredible growth” which branded 8.7 million acres of forests in the United States alone as ‘certified’.

The FSC has been fiercely criticised since being set up in 1993. “From the falsification of documents, to illegal third party concessions and environmental damage in forests from Guyana to Nicaragua to Brazil, over the years FSC has been found to have certified the uncertifiable,” wrote Matilda Lee in an article – “Can we trust the FSC?” – published in The Ecologist in 2009 (for more background visit ‘FSC-Watch’).
The ASC, by certifying farmed salmon (and shrimp), is now following the same destructive path as the FSC and is certifying the uncertifiable. Indeed, anyone who seriously believes that farmed salmon can ever be sustainable, responsible and environmentally friendly must be certifiable themselves.

By leaping from the FSC to the ASC and believing that farmed salmon should be certified, Mr. Cauley is clearly a nutbar.
The credibility (and sanity) of the panda (WWF) must also be seriously called into question. Lest it be forgotten that it was WWF who jumped into bed with Unilever in founding the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) in 1996. Unilever, as it happens, is the company which set up the first salmon farms in the 1960s and also founded Marine Harvest. In 2008, Marine Harvest also entered into a corporate partnership with WWF Norway “to strengthen the focus on sustainable fish farming with leading environmental standards” (more of that deal later!).

In 2004, WWF set up the ‘Aquaculture Dialogues’ with both Marine Harvest and Nurtreco’s subsidiary Skretting on the ‘Steering Committee’ of the ‘Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue’. The ‘Aquaculture Dialogues’, as it turned out (it was not revealed publicly until 2009), acted as a Trojan Horse in the war for certification.

As WWF explains: “When finalized, the standards are given to a new organization, the Aquaculture Stewardship Council, that will be responsible for working with independent, third party entities to certify farms that are in compliance with the standards.”
In fact, WWF funded the expenses of the ASC’s first ‘Development Director’, Dr. Philip Smith. In the incestuous world of salmon farming certification, it will come as no surprise to discover that Dr. Smith used to work for the fish feed companies EWOS (a subsidiary of Cermaq) and Nutreco as well as Marine Harvest. Dr. Smith left the ASC last year and joined another salmon farming company (the Scottish Salmon Company).

WWF’s aquaculture standards are therefore the vehicle with which the ASC are railroading the certification of farmed salmon (as well as the equally destructive farmed shrimp).

As Hank Cauley admitted in 2009:

-----Original Message-----
From: Hank Cauley
Sent: Wednesday, January 28, 2009 1:46 PM
To: PCT-Aquaculture Group
Subject: RE: WWF looks to private investors to co-fund ASC

Anyway, devils in the details and wwf is clearly frustrated that they've developed a set of stds and no one wants to use them so they have to invent the asc to take it forward.

Hank Cauley
g: 202-552-2167 | c: 202-262-4433 |

Fast-forward to 2012 and the ASC is attempting to invent the ‘responsible’ and ‘sustainable’ farmed salmon.
WWF’s role in pandering to corporate interests is nothing short of prostitution – what Jeffrey St. Clair famously coined ‘Panda Porn’. The so-called ‘panda cash machine’ or ‘Wicked Wildlife Fund’ has now become “little more than the well-paid zombies of the corporations they have gotten into bed with”.
Watch a documentary exposing WWF’s eco-facade – online via ‘Silence of the Pandas’ and read ‘Way Beyond Greenwashing’

Scepticism of WWF’s farmed salmon standards and the ASC’s certification of farmed salmon is simmering away. A petition via the organization ‘Change’, signed by over 1,500 people from all over the world, includes:

“Please help stop farmed salmon being certified as ‘sustainable’, ‘environmental’ and ‘responsible’. WWF, the Aquaculture Stewardship Council and Marine Harvest (the largest salmon farming company in the world) are attempting to green-wash salmon farming via ‘Standards for Responsible Aquaculture’. However these standards fail to address welfare and food safety issues and allow for the use of toxic chemicals, antibiotics, unsustainable feed, escapes, non-native species, GM feed and the killing of marine mammals.”

Sign the petition online via ‘Stop the Certification of Farmed Salmon as ‘Sustainable’ and ‘Responsible’’

The ‘Final Draft Standards for Responsible Salmon Aquaculture’ was published in February this year and immediately attracted criticism – even from a member of the Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue’s ‘Steering Committee’ in the shape of the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR).
“The final draft Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue (SAD) standard is stronger than any of the other certification systems currently being touted by the industry,” said Jay Ritchlin, Director of Marine Conservation at CAAR member group the David Suzuki Foundation, and a Steering Committee member of the Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue. “Unfortunately, there are too many uncertainties to say it is strong enough to protect wild salmon or marine ecosystems and, for the CAAR groups, that is our bottom line.”

