

## Coastal Communities Network, Aquaculture Sub-Group: Press Release

For Immediate Release: 27 January 2020

### **Re: The Coastal Communities Network declines workshop invitation by the Scottish Salmon Producers' Organisation**

In light of intense media inquiries, public scrutiny and critical cross-party reports from the Scottish Parliament on the environmental impact and management of the salmon farming industry, the Scottish Salmon Producers' Organisation (SSPO) is aiming to improve its public image with clever PR rather than taking effective action to change the unsustainable industry practises.

The SSPO invited industry figures and NGOs, including the Coastal Communities Network (CCN), to a workshop in Edinburgh on 23 January to create a 'blueprint' for the industry's sustainable future, despite continuing a massive expansion plan based on polluting open-cage salmon and trout farms.

The 11 community organisations of the CCN aquaculture sub-group have written to the SSPO, declining its invitation. We are clear that authentic actions to prove sustainability are needed, and this is well known by the industry without it being necessary for concerned coastal communities to tick the PR box of stakeholder buy-in.

The industry wants to double its size by 2030. This expansion is happening rapidly; since the Scottish Parliamentary Inquiry of 2018, an additional 76,000 tonnes of farmed fish biomass has either been consented or is in the pipeline for consideration.

This ignores the recommendation of that inquiry's report by the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee (RECC) that *'if the industry is to grow, the "status quo" in terms of regulation and enforcement is not acceptable. [The RECC Committee] is of the view that urgent and meaningful action needs to be taken to address regulatory deficiencies as well as fish health and environmental issues before the industry can expand.'* (our underlining)

Moving to closed-containment salmon farming would largely separate farmed fish from the open sea. This would prevent many of the industry's worst impacts by capturing waste, for recycling, and preventing sea lice from harming wild salmon. Farms like this are commercially viable, yet there is no effective action by the industry or the Scottish Government to change the direction in Scotland and ensure a swift transition toward closed-containment.

Guy Linley-Adams (Friends of Loch Etive) said:

*'We need to see the Scottish Government imposing stricter regulation on this damaging industry. That is what MSPs demanded, that is what CCN expects – nothing less will do. Ultimately, what we need to see is the industry getting serious about moving to full closed containment.'*

Aside from the moral duty of these companies to act as good neighbours to coastal communities, who rely on a healthy sea, there are plenty of other reasons to move to closed-containment farms:

- the ECCLR and REC committee reports' recommendations,
- the introduction and further development of SEPA's new regulations,

- the climate and ecological emergency which is contributing to problems of mass mortality due to disease, sea lice, jellyfish and harmful plankton blooms,
- the collapse of wild salmon stocks, in part due to the impact of sea lice from salmon farms,
- the growing public awareness and opposition to the methods and consequences of open-cage farming,
- the Governments' halt to expansions in Denmark, and the removal of all marine salmon farms in British Columbia by 2025, on environmental grounds,
- the rapid growth in vast investment going into competing, land-based, carbon-efficient, closed-containment systems internationally, which ultimately will out-compete Scotland's open-cage farms.

Paul Chandler (COAST Executive Director) said:

*'The SSPO, and the companies it represents, know that open-cage farming is harming our marine ecosystem and are resisting switching to closed-containment alternatives, purely because shareholder profits are greater, when the sea is used for free waste disposal.'*

The CCN aquaculture sub-group will continue to attend meetings with the Scottish Government and industry regulators to campaign for a shift toward a sustainable future for finfish farming and for our marine environment in Scotland. Further to this, the CCN aquaculture sub-group supports PE01715 (attached supporting document) and calls on the RECC to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that the finfish farming industry solely utilises closed-containment systems in Scotland.

John Aitchison (Friends of the Sound of Jura) said:

*'Many jobs in our coastal communities depend on the health of the sea, and so does much of Scotland's iconic wildlife, but open-cage fish farming is damaging that health, as well as spoiling the international reputation of 'Brand Scotland's' vital food and drink sector. We invite Julia Hesketh-Laird (CE SSPO) to come to talk to us about how fish farming should clean up its act, by using closed-containment.'*

ENDS.

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## Notes to Editors

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## **Supporting Documents**

The letter from the CCN Aquaculture sub-group to the SSPO, declining the invitation, is attached along with the original invitation.

The following CCN documents are published and can be downloaded from the CCN website here:

<https://www.communitiesforseas.scot/network-initiatives/aquaculture-subgroup/>

- CCN Response to SSPO Workshop Invitation – 17 January 2020
- CCN Briefing, RECC Report Debate - 4 February 2019
- Letter to Fergus Ewing, Cabinet Secretary, Rural Economy - 21 December 2018
- CCN Consultation Response to SEPA Aquaculture Plan - 19 December 2018
- CCN Statement on Salmon Farming in Scotland - 29 November 2018

PE01715: Closed Containment for Salmon Farms in Scotland, submitted by Mark Carter on behalf of Marine Concern, is available here:

<https://www.parliament.scot/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01715>

The Salmon & Trout Conservation Scotland submission to the Petitions Committee (PE 1715/B, 5 August 2019) is available here and is a useful additional briefing document:

[https://www.parliament.scot/S5\\_PublicPetitionsCommittee/Submissions%202019/PE1715\\_B.pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/S5_PublicPetitionsCommittee/Submissions%202019/PE1715_B.pdf)

For your interest, an article by Liu et al. (2016) on “Comparative Economic Performance and Carbon Footprint of Two Farming Models for Producing Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo Salar*): Land-Based Closed Containment System in Freshwater and Open Net Pen in Seawater” is also attached.