

Follow up into salmon farming in Scotland

Correspondence from Dr Martin Jaffa

20 January 2025

Dear Mr Carson

You have told the salmon farming industry via Salmon Farming Expert that Transparency is your friend which is why I am now requesting as a FOI for details of how the inquiry was put together and how witnesses were selected. It is quite apparent from your report that the Committee have preferred to hear the views of the anti-salmon farming lobby who sole aim is to bring about the removal of salmon farming from Scottish seas.

Although there has been much talk of the harm done to the environment, I did not hear of one single quantified example of the damage caused. There is no link to the collapse of wild salmon. or reduced catches of crabs and lobsters. There is no evidence of waste build up around farms. In fact, the latest analyses show that the seabed recovers quickly after the long term presence of a farm. The only issue with numbers that the opponents use is mortality and has been highlighted this only became an issue when anglers decided to use it as a way of undermining the industry.

It is a shame that the committee followed the REC inquiry in its format instead of having witnesses from opponents and the industry sharing the same table. Groups like WildFish are happy to come and talk to you but when faced with potentially talking to the industry run a mile because they might have to face questions that they cannot answer. Just prior to Christmas., one of your witnesses, Rachel from Wild Fish was speaking at a meeting in Edinburgh, but when she heard I was to attend, she got the organisers to cancel my ticket. CCN also refused my offer of a meeting. I see in the report (107) that CCN said that you need thousands of fish counted each week to give a meaningful relatively statistically accurate figure for lice on a farm. Any A-level statistics student will tell you this is nonsense, If they can't get this right then what else have they got wrong but have never been challenged because they refuse to sit in the same room as the industry.

However, the major flaw in the report, given that it is a follow on inquiry is the omission of any discussion about the impacts of sea lice on wild fish, which was after all the primary driver of the REC inquiry. I believe that my name was put forward as a potential witness as well as an offer from myself as an expert on sea lice interactions. Instead, you preferred to take scientific evidence from those with limited knowledge of the sector (as illustrated by their unwillingness to answer your questions). It is as if the inquiry didn't want to hear from the best sources of knowledge and experience.

Instead I was told, to make a written submission which I did and which included a detailed scientific account of why sea lice are not the issue the angling sector claims it to be., yet my submissions failed to reach the report unlike those from One Kind, Animal Equality (a vegan organisation) and Animal Law Foundation.

My submission also included an explanation of why Scottish Government policy driven by the angling sector is the main reason for increased mortality, a point that was ignored despite the Committee's focus on mortality.

I've read the report and I also know the industry extremely well. The claims that the industry has not made progress since the REC inquiry are unjustified. The industry has made great strides forward and continues to do so. If the Committee had spent more time with the industry rather than listen to opponents, then I believe that you would have a much better understanding of the success of this sector.

The REC Committee inquiry was always intended to be an attack on the sector by the angling fraternity prompted by a petition from what is now WildFish. Whilst the industry has moved forward, I am not sure that the Committee has. Why would you begin an inquiry into salmon farming by listening to the opponents. Surely, the first step is to learn about salmon farming and then hear what the opponents think and be able then to judge for yourselves whether they have a valid claim or not.

I will end with a quote from Alan Cochrane in the Daily Telegraph.

It is not often that lawmakers take a decidedly poor view of their country's produce especially when it just happens to be their number one food export.

Best regards

Dr Martin Jaffa