CAAR is particularly concerned that the standard falls short in a number of significant areas including elimination of disease transmission between farmed and wild fish. It does not adequately address the impacts of existing exotic species. While there are some important limits on the use and discharge of antibiotics and toxic sea lice chemicals, the standard does not eliminate them.

Nevertheless, despite such criticism: “CAAR will remain on the SAD Steering Committee to influence the standard's implementation, to follow through on what has been a strong process and to evaluate the evidence collected from farms that apply to use the standard.”

Read more via ‘Final Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue standards won't solve threat to wild salmon’

GAAIA believes that any standard which supports the status quo – and consequently sanctions the use of toxic chemicals, the killing of marine mammals, escapes, waste pollution, sea lice infestation, the spread of infectious diseases and use of GM and unsustainable feed – is not worth the paper it is written on.

Judge for yourselves by reading the final draft of the salmon standards online here!

Opposition to the ASC is growing all over the globe. In 2009, a coalition of 70 NGO from around the world signed a letter expressing opposition to the ASC. “The proposed certification by WWF promises to legitimize environmentally and socially damaging forms of aquaculture in the name of cheap prawns and salmon,” Natasha Ahmad, secretary of Asia Solidarity Against Industrial Aquaculture, told SeafoodSource. “It’s high time that WWF stops pandering to the interests of big business and instead begins to listen to the voices of real people that rely on the oceans and forests to survive.”

Read more via ‘NGO Oppose Aquaculture Stewardship Council’

Intrafish reported in August 2010 that:

“Salmon farming opponent the Pure Salmon Campaign blasted the standard. “Any standard which merely rewards the status quo and allows open-net cages to continue to pollute our global oceans via infectious diseases, toxic chemicals, sea lice, escapees, untreated wastes and uneaten feed is not worth the green-washed paper it is written on. Marine Harvest would have us all believe that the industry has come a long way and made significant progress but the ongoing spread of ISA in Norway and increasing chemical resistance to sea lice serves only to remind us that even the trumpeted industry leader is lagging behind in the Dark Ages,” said Don Staniford, global coordinator for the Pure Salmon Campaign.
“By cravenly kowtowing to Marine Harvest --with whom WWF Norway has a financial relationship via their 'partnership for sustainable aquaculture' -- and pandering to the vested interests of retailers who are demanding 'green' farmed salmon, WWF risks losing the precious little credibility it has left,” said Staniford. “Likewise, if the Aquaculture Stewardship Council, whose current Director is a former Managing Director of Marine Harvest Europe, certifies salmon farmed in open net cages then it will be mocked as a watered down version of the much-maligned Marine Stewardship Council. For if the MSC has the gall to certify Antarctic krill and wild Fraser River sockeye salmon then you can bet your bottom dollar that the ASC is casting its beady eye towards open net cage farmed salmon and intensively farmed Mangrove-friendly shrimp.”

Read more via GAAIA’s web-page on ‘Certification’ and ‘Not Worth the Paper’

WWF and Marine Harvest were also criticised at a meeting of the Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue in Bergen in 2009 when Green Warriors of Norway unveiled a 'Skin the Corrupt Panda' banner.

“There is no right way to do something wrong,” said Green Warriors' leader Kurt Oddekalv

Read more via ‘Green Warriors: WWF Undermines the Environmental Movement’

Greenpeace’s ‘Green Action’ campaign also criticised WWF and Marine Harvest for their toxic relationship in 2010.
Here’s Marine Harvest’s billionaire owner John Fredriksen (75th richest man in the world worth $11.3 billion according to the Forbes ‘Rich List’) pictured as a money machine – next to ‘Branda the Panda’.

WAY BEYOND GREENWASHING

Have Corporations Captured “Big Conservation”? 
The ASC and WWF are carrying on regardless – very much like headless chickens sponsored by Perdue University.

WWF’s Katherine Bostick (who has overseen the ‘Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue’ process since its inception in 2004) informed participants in an email last month (29 March): “The Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue Steering Committee is currently overseeing the development of the audit manual to accompany the standards and hopes to finalize the standards and the manual soon.” She ends by encouraging people to visit the ASC at the Seafood Exposition in Brussels next week (24-26 April): “If you will be at the Seafood Exposition in Brussels in April, I encourage you to stop by the ASC booth to talk with ASC staff about the organization and the certification process.”
Last month, the ASC’s CEO Chris Ninnes was hawking the “sustainability” aspects of the ASC at a conference in the United Kingdom although the word ‘sustainable’ had been strangely dropped from his presentation.

