

Industrial Ocean Fish Farming **Myths & Facts**

MYTH

"Fish waste naturally occurs in the ocean, and there is no difference between the waste of farmed fish and that of wild fish. All farmed fish waste will be spread by water currents and become diluted as it naturally biodegrades back into the environment."

FACT

A single fish farm produces massive quantities of untreated waste – thousands of gallons per day – which the industry "dilutes" by emptying into the surrounding environment. Farmed fish do not eat the same food as wild fish, and are administered a number of agricultural drugs to prevent disease and pests. Residues from these drugs are present in farmed fish waste, and spread throughout the surrounding environment.

Water currents, no matter how strong they are, are not reliable methods for diluting factory farmed fish waste. Often, the ocean simply does not have the capacity to process this concentration and quantity of waste quickly enough, causing a severe imbalance in water quality and marine life.

MYTH

"Technological advancements have enabled us to avoid or mitigate any risks previously associated with marine finfish aquaculture."

FACT

A number of risks are inherent in marine finfish aquaculture, and simply cannot be avoided or mitigated.

- In the open ocean, harsh marine conditions, such as severe winds and storms, could easily cause a **catastrophic fish escape** no matter how "infallible" the infrastructure.*
- Congregating large populations of animals increases the risk of **diseases and pests** on site, and produces massive quantities of fish waste.

MYTH

"Our facility is accident free, with no record of environmental harm."

FACT

These claims are shortsighted and oftentimes focus on newly operational facilities, making it easy to claim that there have been zero problems. This will not guarantee a clean record for the facility in the future. Further, environmental degradation from industrial ocean fish farms occur over time, and may not be revealed until damage is irreversible.

* In just the last year, there have been a frightening number of farmed fish spills from industrial facilities viewed by some as leaders in the industry:

- Here in the United States, in August 2017, more than 263,000 farmed, non-native Atlantic salmon spilled into Puget Sound from an industrial ocean fish farm in Washington State owned by Cooke Aquaculture Pacific, LLC. The cause: poor maintenance and cleaning of the nets.
- In August 2018, an industrial ocean fish farm in Chile reported the escape of 930,000 salmon – of which approximately 680,000 are still missing. The cause: a wind storm with high waves.
- In July 2018, an industrial ocean fish farm in Norway spilled up to 10,000 fish into nearby waters. The cause: a fire at the facility.
- In July 2018, a salmon hatchery plant in Norway allowed for the escape of approximately 20,000 smolt. The cause: complications during routine vaccination procedures.
- In December 2017, an industrial ocean fish farm owned by Bakkafrøst located off Faroe Islands spilled more than 109,000 Atlantic salmon. The cause: extreme weather conditions.

Unfortunately, farmed fish spills are commonplace for industrial ocean fish farms. The above are only a small example of these routine disasters, which put our wild fish stocks at significant risk due to increased competition, genetic degradation, and spread of pests and disease.

MYTH

"Would-be fish farms need the federal government to remedy administrative burdens, heavy permitting processes, and unreliable timelines so the industry can get up and running."

FACT

To date, the United States has only hosted a limited number of nearshore finfish farms. Placing facilities farther offshore introduces more risks. The federal government must ensure that it places adequate restrictions and conducts proper planning and studying prior to opening our oceans to this new industry. We should look before we leap into the deep end, especially with knowledge of how harmful the industry has been when located nearshore.

MYTH

"We must farm fish in the ocean to feed the masses."

FACT

Contrary to what NOAA and other industry supporters claim, most marine fish species proposed for ocean farming are more expensive, severely limiting their availability to the "masses." Should the industry implement cheaper production methods to lower costs to consumers, we will likely be receiving lower-quality fish that will damage our wild-capture fishing communities beyond repair.

MYTH

"We must farm fish to lower the seafood deficit in the United States."

FACT

We simply can't be certain that marine finfish farming would decrease the need for imports. There is currently a trade deficit for seafood in the U.S, which is caused by many factors and cannot be solved by any single industry. More exports would decrease the deficit, but if farmed fish are exported, then Americans would still be eating mostly imported seafood. Moreover, seafood trade is a global issue. Many countries, including the United States, export expensive seafood and import cheaper fish products.

MYTH

"Ingredients in fish feed have become more sustainable and no longer lead to overfishing issues."

FACT

Although the industry has begun using feeds with lower levels of fishmeal and fish oil made from forage fish species, they are now substituting land-based crops such as soy, nuts, and grains, which are not naturally part of a fish's diet. Relying on these types of crops for farmed animal feed simply increases demand and pressures for natural resources across-the-board. Moreover, these ingredients are often genetically modified, which could have unknown environmental and public health risks.

MYTH

"Farmed fish is a more sustainable choice than other meat."

FACT

Although farmed fish process feed more efficiently than certain farmed animals, like pigs and cows, farmed fish still require feed that is protein-dense, and contribute to rising global demand for crop-based feed ingredients. Truly sustainable seafood comes from farmed fish produced by small, closed-loop facilities on land and wild fish sustainably caught by fishermen.

ACT NOW:

Tell your representatives to oppose S. 3138, the "Advancing the Quality and Understanding of American Aquaculture Act"!