



Rural affairs and islands committee - follow-up inquiry into salmon farming in Scotland
Written submission from Salmon Scotland
18 February 2026

Summary

We ask MSPs to support local people producing high quality and nutritious food that our country – and the world – wants.

We recognise the committee's interest and purpose in reviewing the recommendations made in January 2025 regarding the importance of the salmon sector to Scotland. We therefore welcome the two forthcoming committee sessions with the sector, regulators, relevant stakeholders, and the Scottish Government. We recognise and understand MSPs regularly receive information from anti-salmon farming organisations whose key objective is to close down the sector in Scotland, with the loss of thousands of well-paid careers. As food security is a major objective of government and parliament, we do not agree that replacing premium salmon grown in Scotland with imported fish from overseas would make any sense. Atlantic Salmon from Scotland is highly regarded by national and international consumers, and represents a sector that Scotland should be rightly proud of.

Progress in 2025

2025 was a standout year, with the following highlights

- **Supporting Scotland's growth and communities:** An independent study demonstrates that Scottish salmon now adds a staggering £1 billion a year to the country's economy. The sector supports 11,000 jobs (including 2,500 in farming with wages and salaries estimated at £44,500 across the sector, some 16 per cent higher than the Scottish median wage) and spends more than £700 million with Scottish supply chain businessesⁱ. Across Scotland's five producing regions, Scottish salmon provides significant economic contributions:
 - £307 million and 3,530 jobs across the **Highlands**
 - £100 million and 1,100 jobs in **Argyll and Bute**
 - £91 million and 1,000 jobs in **Shetland**
 - £39 million and 420 jobs in the **Western Isles**
 - £30 million and 340 jobs in **Orkney**

One supply chain company commenting on the sector said "*it has had arguably the most powerful effect on the sustenance of rural areas. Enabling families and communities to grow.*"ⁱⁱ

- **Stock retention:** an average monthly fish survival in 2025 of 98.3%, representing a return to levels recorded prior to the much-publicised environmental challenges experienced in 2022/23.
- **Continued investment** in sea lice management, including well boat technology and freshwater bathing, leading to low lice averages across the sector (annual average lice levels since 2018 range from 0.42 to 0.61 – less than one louse per fish).
- **Assurance:** the sector continues to invest in third party assurance to demonstrate high standards of operational practice including:
 - Annual spend of c.£10m on audit and compliance activities, with more than 1,600 audits conducted by certification bodies, standards owners and regulators.

- 100% compliance with the Code of Good Practice for Salmonid Aquaculture.
- All farms operate higher welfare practices, with c.75% formally accredited to the RSPCA Higher Welfare standard – the highest rate of any livestock sector in the UK.
- **Innovation:** Independent research demonstrates that over £183m has been invested in collaborative, public-facing research and innovation since 2018 on ways to provide even greater care for our fish, including:
 - Over £83m on fish health and welfare, including research into health diagnosis using blood biomarkers, leading to the development of a spinout company, Wellfish Tech. Also, £8.5m on research between Mowi and Edinburgh’s Roslin Institute to improve fish health and resilience using genomic technologies.
 - Over £51m spent on environmental and sustainability projects, including an eight-year collaboration between the sector and SAMS, with SEPA, to develop a model used to manage and regulate benthic impacts on the seabed.
 - Over £17m on new and novel feed ingredients, including research into hemp as an alternative protein source.
- Continued commitment of £230,000 this year to support wild salmon conservation projects through the sectors “Wild Fisheries Fund”. To date, the fund has supported 34 local projects totalling £635,659 to help restore Scotland’s iconic wild salmon and sea trout on Scotland’s west coast and islands. A further £560,000 sector investment was made in the Atlantic Salmon Trust’s “West Coast Tracking Project” in 2021.

2026 – the opportunity

- Continued investment in fish health and welfare, building on c.£1 billion invested since 2018. For example, Mowi has recently taken delivery of a new well boat in Scotland, with a well capacity of 6,500m³ and capable of producing 15,000m³ of freshwater by reverse osmosis, for sea lice and gill health management.
- Exports – as the nation’s biggest food export, 2026 sees Free Trade Agreements with India, South Korea and the Gulf states go live – Scotland can service these markets with salmon. If we do not, other nations will.
- Salmon is Scotland’s and the UK’s favourite fish; if Scottish salmon is not available it will be replaced by imports. In 2025, over 80,000 tonnes of salmon was sold across the UK with a value in excess of £1.5 billionⁱⁱⁱ.

Conclusion

We urge parliamentary committee support for a sector that delivers food security, is the country’s favourite fish and leading export, which employs men and women in areas where there are few alternative jobs paying good salaries and providing sustainable careers, and which supports rural and coastal communities countering rural depopulation. We appreciate the noise that MSPs get from our opponents, but such noise is driven by single issue agendas and motives which do not align with the goal of prosperity for Scotland.

The choice for committee members is to back Scottish working people, and rural, coastal and island communities, or activism that would make Scots dependent on imports for their favourite nutritious food.

ⁱ The Economic Impact of Scottish Salmon Farming; BiGGAR Economics; November 2025

ⁱⁱ P11; The Economic Impact of Scottish Salmon Farming; BiGGAR Economics; November 2025

ⁱⁱⁱ Seafish; Source: NielsenIQ Retail Panel