



## **BBC Documentary on the Scottish Salmon Industry**

### **M&J Seafood Statement**

Following the recent documentary "Salmon Farming Exposed - Panorama" which aired on BBC1 Monday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2019 and was critical of the Scottish Salmon Industry over its animal welfare and chemical use, M&J would like to reassure customers that;

- M&J sources over 90% of its salmon from Norway whose investment in technology, improving practices and commitment to regulations were highlighted as industry leading.
- Whilst some of our customers request Scottish origin Salmon, M&J Seafood has not sourced any fish in 2019 from either MOWI (formerly Marine Harvest) or Loch Fyne who were both implicated in the documentary.
- M&J colleagues work closely and as part of industry organisations and NGO's to improve standards and practices throughout the fish and seafood supply chain

The following are statements by SEPA (Scottish Environment Protection Agency) and SSPO (Scottish Salmo Producers Organisation)

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## **SSPO Response to BBC Panorama's 'Salmon Farming Exposed'**

The Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation (SSPO) fully cooperated with the BBC Panorama team, including giving them access to the SSPO's chief executive Julie Hesketh-Laird. During those discussions and subsequent filmed interview, no specific allegations in respect to any SSPO member company were made. Publicity by the BBC around the Panorama broadcast appears to sensationalise the operations of a farming sector raising live animals day to day in natural surroundings and the routine dealings with the environmental regulator that all farmers, regardless of stock, are subject to.

Responding to the BBC's press release ahead of the broadcast the chief executive of the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation Julie Hesketh-Laird said: *"Scottish salmon farmers are strictly monitored and regulated. Though building trust in the regulatory regime is important, Scottish salmon farmers consistently strive to go beyond compliance and we are supportive of regular inspections and scrutiny; it's how we improve as a sector. Scottish laws governing aquaculture are some of the strongest in the world and we welcome that – we want customers to be confident in farm reared salmon."*

The SSPO and our members are committed to good environmental performance. It is in everyone's interest to maintain a high-quality environment in which fish are raised. The sector is committed to quickly addressing issues where they do occasionally arise and in 2017 had an average compliance of 81%.

The Scottish salmon farming sector is subject to over 1,000 audits and regulatory inspections every year. All Scottish salmon farmers adhere to the sector's 500 point Code of Good Practice which goes beyond regulatory compliance and publish monthly figures on issues of fish health and survivability. This is in addition to a range of third party visits from customers and independent accreditation schemes.

The health and welfare of farmed fish is paramount to Scottish Salmon farmers who are investing heavily in a strategy of prevention over cure. Medicinal use in salmon farming has fallen by 49% in the last decade as spending on innovation, natural preventative measures and alternative treatments have grown dramatically. However, as in all farming sectors, medicines are used from time to time. Withdrawing all access to medicines is not the best way to ensure the highest standards of fish health and welfare. It is important that salmon farmers retain the ability to treat fish medicinally if required.

Julie Hesketh-Laird said: *"Medicine use in all farming, is tightly regulated by the authorities and in our case by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency. We expect all our companies to adhere to the tight rules that are put in place. The industry has a great record on medicines and the significant decline in use over the last 10 years resulting from the industry's strategy of prevention over cure has really paid dividends."*

We welcome SEPA's support to grow the Scottish salmon farming sector sustainably over the long term and their initial proposals for a new regulatory package. Strong and enabling regulations not only offer customers confidence, they also offer the sector clear and unambiguous rules that support sustainable growth. The SSPO and salmon farming sector have been pressing for regulatory change for many years and we welcome the long-awaited new model from SEPA that should remove some of the barriers to farms being sited in more exposed, deeper waters.

The target to double the economic value of salmon farming to Scotland by 2030 can only be achieved through steady, sustainable growth within a strong regulatory framework. SEPA's proposals pave the way for the gradual and careful expansion of the Scottish salmon farming sector and should help maintain the excellent standards set by the many existing high performing farms.

## BBC Panorama response

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### SEPA's firm, evidence based approach for a revised, finfish aquaculture regulatory regime

- Scottish salmon farm medicine is significantly impacting local marine environments concluded a SEPA research report in November 2018, which increased the now substantial weight of scientific evidence that the existing approaches do not adequately protect marine life.
- The research report was subsequently peer reviewed and published in international journal, *Science of the Total Environment*.
- In November 2018, SEPA, as one of a number of organisations regulating finfish aquaculture, announced firm, evidence-based proposals to be introduced in June 2019 for a revised regulatory regime that will strengthen the protection of the marine environment for the people of Scotland.
- New, tighter standard for the organic waste deposited by fish farms.
- Enhanced environmental monitoring and creation of new SEPA enforcement unit to ensure compliance is non-negotiable.
- New approach could allow for larger farms than traditionally approved, provided they are appropriately sited in sustainable locations.
- SEPA held Scotland-wide consultation events across November and December 2018 where 275 people attended nine community drop-in events. 28 one-to-one meetings were facilitated between SEPA specialists and stakeholder groups including community groups, local fisheries, NGOs and industry representatives.
- In May 2019, SEPA announced a SEPA National Aquaculture Stakeholder Advisory Panel, recognising the breadth of opinions on the sector to better inform SEPA's regulatory approach.
- In order to ensure full transparency and accountability, SEPA fully participated with BBC Panorama, including access to our research vessel, the Sir John Murray, our scientific laboratories, scientific and regulatory officers.
- As an organisation based on law and evidence, SEPA routinely reviews data from operators, from SEPA monitoring and from third parties. While it would be inappropriate to pre-judge potential outcomes, SEPA will fully investigate suggestions of alleged industry wrongdoing made by BBC Panorama.
- In addition to continuous review of data from a variety of sources and conducting enhanced environmental monitoring, officers are engaged in a programme of unannounced visits to confirm compliance with regulatory requirements.
- SEPA is unable to comment further on its current audit and unannounced inspection programme underway at present.