



British Columbia Salmon Farmers Association  
302 – 871 Island Highway  
Campbell River, BC V9W 2C2  
(250)286-1636

[www.salmonfarmers.org](http://www.salmonfarmers.org)

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY AND SALMON FARMING

### How do you define “sustainable” farming?

- Sustainable farming is farming done in a way which minimizes impacts to the marine environment and local species, which results in a healthy and nutritious product that is raised and harvested humanely, and which supports the communities in which we operate.
- Sustainable farming the only kind of farming practiced in British Columbia.

### Some people say that the only sustainable farming is closed containment farming. Why does industry resist moving to closed containment?

- We have done – and continue to do – a lot of research into closed containment. We don’t feel it is the answer for two key reasons:
  1. Fish health and animal welfare: raising ocean fish in closed containment systems has resulted in increased illness and stress, and mortality rates have been higher than when the fish are ocean raised.
  2. Climate change and the carbon footprint. Land based farming will result in increased greenhouse gas emissions due to the use of fossil fuel to maintain the artificial environment and mimic ocean temperature and salinity – all of which can be done naturally in the ocean.

[Click here](#) to link to past studies

### In Alaska finfish farms are outlawed. Why doesn't BC follow that example?

- In Alaska, like BC, many salmon start their life in a hatchery and are then transferred to ocean pens to mature.
- In BC the fish live on the farm until harvest. In Alaska once the fish reach a certain age they are released from the ocean pen so that commercial fishers can harvest them.
- In other words the principal difference is that in BC the fish remain on the farm until harvest while in Alaska the fish are “ocean ranched” meaning that at maturity they are released into the environment for fishers to catch.

**Researchers looking at salmon populations in the Broughton are predicting extinction of the pink salmon in a few short years. Would getting rid of the salmon farms fix the problem?**

- The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans has monitored pink salmon returns in the Broughton since 1953 and has recorded significant fluctuations in population size.
  - The lowest returns recorded – 6000 fish -- were in 1987; before salmon were being farmed in the area.
  - The highest returns recorded -- 1,350,000 fish – were in 2001, twelve years after salmon farming started in the Broughton
- As scientists have noted, there are many factors impacting salmon returns: water temperature, currents and salinity are three of the big ones. This is an area that needs careful monitoring and merits additional research.
- An interesting thing to note is that the rise and fall of pink salmon populations in the Broughton – where there are salmon farms – is mirrored in many other parts of the province where there are no salmon farms.
- We believe wild and farmed salmon can co-exist provided farms are properly sited and strictly regulated: something which is done in British Columbia.

**What steps are salmon farmers taking to protect migrating pink salmon from sea lice?**

- On the farms we can manage the risk of sea lice by working to prevent infestations and moving quickly to treat outbreaks should they occur. Treating sea lice outbreaks is not left up to the farmers' discretion, it is mandated as a condition of each farm's operating license and regulators frequently inspect the farms thorough BC to ensure proper care is being taken of the marine environment
- Recognizing the importance of this issue, we also support and fund a number of sea lice research studies. For example, the BCSFA is currently sponsoring research to assess lethal infection levels on juvenile salmon and to identify all potential sources of sea lice in the marine environment.
- Some farms in the Broughton are fallowed during the out migration period and companies operating in that area are working collaboratively with environmental groups to develop additional protection strategies.

**Some people say that we should only eat wild fish. Is that the answer?**

- To meet demand and to protect wild fish from overfishing, especially during periods when annual commercial catches are low, aquaculture is necessary.
  - Today, approximately 25 per cent of the fish consumed worldwide is raised on farms

- During a peak catch year, wild salmon can only supply about one-third of growing worldwide demand. Industry expert H.M. Johnston & Associates predicts a 23 – 32 million tonne increase in supply will be required to meet 2020 global demand for seafood.
- In British Columbia, the commercial sockeye catch last year was 1723 tonnes compared to 4371 tonnes in 2004 and 8871 tonnes in 2000. During the period of time, demand for salmon has risen.

-end -