



BLUE EMPIRE — HOW YOUR SUPERMARKET SALMON IS IMPACTING COMMUNITIES IN WEST AFRICA

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by Amelia Cookson

Our new report, Blue Empire, exposes how the expansion of Norway's salmon farming industry is harming communities in the Global South.

It's been a big week for Feedback this week, with the launch of our [Blue Empire](#) report detailing the impact of Norway's enormous salmon farming industry on communities in the Global South.

The report is the fruit of months of careful research and collaboration with our partners to gain insights into the Norwegian salmon farming industry's global supply chain with a specific focus on its feed sourcing in West Africa.

Our findings have literally made front-page news, having been picked up both in a major investigation by the Financial Times: [The hidden cost of your supermarket salmon](#) and by Norwegian Business daily Dagens Næringsliv (DN): [Europeisk miljøorganisasjon slakter norsk oppdrett: – Matkolonialisme](#).

So, what did we find out about this massive industry, second only in value terms to Norway's oil and gas sector?

Norway's Salmon Farming Industry

Norway is the world's biggest salmon farming country, supplying more than half of global production. Norwegian companies occupy eleven out of the top 20 slots in the list of global producers of farmed salmon. Norway is also home to the world's largest salmon farmer, MOWI, which had a turnover of nearly €5 billion in 2022, and supplies supermarkets across Europe.

Why is this an issue?

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Salmon farming is often plugged as the 'sustainable solution' to relieving the burden on ocean life. However, this could not be further from the truth.

In fact, Norway's 'blue empire' has created a new type of food colonialism which fuels hunger and unemployment in regions such as West Africa and entrenches the existing power imbalance between rich and poor countries.

Farmed fish, such as salmon, consume millions of tonnes of wild-caught fish in their feed, in the form of fishmeal and fish oil (FMFO). In 2020, nearly 2 million tonnes of wild fish were required to produce the fish oil supplied to the Norwegian farmed salmon industry. This is equivalent to a staggering 2.5% of global marine fisheries catch. Just to supply fish oil to the Norwegian salmon farming industry!

On top of this, this system is inefficient. Norway's annual output of farmed salmon is one quarter (27%) lower than the volume of wild fish required to produce the fish oil used in Norwegian farmed salmon feed.

But where does this wild fish come from?

Much of this wild fish is sourced from Northwest Africa, threatening the livelihoods, health, food security and nutrition of coastal and inland communities, in direct contradiction with the Norwegian government's stated development goals, the overall objective of which is to "fight hunger and increase global food security" according to Anne Beathe Kristiansen Tvinnereim, Norway's Minister of International Development.

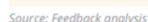
But our findings show that beneath shiny promises of a 'blue revolution' lies a 'blue empire'. The industrial scale of FMFO production in West Africa is driving up the price of fish and depleting marine resources in traditional fishing areas. This is reducing the availability of fish for human consumption – in Senegal alone, fish consumption declined by 50% in the 10 years between 2009-2018 – and resulting in the migration of fishers between West African coastal states.

How does Norwegian salmon link to the UK?

Norwegian salmon is now available in most European markets and is sold as a premium product all around the world, including the UK where it can be found in Sainsburys, Tesco, Costco, Aldi and Lidl. Even restaurants in the UK, such as Wagamama, which sees itself as "support[ing] the planet, whilst spreading positivity... from bowl to soul", source Norwegian farmed salmon.



"This Is Big Business Stripping Life From Our Oceans, And Depriving Our Fishing Communities Of Their Livelihoods. The Science Is Clear, It Will Soon Be Too Late. They Must Stop Now. These Industries Established In West Africa Use Fish To Produce Fish Meal And Fish Oil To Feed Animals In Europe And Asia While The African Population Needs This Fish To Feed Themselves.", Dr Aliou Ba, Senior Oceans Campaign Manager For Greenpeace Africa



Is there a solution?

When it comes to Norway's salmon farming industry, our report points to a clear disconnect between the Norwegian government's industrial strategy – under which salmon farming is set to expand massively by 2050 – and its development goals. In light of our findings, we're calling on Norwegian decision-makers to stop further growth in salmon farming, mandate genuine transparency throughout the supply chain, and ensure that Norwegian companies' activities and feed sourcing practices do not run counter to its own development policy.

Sign our petition, in partnership with Eko and Wild Fish, calling for Wagamama to drop farmed salmon from its menu!

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