

Global groups denounce latest Best Aquaculture Practices salmon farm standard as greenwash

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By SeaChoice



Open letter daylight evidence of environmental damage associated with BAP salmon farms

More than 70 environmental, animal welfare, and community groups from 18 countries have called out the industry trade association, Global Seafood Alliance, for its continued greenwashing of industrial salmon farming with its latest version of the Best Aquaculture Practices certification.

In an open letter, submitted on the final day of the public consultation for BAP Salmon Farm Standard issue 3.0, groups listed damning evidence of numerous BAP certified farms and facilities associated with environmental damage, illegal activity, and/or negative impacts to endangered species. Examples were found in all major salmon farming regions: the U.S., Norway, Chile, Canada, Scotland, and Australia.

Groups criticized the new standard for failing to have limits on critical environmental impacts such as sea lice, disease, chemicals, and water quality. Instead, the standard relies on farms meeting their minimal legal obligations and following business as usual practices.

The open letter follows recent exposés by the Outlaw Ocean Project and Corporate Accountability Lab that uncovered serious allegations of forced labor, child labor, and worker exploitation, as well as environmental damage, associated with BAP-certified facilities in the Indian shrimp supply chain.

“There is mounting evidence that environmental harms and human rights abuses are occurring despite the ‘responsible seafood’ claims of BAP and other certifications. The new BAP Standard is no exception. Farms in Chile’s marine protected areas will be eligible for certification; so will farms in Canada, Scotland and Norway with sea lice loads that are lethal to juvenile wild salmon; as well as Australian farms that are driving the endangered Maugean skate towards extinction,” said Kelly Roebuck, SeaChoice representative from Living Oceans Society.

A significant number of major supermarkets - such as global giants Amazon, Walmart and ALDI; Loblaws and Target in North America; Tesco and Sainburys in the UK; and Woolworths and Coles in Australia - defer to the BAP certification as part of the responsible seafood sourcing policies.

“Major supermarkets must quit relying on these flawed certifications, stop the greenwashing, and do their own environmental and human rights due diligence on their seafood supply chains,” said Dana Cleaveley, SeaChoice Market Analyst.

Quotes from signatories:

Karen Wristen, Executive Director, Living Oceans Society (British Columbia, Canada):

“It is utterly irresponsible that all British Columbia salmon farms are BAP certified and sold to unsuspecting shoppers as ‘environmentally responsible’. Claiming ‘best practice’ doesn’t cut it when the practices allowed by certifications are simply farms obeying the law, and industry norms that continue to threaten wild salmon populations.”

Bonny Glambeck, Campaigns Director, Clayoquot Action (British Columbia, Canada):

“Given the number of sea mammal deaths, pesticide dumping, sea lice, and deadly pathogens, it is shocking that salmon farms in the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Reserve could receive any type of eco-certification.”

Matthew Abbott, Marine Program Director and Fundy Baykeeper, Conservation Council of New Brunswick (Atlantic Canada):

“BAP markets its certification as promoting safe and responsible seafood practices, but BAP-certified companies in New Brunswick have been caught using pesticides illegally, even killing commercially caught lobsters. These reckless practices threaten sensitive marine ecosystems and economically and socially important fisheries. If companies with records of proven negligence can get certified by BAP, what is the point of this program?”

Andrew Clarke, Conservation Campaign Director, Atlantic Salmon Federation (Atlantic Canada):

“The BAP standard has not done anything to protect wild Atlantic salmon and other wildlife from salmon farms in Atlantic Canada. Entire populations of wild Atlantic salmon are being lost and the cause is aquaculture. The licensing and regulatory requirements established by provincial governments in Atlantic Canada are proven to be inadequate, and that is as high as the BAP salmon farm standard reaches.”

Allie Brudney, Senior Staff Attorney, Corporate Accountability Lab (USA):

“Across industries and countries, certification schemes have been shown to fail - to fail workers, local communities, and the environment. In CAL’s recent report, Hidden Harvest: Human Rights and Environmental Abuses in India’s Shrimp Industry, we documented evidence of labor exploitation, including forced labor, and environmental harm at and resulting from BAP-certified facilities. Certification schemes like BAP have become a shield for companies to hide behind. Buyers must stop treating flawed certification schemes as if participation in such schemes constitutes due diligence, and should instead work with independent worker organizations to improve conditions.”

Rachel Mulrenan, Scotland Director, WildFish (UK):

“Years of involvement by certification bodies such as BAP, RSPCA Assured and ASC has not translated into any meaningful improvements in the environmental and welfare performance of open-net salmon farms across the globe. If they are to be credible, certification schemes need to have stringent requirements, which are robustly enforced. Unfortunately, research conducted by WildFish, Living Oceans, SeaChoice and others shows that this is currently not the case. If these schemes aren’t going to properly hold the industry to account, then their existence risks being little more than a greenwashing operation, which misleads consumers and obscures the true cost of this inherently unsustainable industry.”

Amelia Cookson, Industrial Aquaculture Campaigner, Feedback (UK):

“Time and time again certification schemes prove themselves to be vehicles for greenwashing. Our research shows that the production of fish oil for the Norwegian aquaculture industry is fuelling food insecurity and loss of livelihoods throughout West Africa. In spite of this, BAP continues to certify companies, such as Norway’s Skretting, that source fish oil from the region. Since when did driving food insecurity become a marker of sustainability?”

James Watts, Save the Skate Campaigner, Environment Tasmania (Australia):

“We call on Australia’s supermarkets to stop using BAP and GLOBALGAP certifications to justify selling Macquarie Harbour salmon. The evidence is clear that Macquarie Harbour salmon farms are the primary threat to the survival of the endangered Maugean skate according to independent scientific advice provided to the Australian Government. BAP has lost all credibility by choosing to ignore the evidence and endorse extinction.”

Jess Coughlan, Campaigner, Neighbours of Fish Farming (Australia):

“There’s nothing sustainable about extinction. BAP certification is running protection for a salmon industry driving a 60-million-year-old animal, Maugean skate, towards extinction in its only natural habitat, Tasmania. Such deceptive certification defrauds consumers attempting to make ethical choices when purchasing seafood.”

Read the [full press release](#) and [open letter](#).

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