



KYMA

sea conservation
& research

Questionable marine factory farming

Aquacultures contribute to overfishing and contaminate the oceans. And the increasing demand for fishes exacerbates this misery.

Fish farming is not a solution

Today almost half of all fishes consumed comes from farms (aquacultures).¹ This proportion is increasing in view of the dwindling fish stocks in the world's oceans and the increasing demand for fishes.² Many consumers believe that fish farming is a gentle alternative to wild catches. But the opposite is true: since many of the cultured and popular edible fishes in richer countries are carnivorous, they must be fed with fish oil and fish meal from wild-caught fishes. In intensive farming this means that, depending on the species farmed, a multiple of wild fishes is fed per kilogram of farmed fishes.³ Thus overfishing is not diminishing, but rather increasing as a result.⁴ Even non-predatory fishes such as carp and tilapia, which are mainly vegetarian, are fed with fishmeal in farms so that they gain weight faster. Many fish farms even use intensive fattening for maximum meat production.

Farmed fish No 1: the Atlantic salmon

The most farmed salmon fish in the world is the Atlantic salmon. However, these salmon often escape from fish farms. There are indications that the farmed salmon mate with their wild counterparts and that the altered gene composition increases the decline in locally endangered populations.⁵ Figures show that in the North Atlantic up to 40% of the alleged wild catches of Atlantic salmon come from farms.

Non-native Atlantic farmed salmon can also be found in the North Pacific; estimates assume more than 250'000 animals. They pose a threat to native fish species because they compete for food and habitat.

But that's not all: Various studies have shown that Atlantic farmed salmon are much more contaminated with pollutants such as PCBs and dioxins than their wild counterparts.⁶ Flame retardants have also been detected in the meat of farmed salmon. One of the reasons for this is the feed, which consists of fish meal and fish oil, also from contaminated fishes.⁷

Sick marine animals in aquaculture

Similar to intensive animal husbandry on land, infectious diseases are also a major problem in intensive fish and crustacean farming.⁸ Pathogens spread rapidly in the water, therefore there is a risk of transmission to wild fishes in surrounding waters.⁹ In addition, if fishes that are not naturally present in the area in question or have been genetically modified are released into the sea from the farm, there is a risk of altering the natural genetic diversity of wildlife populations.¹⁰

Do you oppose factory farming on land? Then you should do the same for the animals in the sea.





¹ The exact number of fishes slaughtered in aquaculture for human consumption is not known. According to a study by Mood & Brooke (2012), it was estimated that this number accounts to 37-120 billion animals in 2010. In addition, 440-1'200 billion of wild caught fishes were killed to produce feeds for farmed fishes. (<http://fishcount.org.uk/published/std/fishcountstudy2.pdf>)

² Campbell & Pauly 2013

³ <https://changingmarkets.org/portfolio/fishing-the-feed/>

⁴ Tsikliras et al. 2014

⁵ Hindar et al. 2006

⁶ <https://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2018/07/25/farmed-salmon-contaminated-with-flame-retardants.aspx>

⁷ <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/07/180710122804.htm>

⁸ Leung & Bates 2013

⁹ FAO, 2006a

¹⁰ Naylor et al. 2000

Tip

Video: [Catching fish to feed fish](#)

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www.kyma-sea.org/break

