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Salmon purchasers net \$85 mln settlement in U.S. price-fixing case

By Mike Scarcella

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- Lawsuit alleged conspiracy to set prices for Atlantic farm-raised salmon
- Plaintiffs' lawyers will seek up to \$25.5 million in fees
- Defendants including Norway's Mowi deny liability

(Reuters) - Six international seafood companies have agreed to pay \$85 million to resolve antitrust claims over an alleged conspiracy to fix the price of Atlantic farm-raised salmon, the plaintiffs' lawyers said in a [proposed settlement](#) filed on Wednesday.

Direct-purchase class plaintiffs including Euclid Fish Co in Ohio and New Jersey's The Fishing Line LLC alleged in claims first filed in 2019 in Florida federal court against leading Norwegian companies and others that they paid artificially inflated prices for farm-raised salmon and related products, including fillets and smoked salmon.

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The defendants included Norway's Mowi ASA, the world's largest fish farming company.

In settling the case, the plaintiffs said they faced "significant hurdles" since the alleged misconduct "occurred years ago and often involves personnel whom defendants no longer employ." Lawyers from plaintiffs' firms Podhurst Orseck and Hausfeld said in court filings they represent a settlement class with 800 members.

The settlement is subject to approval of Chief U.S. District Judge Cecilia Altonaga in Miami federal court.

Podhurst partner Peter Prieto on Thursday declined to comment.

Defendants including Mowi, represented by Karen Lent of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, continue to contest liability despite the settlement.

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Lent and a representative for Mowi did not immediately return messages on Thursday seeking comment.

The plaintiffs' complaint alleged the defendants, including several based in Norway and which are among the world's largest Atlantic salmon producers, coordinated sales prices and shared "commercially sensitive information" to reduce competition.

The lawsuit alleged "the salmon market is susceptible to manipulation by the major salmon producers in Norway" since the spot market there serves as a benchmark for salmon prices around the world. The EU is the largest global market for salmon, ahead of the United States, according to the complaint.

Altonaga in March 2021 [rejected](#) a bid to dismiss the case. She found the plaintiffs' facts "show defendants engaged in parallel conduct by coordinating spot market price increases."



The plaintiffs lawyers said they would seek up to \$25.5 million, or 30%, of the settlement for attorneys' fees.

The case is In re: Farm-Raised Salmon and Salmon Products Antitrust Litigation, U.S. District Court, Southern District of Florida, No. 1:19-cv-21551-CMA.

For direct purchaser plaintiffs: Peter Prieto of Podhurst Orseck and Michael Lehmann of Hausfeld

For Mowi ASA: Karen Lent of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom

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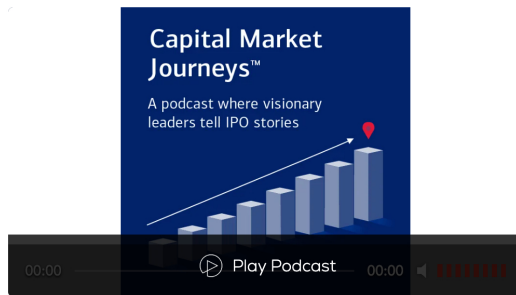


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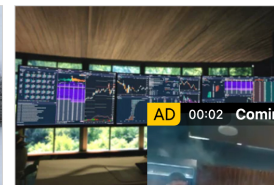
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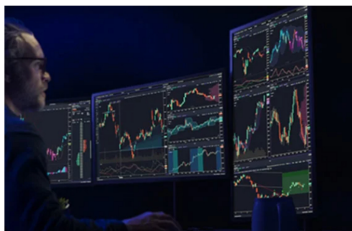


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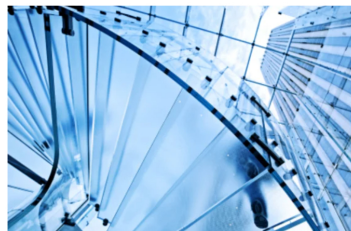


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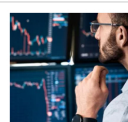
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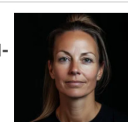
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