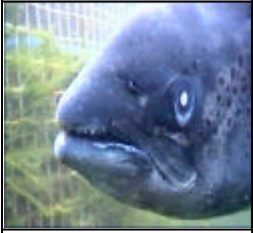




The Scottish Parliamentary Aquaculture Inquiry

Nautilus Consultants has been actively following the progress of the Parliamentary inquiry into aquaculture in Scotland and is encouraged that the level of debate seems to be improving and all interested parties are sharing views in a common forum.



Nautilus Consultants has been involved in the environmental management and policy development of aquaculture in developing countries for many years. The urgent need for integrated policy has already led to substantial progress on the consideration of economic, environmental and social aspects of aquaculture development, although much work and education remains.

Over the years, we have learned that the defining aspect of any attempt to bring an holistic and sustainable development approach to aquaculture is the approach taken in considering the uncertainty and risk surrounding the environmental effects of aquaculture. We feel that this is fundamental to the future development of the industry in Scotland. It is vital that management and policy makes full use of all available information and expertise. In addition, where there is uncertainty, it is the quality of the inclusive and open management structures that will determine the overall success of the National strategy. It is our view, therefore, that the sustainable future of aquaculture in Scotland depends, not only on the level of knowledge, expertise and information, but also on the decision making structures that are in place where the level of information is poor.



Our submission to the inquiry:

Scottish salmon farming is suffering from unprecedented criticism relating to possible food health and environmental impacts. Some, but not all of this is ill informed and biased, yet still receives broad media coverage. This is despite the fact that Scottish salmon farming is amongst the most highly regulated industries in the world.

For the sake of the industry and the people of the Highlands and Islands who benefit from the positive economic impacts of salmon farming, something must be done. Experience to date suggests that more regulation will be insufficient to convince environmental groups and a sceptical public.

While accepting the need for some improvements and rationalisation to the regulatory regime, we believe that the main thrust of change must be in three key areas:

1. Increased participation in and improvements to product and environmental quality certification and labelling schemes;
2. More widely understood, more broadly agreed and better monitored environmental quality standards – at national and local level;
3. Making farmers both more aware of and more responsible for their effects on the environment.

Without these changes consumer confidence will continue to fall, pressure groups will continue to gain ascendancy, growth in the industry will be limited and prices will continue to decline in relative terms.

