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Animal Concern is a pressure group registered as a non-profit making Limited Company
(Co. No. SC109126) established in 1988 as Animal Concern (Scotland) Ltd.
It incorporates the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society which was founded in 1876.

To all MSPs

Dear Member of the Scottish Parliament,

I write regarding plans to double production of Atlantic Salmon farmed in Scotland. These plans include establishing farms at many new sites and greatly increasing production at existing farms.

We oppose this proposed expansion for many reasons including shooting of seals at the farms, increased welfare problems caused to the salmon if stocking densities increase, the damage done to wild fish stocks due to increased sealice numbers and the environmental damage caused by the increased pollution created by any expansion of salmon farming.

Salmon farming is in a crisis at the moment with several cases of mass stock mortalities caused by disease and the use of controversial new methods of removing sealice from fish. Millions of fish have been killed in these incidents.

Documents obtained via Freedom of Information legislation show there have been huge increases in the use of chemicals to combat mass sealice infestations on salmon farms. One area of particular concern is the adverse effect some of these chemicals may be having on plankton. The agents which kill parasitic sealice may also be killing the spat of wild shellfish which could lead to a breakdown of the basic marine food chain and decimation, including local extinctions, of wild mussels, oysters, scallops, razor clams, crabs and lobsters.

Media reports based on documents obtained under FOI suggest that SEPA has a very close relationship with the salmon farming industry. It has been claimed that a SEPA report on increased pollution levels associated with salmon farming was toned down at the request of industry officials. I don't want to simply give you my spin on this situation and I urge you to read for yourself the documents obtained under FOI legislation by the Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture (GAAIA) <http://salmonfarmingkills.com/> .

I also recommend reading recent articles by Rob Edwards, Environmental Editor of the Sunday Herald. You can access several of these via links on the GAAIA website.

Our coastal and island communities and economies rely on a clean and healthy marine environment. For many years I have been extremely concerned that the Scottish Government and the Government Ministers and Government Departments which should be

protecting our marine and coastal environment have been far too supportive of those who exploit that environment for profit.

For instance when the Scottish Government established a "Seals Forum" to advise on the replacement of the Conservation of Seals Act 1970 I was denied membership despite the fact I was an expert on the notorious "Netsman's Defence" clause of the Act and had been responsible for the only successful prosecution under the Act (Portree Sheriff Court, 1/8/1989). The Seals Forum was heavily biased in favour of seal shooting with those actively shooting seals or supporting calls for a seal cull outnumbering seal protection representatives by nearly 3 to 1. It was of no surprise to me when the Government refused to insist that salmon farmers use proper predator exclusion nets and instead opted for the much cheaper but far less effective option of issuing licences to shoot seals.

I ask you to take action to protect our coastal environment by urging the Government to impose a complete ban on the expansion of salmon farms in Scotland.

I would also like to invite you to meet with myself and some colleagues who also oppose the expansion of salmon farming.

The Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation (SSPO) are holding an event at the Macdonald Hotel on Holyrood Road tomorrow (Thursday 16th March) to mark the 25th anniversary of Scottish farmed salmon being granted the French food mark "Label Rouge".

Animal Concern, Save Our Seals Fund, Compassion in World Farming and the Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture will be holding an alternative event to remind people that in Scotland a red label is usually a warning sign. We had booked a conference room at the Macdonald Hotel but for some reason the hotel discovered they needed our room to accommodate the SSPO and they politely cancelled our booking.

We have found an alternative venue a few doors along the street from the hotel. We will be in The Blue Room, Serenity Café, 8 Jackson Entry, The Tun, 111 Holyrood Road, Edinburgh EH8 8PJ from 10.30am to 1pm and then 3pm to 5pm on Thursday 16th March.

If you are in the area and have a few minutes to spare please pop in for a coffee and a chat about why salmon farming deserves a red flag rather than a red label.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,
For Animal Concern & Save Our Seals Fund