Now see the ASC’s web-site again and notice the word ‘sustainable’ is mysteriously back!

The ASC advocates a strong ‘chain of custody standard’.
However, the salmon farming industry by its very nature breaks the chain.

Feeding more wild fish to produce less farmed fish is the antithesis of ‘sustainability’. As Dr. Daniel Pauly of the University of British Columbia pointed out in 2009:

“There is a hitch: salmon and many other farmed fish are carnivorous, and farming them involves feeding them with animal flesh, just as farming mountain lions would. In this case, the animal flesh, supplied in the form of pellets, consists of ground up sardines, anchovies, mackerels and other edible fish caught mainly - you guessed it - in developing countries. About 3-4 pounds of ground up small fishes are required to produce one pound of farmed
salmon. Thus, the more farmed fish we produce, the less fish there is. This is akin to robbing Pedro to pay Paul.”

For more background on how salmon farming is draining the world’s oceans read ‘Raising Tigers of the Sea’ and watch the film ‘The Greed of Feed’

Sadly but not surprisingly, the ASC’s supervisory board is comprised of a posse of pro-salmon farming advocates including the world’s largest fish feed company Nutreco (the owner of Marine Harvest until 2006) and WWF’s Jose Villalon who previously worked for Marine Harvest.

**Governance and People**

**The ASC Supervisory Board**

Jose Villalon (chairman)
Managing Director of WWF Aquaculture

Ted van der Put
Programme Director IDH (the Dutch Sustainable Trade Initiative)

Hank Cauley
Innovative Environmental Technologies Inc

Peter Hajipieris
Chief Technical, Sustainability & External Affairs Officer, Birds Eye/Iglo

Knut Nesse
Chief Operating Officer Aquaculture, Nutreco N.V.
Marine Harvest brazenly promote their cosy relationship with WWF via their web-site.

In a shameless display of window-dressing, Marine Harvest wears WWF’s panda logo like a green fig leaf.
The incestuous relationship does not stop there. The ‘Steering Committee’ of WWF’s Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue includes the Norwegian salmon farming trade association (the Norwegian Seafood Federation); the feed company Skretting (a subsidiary of Nutreco) and the Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance (whose members include the BC Salmon Farmers Association, Grieg and Mainstream) in addition to Marine Harvest.

Nutreco trumpets their role in the ASC in their ‘Sustainability Report 2011’.
WWF is little more than a shameless apologist of aquaculture masquerading as an environmental group. WWF Norway, for example, accepts blood money from Marine Harvest to the tune of 800,000 NOK per year. Even with such blatant bribery, Marine Harvest is not 100% confident that it can meet the low standard of the ASC. Last month, Marine Harvest announced that it was conducting a trial certification.

Marine Harvest to trial run ASC certification

Marine Harvest will run an ASC salmon trial to decide if it will proceed with process.

As soon as the certification manual for the Aquaculture Stewardship Council’s (ASC) standard for farmed salmon is ready, Marine Harvest, the world’s largest salmon farmer, will commence trial certification. The result will decide whether or not the company proceeds further.

“Once the certification manual is ready and approved, we will trial run certification at selected sites to determine the extent to which our production can be certified. The result from the trial certification will decide whether ASC is a company that Marine Harvest will proceed further with,” said Marine Harvest Communications Director Jorgen Christiansen.

“The ASC has become an extremely rigid environmental standard, and I have yet to see an equally strict standard for other food products,” claimed Marine Harvest’s Director of Communications Jorgen Christiansen.

Thankfully (for Marine Harvest), the new CEO of the ASC is a former executive of the MSC (Chris Ninnes) who pledges even lower and more streamlined standards.
"It will be shorter, quicker, cheaper [than the MSC's process]," said the ASC’s CEO in an interview in February. In view of the MSC’s appalling track record such a statement hardly inspires consumer confidence.

In a presentation last month in the United Kingdom, the ASC’s CEO gave a glimpse into the nightmare future for farmed fish certification.
If the ASC follows the same trajectory of growth as the MSC then the marketplace will be flooded with “sustainable” farmed salmon sooner than the ’panda cash machine’ (aka ‘Branda the Panda’) can say ‘kerching’.

