

NEW REPORT FOR MARKET RECOMMENDATIONS RANKS ATLANTIC CANADIAN FARMED SALMON AS “AVOID”

Chemical Use, Escapes, and Disease Continue to Pose a Threat to the Marine Environment and Endangered Wild Salmon Populations, According to New Seafood Watch Report

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Halifax, NS and Vancouver, BC - Open net-pen Atlantic salmon remains on the “Avoid” list after a new assessment outlines the ongoing threats posed by excessive chemical use, high levels of escapes, and the presence of persistent diseases in Atlantic Canadian farms. The Seafood Watch report, completed as part of the Monterey Bay Aquarium’s seafood recommendation program, also assessed farms in North East US, which have scored a “yellow,” or “Some Concerns” ranking. These differed from Atlantic Canadian farms as they have lower disease outbreaks and the existence of a successful regulatory framework which includes protection for wild Atlantic salmon through a containment management protocol for escapes.

“This report confirms that there are significant problems with Atlantic Canada’s open net-pen finfish farming operations,” says Susanna Fuller of the Ecology Action Centre. “How is it that in Maine – just across the bay – net-pens owned by the same company have less disease and such fewer escapes? This very clearly indicates that the lack of regulations here in Canada is resulting in higher, and completely unnecessary, environmental damage.”

One of the major concerns facing both assessed regions is the extremely high levels of chemical use. Antibiotic and pesticide use in Eastern North American farms is significantly higher than other salmon farming regions in the world - 241 times higher than in Scotland and 204 times higher than Norway. Also, some of the chemicals used are listed as Highly and Critically Important to Human Health by the World Health Organization, according to the report.

“It’s alarming that such high amounts of chemicals, including antibiotics, are being used here in Atlantic Canada,” says Matt Abbott of the Conservation Council of New Brunswick. “This is of particular concern as the Canadian government has recently weakened laws and regulations prohibiting the use of chemicals, with the introduction in summer 2015 of the Aquaculture Activity Regulations. Not only are there high amounts of antibiotics in the farmed salmon, the regulation of pesticide use is now significantly less that it was a year ago.”

A significant difference between the US and Canadian farms was the regulatory requirement to track all escapes back to the farm. In Canada, there are no such requirements, although the Nova Scotia government is in the process of developing a similar protocol as part of its recent regulatory changes.

“Impacts on endangered populations of wild Atlantic salmon as a result of aquaculture operations cannot be underestimated.” says National SeaChoice Manager Lana Brandt.

With wild Atlantic salmon listed as endangered in both Canada and the US, the additional threats created by open net-pens pose an unacceptable risk to the future of wild populations. We need to address these issues and create changes in our regulatory system to ensure that Atlantic Canada's ocean ecosystems are not unnecessarily and irreversibly harmed by these open net-pen farms.

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To view the full Atlantic salmon recommendations please visit the [SeaChoice](http://SeaChoice.org) website.

Or, for more information contact:

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Background:

- New Brunswick and Nova Scotia make up over 60 per cent of all North American marine farmed Atlantic salmon.
- 100 per cent of US farmed Atlantic salmon is from Maine – accounting for 25 per cent of North American market.
- 60 per cent of Atlantic Canada's farmed salmon is exported to the US.
- Average North American antibiotic use between 2012-2014 for Atlantic salmon farms was 241 times higher than in Scotland, 204 times higher than Norway, and 6 times higher than British Columbia.

Escapes

- Escapes pose ecological and genetic threats to the historically low wild Atlantic salmon populations, which are listed as endangered in Canada and the US.
- In Canada, there is currently no centralized Containment Management System (CMS) to monitor escapes. Instead, it is self-regulated.
- In the USA, they have a very successful, multi-faceted CMS in place, and there have been no containment breaches since 2003.
- Only 0.24 per cent of wild fish found in the Gulf of Maine originated from a farm, compared to a New Brunswick river where 70.3 per cent of fish in the wild were from a farm origin.
- Additionally, in Maine it is required to maintain a genetic database of hatcheries so that escaped fish can be traced back to their specific production site. This database does not exist in Canada.

Disease

- A severe viral disease called Infections Salmon Anemia (ISA) is still present at many Canadian Atlantic salmon farms, while there have been no cases of ISA in the US since 2006.
- In Atlantic Canada, sea lice loads are higher than industry-authored limits, and there is also a high transfer of disease on farms.

Graphs a) and b) from *Atlantic Canada and U.S. Maine Atlantic Salmon Seafood Watch Report* (PDF)



Figure 15: The relative proportions (bars) and actual numbers of farm-escaped (blue) and wild (orange) Atlantic salmon captured in rivers in the US and Canada from 2000-2014. (a) Fish captured in rivers utilized by the Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment (GOM DPS), Maine, US. (b) Fish captured in the Magaguadavic River, NB, Canada.