

World Oceans Day 2024

Dr. Manuel Barange
Assistant Director General and
Director of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Dear Dr. Barange

In honor of World Oceans Day and recognizing the urgent need to address the problems facing our oceans, we urge you **to revise the FAO's position on sustainable aquaculture to EXCLUDE carnivorous fish farming**. The signers of this letter represent a wide range of international organizations and local communities that have studied or experienced firsthand the deleterious impacts of industrial-scale open net-pen fish farming. So, when the FAO's goal calls for a 75% growth in global sustainable aquaculture by 2040 compared to 2020 levels¹, we are deeply concerned about how you plan to achieve it.

Aquaculture includes multiple types of production, some of which are sustainable, such as the farming of kelp and other aquatic plants, as well as the cultivation of a wide range of bivalve creatures such as mussels, clams and oysters in small scale operations. However, it also includes the farming of carnivorous fin fish² (e.g. most commonly salmon, sea bream, and sea bass) which, when cultivated in marine-based net pens, is not sustainably farmed anywhere in the world.

Your own research acknowledges that, *"Unfortunately, production and distribution of aquatic foods are not without problems. Strategies to deliver healthy, sustainable and equitable food systems do not adequately include the critical long-term impacts of overfishing, habitat degradation and unequal access to resources and markets"*³.

More and more evidence keeps coming to light on the unsustainability and environmentally damaging aspects of industrial fish farming. For example, studies have linked the following problems with fish farms:

- increase in harmful algal blooms, exacerbating impacts from global warming⁴
- negative impact on critical Posidonia meadows⁵
- mass fish die-offs⁶
- uncontrolled use of the carcinogen formaldehyde⁷
- large amounts of microplastics and debris left behind in the waters by the fish farms⁸
- high volumes of wild-caught fish used to feed farmed fish which are often taken from food-insecure low and middle income nations to develop farmed fish for consumption in industrialized nations⁹
- prophylactic and overuse of antibiotics¹⁰

These negative impacts will only increase as ocean temperatures continue to rise. The bottom line is that in our current world there is **NO** farming of carnivorous fin fish which is environmentally sustainable. We need concrete, enforceable international standards for the remediation of damaged environments and the expansion of genuinely sustainable aquaculture options.

In April 2024, a Manifesto for a European Ocean Pact written by the European Ocean Pact Stakeholder Group, recommended that in order to pursue a strong and sustainable blue economy, the European Union should, “Promote a more sustainable consumption of seafood and aquatic food in the EU, notably through the development of least impact aquacultures (sustainable and herbivorous fish farming, multi-trophic aquaculture, shellfish farming and algaculture).” Notably absent from this list is the cultivation of carnivorous fish farming.

If the FAO’s aggressive goal of reaching a 75% growth in aquaculture includes expanding the farming of carnivorous fin fish, it would be catastrophic. In light of the above, **we ask that the FAO stop supporting and promoting marine based open net carnivorous fish farming** (ie. salmon, sea bream, and sea bass) which are destroying our local environments, depleting wild fish stocks and harming local economies. **We ask the FAO to revise their position on sustainable aquaculture to EXCLUDE carnivorous fish farming.**

Respectfully,

The Organizers of the Seas of Change Conference 2024 and over 160 organisations from six continents including environmental organisations, fishing associations and scientists.

CC

Inger Andersen, Under-Secretary-General of the UN and Executive Director of the UN Environment

Ambassador Peter Thomson, United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for the Ocean

Miguel Bernal, Executive Secretary of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean of the FAO

Virginijus Sinkevičius, EU Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries

Janet Coit, Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries

Secretaries of State and Ministers of the Environment and/or Fisheries from Australia, Chile, France, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Scotland and Spain





Seas of Change Organizers

Rauch Foundation, Eva Douzinas, President

Global Salmon Farming Resistance, Catalina Cendoya, Director

Don't Cage our Oceans, Andrianna Natsoulas, Campaign Director

Katheti, Fay Orfanidou, Executive Director

AKTAIA – The Greek Alliance for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Aquaculture

Alessandro Bocconcelli, Emeritus Research Scholar, Applied Ocean Physics and Engineering, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, USA, and Co-founder, Centinela, Chile

Animal Legal Defense Fund, Chris Green, Executive Director

Anthi Giannoulou, Environmental Lawyer, Greece

Aquatic Life Institute

Argosaronic Environment Foundation, Daphne Mantziou, Executive Director

Argosaronic Environment Foundation, Nancy Burrell, Chairperson

Asociación Cultural y Ecologista de Calp, Spain, Marco Bittner, President

Association of Eastern Arcadia Tourist Accommodation, Greece, Vivian Manolesou, President

Association Sideritis

Babis Kanatsidis, Journalist, Saronic Magazine

Beyond Pesticides

Bloom, Dr Frédéric Le Manach Scientific director

Blue Marine Foundation, Tom Appleby, Chief Legal Affairs Advisor

Businesses for Conservation and Climate Action

Canoe and Fishing Gear Owners Association of Ghana (CaFGOAG)

Capitol City Seafood

Captain Charlie Fish Co.