The catfish (pangasius) is out of the bag already with standards finalized along with abalone, tilapia and bivalves. Salmon, shrimp and trout are next on the ASC conveyor belt during Q4 2012 with only seriola and cobia delayed.
Planning milestones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>ADs → ASC</th>
<th>Start audits</th>
<th>Volumes available in market</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tilapia</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Mar 2012</td>
<td>Q2 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pangasius</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Apr 2012</td>
<td>Q2 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bivalves (4)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Q2 2012</td>
<td>Q3 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abalone</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Q2 2012</td>
<td>Q3 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salmon</td>
<td>AD finished</td>
<td>2nd half 2012</td>
<td>Q4 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrimps</td>
<td>AD finished</td>
<td>2nd half 2012</td>
<td>Q4 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trout</td>
<td>AD finished</td>
<td>2nd half 2012</td>
<td>Q4 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seriola &amp; Cobia</td>
<td>AD paused</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Read more codswallop (i.e. bullshit) via ‘The ASC: Making Sense of Sustainability Through Positive Engagement’

Don’t say you haven’t been warned! Just watch as the Abominable Salmon Council (aka Aquaculture Stewardship Council) attempts to greenwash salmon farming with a glossy PR makeover.
Hogwash more like it. With all the infectious disease problems in Canada, for example, this could be a case for a real consumer champion, Advertising Standards Canada.

The salmon spin doctors in Scotland, Norway, Canada and Chile have all peddled farmed salmon as “sustainable”, “environmentally friendly” and even “organic” – hoodwinking a gullible public in the process.

Read more via ‘Spinning Farmed Salmon’ and ‘Farmageddon and the Spin Doctors’

The Norwegian Seafood Export Council, for example, was accused of deceptive advertising in 2010 when a complaint was filed with the Federal Trade Commission’s ‘Bureau of Consumer Protection’ (read complaint in full online here).
Complaint: Norwegian salmon ad deceptive

Last year, in a presentation at the Seafood Summit in Vancouver, the ASC made a plea for patience. “The ASC is on a journey here – a long journey,” said Dr. Philip Smith (the then CEO of the ASC). “It’s extremely important to understand how much financial and human resources that are needed to put in in order to drive change. It does take time. Unrealistic timelines will create problems for managing expectations.”

Jose Villalon of WWF was also at pains to stress: “Sustainability is a journey and we’re all on the march together – the word ‘sustainability’ implies you’ve already reached your destination. Hence the ASC is staying away from the word sustainability and focussing on responsible. Please appreciate that the ASC is a work in progress”.

Judging by the abject lack of progress since, the ASC looks nailed on to achieve the impossible – making the ‘corrupted’ MSC look an honourable organization! Earlier this year, the MSC suffered a body blow as Alaskan wild salmon producers pulled out en masse of the certification program.

Read more via ‘Complaint: Norwegian salmon ad deceptive’

Read more via ‘ASC on a ‘mission impossible’ to brand farmed salmon as ‘responsible’”

By SeafoodSource staff
15 February, 2010 – A complaint filed with the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in late January alleges a Norwegian Seafood Export Council (NSEO) ad infers its salmon is wild when the fish is actually farmed.

The letter of complaint is signed by Rick Moonen, chef at RM Seafood in Las Vegas; Marianne Cufone, Food & Water Watch fish program director; George Kimbrell, staff attorney for the International Center for Technology Assessment & The Center for Food Safety; Anne Mosness of the Go Wild Campaign, Bartlett Neyrol of Capital Strategies; and Don Staniford, Pure Salmon Campaign global coordinator.

The complaint claims that the ad, which appeared in the October issue of Cooking Light, deliberately and systematically uses misleading language such as naturally, nature, pure and simple to convey the image of wild salmon.
Marine Stewardship Council losing ground with wild salmon fisheries

Last year, the MSC was accused of “duping” consumers by giving its ‘eco-label’ to fisheries where stocks are tumbling. Richard Page, a Greenpeace oceans campaigner, told The Guardian that decisions to certify some fisheries “seriously undermine” the MSC’s credibility. “I will go as far as to say consumers are being duped,” he said. “They think they are buying fish that are sustainable and can eat them with a clean conscience.”

Read more via ‘Sustainable fish customers 'duped' by Marine Stewardship Council’

“Unfortunately, perception is reality,” said Gerald Leape of the Pew Environment Group in 2010. “The MSC’s label falsely advertises the message that all krill are sustainably caught and that consuming krill-based omega 3 supplements or purchasing farmed salmon raised on krill meal is okay. Nothing could be further from the truth.”