Carmo Food

Catch Wilmington

Center for Food Safety

Centinela, Alessandro Bocconcelli, Vice President

Changing Markets Foundation, Nusa Urbancic, CEO

Christopher J. Gobler, Ph.D., Endowed Chair of Coastal Ecology

and Conservation Distinguished Professor, Stony Brook University, USA

Citizens of Ebeys Reserve

Citizens' Group for the Protection of the Kolovrechtis Wetland, Apostolos Selinas

Clayoquot Action

Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements, Beatrice Gorez, Coordinator

Coastal Communities Network, Scotland

Coco Lab, Cheryl Loh, Founder

Community Trust Spetses, Efthymia Psarakou, Executive Director

Conscience Consulting, Joanna Sullivan, Founder and CEO

Copper River Fish Market, USA

Cultural Association of Arcadiko Village, Greece

Cultural Association of the Arcadian Village of North Kynouria, Greece, Spyros Apostolopoulos, President

Cultural-Environmental Association DRYS of Skalochori, Lesvos, Greece, Christos Hatzilias, President

Cultural, Environmental and Sustainable Development Network of Pineios Delta and Tempi, Greece, Nikos Rigas, President
Downeast Salmon Federation, Dwayne Shaw, President

Curious PR, Hannah Kapff, Managing Director

Dimitris Poursanidis, Ph.D. Marine Ecology

Efthymia Cotou PhD, Biologist (Eco) Toxicologist, Senior Researcher

Elina Makri, Journalist

Enaleia, Eleftherios Lampros Arapakis, Director, Co-founder

Endangered Species Protection Agency, Peter Carr, Chief Operating Officer

Environmental Group of Salamina Island, Perivos, Greece

Environmental Protection Association of Norway, Ruben M Oddekalv, Leader

Ethical Farming Ireland, Caroline Rowley, Director

Eurogroup for Animals, Inês Ajuda, Programme Leader Farm Animals

Family Farm Defenders

Farm Forward

Federation of Ecological Organizations of the Corinthian

Gulf, ALKYON, Tasos Drosopoulos, President

Feedback EU, Frank Mechielsen, Director

Feedback Global, Natasha Hurley, Campaigns Director

Fish & Whistle

Fishermen's Association of the Municipality of Arta, Pavlos Charalambous,

Fishing Vessel Owners' Association

Florida Watermen

Frederik W. Mowinckel Family

Gallifrey Foundation, Antoinette Vermilye, Co-founder

Galway Bay Against Salmon Cages, Billy Smyth, Chairman

Give A Fish

Goodness Gracious

Grain, Alexandra Toledo

Green Greeks

Greenhorns

Gulf Islands Conservancy Inc.

Healthy Bays Network

Healthy Gulf

Hersonissos of Methana - Citizens in Action, Vicky Alexandratou

Hoteliers and Tourist Accommodation of South Kynouria, Anestis Vasileiadis, President

Humane League, Vicky Bond, President

Ingen Burfisk I Havet (No Caged Fish in the Sea), Johan Flyvbjerg, Founder

Inland Ocean Coalition

Inside Scottish Salmon Feedlots, Corin Smith, Founder and Lead Investigator

Jennifer Jacquet, Professor, Department of Environmental Science and Policy, University of Miami

Kallia Milioreli, Environmental Scientist MSc, Environmental Inspector

Katerina Sakelliou, Odyssey Apartments, Ec(h)o

Kriton Arsenis, Senior Policy Expert on Nature-Based Solutions

Live-Bio, Ec(h)o, Magdalena Iwaszko, Greece

Living Oceans

Longinidis Panagiotis Dr., Lawyer, Greek Green Fund, Ministry of Environment

LOWCo Australia, Kirsten Bacon &

Mike Sampey, Producer & Director Madein Puget Sound Mangrove Action Project Maqi Seafoods Mayor Evgenia Fraggia – Mayor of Spetses, Attica, Greece Mayor George Koutouzis - Mayor of Poros, Attica, Greece Mayor Ioannis Triantafyllakis, Mayor of Xiromero, Greece Mission Blue, Sylvia Earle Montauk Seaweed Supply Co. Mor Mbaye Mbengue, Collectif Taxawu Cayar, Senegal Morro Bay Commercial Fishermen's Organization Movilizadorio Native Fish Society Neighbors of Fish Farming Nell Newman Foundation Nell Newman, President North American Marine Alliance North Atlantic Salmon Fund, Elvar Fridriksson, CEO Ocean Conservation Research Ocean Rebellion Oceanic Preservation Society One Fish Foundation Dr Oulie Keita, Executive Director of Greenpeace Africa OZON NGO Pacific Cloud Seafoods Palakas Dimitris, Pharmacist Panagiotis Karachalios, retired Surveyor Engineer Panhellenic Association of Fishing Tourism for Professional Fishers, Antonia Vasiliou, President Panhellenic Association of Fishing Tourism for Professional Fishermen Papaioannou Eleni - Secretary General of Municipality of Poros, Attica, Greece	Paraskevi Zavoigianni, Mytikas- Aitoloakarnania resident, Greece Architectural Engineer NTUA Parley Patagonia, Hans Cole, Vice President of Activism, Grants and Campaigns Pensacola Beach Advocates Perdido Key Association Perivos Planet Oceans Por El Mar, Martina Sasso, Co- Founder and Director Poros Commercial and Business Association, Dimitris Syxeris, President Poros Municipal Port Organization, Dr. Matina Alexandri, Marine Geologist – Oceanographer, Vice President Poros Fishing Trips, Anastasios Ladas Protect Maine's Fishing Heritage Foundation Raymond Fisheries, Inc Recirculating Farms Rewilding Greece, Beatrice Yannacopoulou Rock Bottom Commercial Fishing Salmon Wars, Catherine Collins and Doug Frantz, Authors Salmon Watch Ireland, John Murphy Salmonberry Tribal Associates SalmonCamera, Rune Jensen San Ysidro Seafood Santa Barbara Flyfishers Savor the Wild Scamon Scotland, Don Staniford Skala Prinou Sciaena, Gonçalo Carvalho, Executive Coordinator Sea Legacy Seas at Risk, Tobias Troll, Marine Policy Director Seastemik, Maxime de Lisle,	President and Co-Founder Seaworld Coastal Protection Ship Island Excursions Sideritis Sitka Salmon Shares Slow Food International, Marta Messa, Secretary General Slow Food Italia, Serena Milano, Director Slow Food USA SoCal 350 South County Fishmonger Spetses Community Trust Sprout New Orleans Tanana Pictures & Centinela, Dani Casado, Director Taproot Earth Tataki Tourist Accommodation Association of Eastern Arcadia Upstream Watch VÁ! félag um vernd fjarðar (WOW! association for the protection of the fjords), Benedikta Guðrún Svavarsóttir Vasilios Soulas, Mytikas- Aitoloakarnania, Greece resident and member Aktaia Alliance Virgin Islands Professional Charter Association Volcanotrails, Elias Rizos Watershed Watch Salmon Society Waves WildFish, Rachel Mulrenan, Scotland Director Winders Delcianna J., Associate Professor of Law, Animal Law and Policy Institute Vermont Law and Graduate School, Director Wishtoyo Chumash Foundation World Salmon Forum Xiromero Municipality
--	--	---

¹ <https://www.fao.org/interactive/sdg2-roadmap/en/>

² Figure 55 on page 104 of the FAO's 2022 report on Aquaculture and Fisheries graphically demonstrates the degree to which finfish farming dominates the market. See: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/a2090042-8cda-4f35-9881-16f6302ce757/content>

³ <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/9df19f53-b931-4d04-acd3-58a71c6b1a5b/content/sofia/2022/transforming-aquatic-based-food.html#:~:text=Unfortunately%2C%20production%20and%20distribution%20of,access%20to%20resources%20and%20markets>

⁴ <https://www.mdpi.com/1424-2818/13/8/396>;

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/9aeb8ade-a623-4954-8adf-204daae3b5de/content#:~:text=The%20results%20indicate%20that%20climate,most%20dependent%20on%20the%20sector>

⁵ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0025326X08003160>

⁶ <https://www.uvic.ca/socialsciences/info-for/faculty-staff/announcements/865-million-farmed-salmon-die-off-worldwide-2012-2022.php>

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2421227-salmon-farms-are-increasingly-being-hit-by-mass-die-offs/>, <https://time.com/6957610/farmed-salmon-dying/>

⁷ <https://theferret.scot/formaldehyde-used-200-times-fish-farm-industry/>

⁸ https://www.ozon-ngo.gr/news_det.php?id=144

⁹ <https://ig.ft.com/supermarket-salmon/>; <https://feedbackglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Feedback-BlueEmpire-Jan24.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-020-78849-3>

¹¹ See: <https://www.oceanoazulfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/222.pdf>