The MSC is scraping the bottom of the barrel to such an extent that on World Oceans Day in July 2011 it announced a business deal with fast-food giant McDonald’s to certify as “sustainable” the catch used for each of the 100 million fish sandwiches the chain sells in Europe every year.
According to The New York Times: “For granting McDonald’s the right to its imprimatur, the nonprofit organization will receive 0.5 percent of the cost of the 100 million frozen filets it certifies.”

The writing on the wall is all too clear – McDonald’s have already teamed up with the world’s largest salmon farming producer Marine Harvest. In 2007, McDonald’s launched a ‘Laksewrap’ (salmon wrap) in Norway with the goal of expanding the product to the global market. An advertising campaign showed the farmed salmon wrap leaping out of the water with a M shape and the Marine Harvest logo underneath.

**McDonalds is launching salmon wrap with salmon from Marine Harvest**

**NORWAY - McDonalds has launched a new product in Norway; the Salmon wrap.**

The salmon comes from the Marine Harvest plant at Hitra. "It is very exciting to cooperate with McDonalds and launch such a healthy and delicious product at the fast food chain", says Arne Hjellnes, Communication Director in Marine Harvest.

The product is a salmon fillet from Marine Harvest Hitra, together with salat, mango and either wasabi or honey.

The recipe is made in cooperation with the Culinary Institute of Norway and the VAP team in Belgium.

The salmon wrap from Hitra will be available at all McDonalds restaurants in Norway from 9 August.
Marine Harvest Canada blogged about it via 'Marine Harvest teams up with McDonalds' and the Norwegian Embassy in the United States bragged:

“The aim is to go global and get the Norwegian salmon into all Mc Donald’s’ 31,000 locations around the world. If the salmon wrap sales hit the magic number of $30 million within the first year, the wrap may be ready for launch abroad in short time.”

Read more via ‘McSalmon, Please!’

“It is very exciting to cooperate with McDonalds and launch such a healthy and delicious product at the fast food chain”, said Arne Hjeltnes, Communication Director in Marine Harvest.

McDonald’s and the ASC ought to know better. In 1997, McDonald's were sued when “four people, including two McDonald's employees, were hospitalized after eating tainted McLaks salmon burgers at a restaurant in Lorenskog, located in the outskirts of Oslo.” McDonald's Norway confirmed that the food poisoning materialized from a “corrupted” consignment of salmon fillets delivered by the Norwegian fish firm West Fish, based in Alesund. Separate legal actions against McDonald's were filed by the four people who claimed they became sick after consuming McLaks burgers. “At first the McLaks tasted very good, but after some minutes my mouth and throat became numb, and I experienced internal spasms,” said Geir Sundberg, one of the four filing suit against McDonald's.

**McDonald's sued over McSalmon burger sickness**

**Published: July 22, 1997**

OSLO — McDonald's in Norway is facing legal action following claims that its McLaks salmon fillet burger, launched in June, caused food poisoning.

Four people, including two McDonald's employees, were hospitalized after eating tainted McLaks salmon burgers at a restaurant in Lorenskog, located in the outskirts of Oslo.

The incident forced the withdrawal of McLaks from the domestic market, and the suspension of plans to launch the product in the U.K., France and Japan.

McDonald's Norway, which operates a countrywide chain of 36 outlets, confirmed that the food poisoning materialized from a “corrupted” consignment of salmon fillets delivered by the Norwegian fish firm West Fish, based in Alesund. McDonald's Norway has declined to comment while the lawsuit is pending.

Separate legal actions against McDonald's have been filed by the four people who claim they became sick after consuming McLaks burgers. McDonald's has been producing salmon burgers in Norway since the 1970s. However, McLaks is the chain's first fish burger composed solely of salmon fillets.

"At first the McLaks tasted very good, but after some minutes my mouth and throat became numb, and I experienced internal spasms," said Geir Sundberg, one of the four filing suit against McDonald's.

For more details read ‘McDonald's sued over McSalmon burger sickness’
Advertising Age reported under ‘1997 Ad Follies’:

“In Norway, McDonald's pulled the McLaks salmon burger off the market after four customers were treated for food poisoning. McLaks had been a hit with health-conscious Norwegians, and McDonald's had been considering expanding the product to Sweden and Denmark”

For more background read ‘Eco-Washing McFarmed Fish’

Mmmm – insanitary, filthy farmed salmon with lashings of listeria, sea lice, infectious diseases and tumours anyone?

As well as the ASC’s ‘Abominable Salmon’ certification scheme there already exists a raft of other eco-labels peddling farmed salmon as ‘trustworthy’, ‘responsible’, ‘organic’ and ‘sustainable’.
Dig more deeply, however, and behind the label there is a horror show. Cooke, the salmon farming giant lurking behind the brand names above, is currently embroiled in a disease crisis with Infectious Salmon Anaemia (ISA) spreading in Eastern Canada. Cooke was also charged by Environment Canada last year in relation to the illegal use of toxic chemicals and the deaths of lobsters.

The Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA) and Friend of the Sea are the ASC’s rivals to certify farmed salmon but suffer from similar criticisms (if not more).

Read more via ‘Comparison of Seafood Eco-Labels’ and ‘Better Than the Rest?: A Resource Guide to Farmed Salmon Certifications’

Earlier this month, the GAA certified a processing plant in New Brunswick, Canada, operated by Northern Harvest Sea Farms praising the company’s “continued dedication to responsible aquaculture.” There was no mention of the $24,000 fine issued by Health Canada last year following six pesticide violations. Friends of the Sea has also certified numerous salmon farming companies – including Wester Ross Fisheries who have been accused of sea lice infestation and pollution in Scotland.

Read more via ‘Who’s Calling Who a Convicted Criminal?’

A review of eco-labels for marine aquaculture by the University of Victoria in British Columbia published in December 2011 found that many were “misleading” and “simply aren’t living up to their promises” (watch a slide show online here).

“Eco-labels are abundant in the marketplace, but there’s little to them but the label,” Dr. John Volpe, lead author of the report, told TakePart. “Many retailers don’t provide any information other than the sticker, and give no indication to what they’re basing their claims on. There’s no meat on the bones.”
NPR reported (8 December) via that: “The majority of labels scored less than 10 percent higher than their conventional counterparts. Four scored exactly the same as the conventional average, and two labels, Global G.A.P and Marks & Spencer, got negative scores. This means their sustainability standards set the bar so low that companies doing more than the average amount of environmental damage could still obtain an eco-friendly label.”

Read more via ‘Environmental Claims for Farmed Fish Don’t Hold Up To Scrutiny’

In fact, not a single standard (including the WWF’s ‘Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue’ and by extension the ASC’s salmon certification scheme) achieved a ‘green’ rating.
Perversely, desperate retailers and supermarket chains are lined up like lemmings rushing headlong to promote farmed salmon as “sustainable” and “responsible”.

Read the report in full via ‘How Green is Your Eco-Label? A Comparison of the Environmental Benefits of Marine Aquaculture Standards’
For example, Canadian retailer Loblaw pledged last year to sell only “sustainable seafood” by the end of 2013. In promoting Cooke’s farmed salmon, Paul Uys, vice-president of sustainable seafood at Loblaw, blathered like Donald Rumsfeld to The Globe & Mail: “We’re not saying this is the most sustainable; we’re saying this is the most sustainable seafood that we can currently sell.”

“As we know, there are known knowns. There are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns. That is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns, the ones we don’t know we don’t know.”

Briefing for United States DoD talk 17-1902 by Secretary General Donald Rumsfeld.

That Rumsfeld’s views have been profoundly influential is a known known, especially to Bush & Blair, one of those things we know we know.

Read more via ‘Environmentalists Skeptical of Loblaw’s Boost for Salmon Farming’
Loblaw, as well as other retailers, surely have an impossible job ahead convincing consumers that farmed salmon is sustainable let alone safe and healthy. Just this week The Globe & Mail revealed that farmed salmon bought in supermarkets owned by Loblaw in Vancouver tested positive for a Norwegian disease (Heart & Skeletal Muscle Inflammation).

Loblaw’s spokesman Craig Ware spluttered: “As relates to this virus, this is definitely the first time we’ve heard about it in relation to any of the fish that have been sold in our stores. Obviously, we take any of these kind of concerns seriously. And so we are looking into it with our suppliers.”

Read more via ‘Supermarket Salmon Test Positive for Virus Found in Europe’

Hell knows what other skeletons, viruses and toxic timebombs are lurking in the salmon farming industry’s closet.
When it comes to ‘Abominable Salmon’ it’s clearly a case of caveat emptor (buyer beware)!

Online via “The Abominable Salmon Council - Buyer Beware!”