

Mr. Graeme Dey MSP
Convenor of the ECCLR Committee
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28th June 2018

Dear Minister,

Firstly, many congratulations on your appointment as Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans. I expect that there are areas where we can support each other in future in the context of constitutional relations and Brexit and we look forward to continuing to work with you.

Thank you for meeting with us on 20 June. It was a helpful meeting in which I believe we found a lot of common ground. Like you, we wish the salmon farming industry to grow sustainably and I welcomed your confidence that, by moving forward in partnership with our important stakeholders, we can do so.

While SSPO was disappointed with the ECCLR's report into the salmon farming industry, we and the companies we represent strongly agree that "*the status quo is not an option*". Our industry is continually evolving, learning, and adapting and refining its practices, techniques and technologies. A good deal of progress has been made by our young sector since salmon farming was first looked at by the Scottish Parliament and we are determined further progress will be made. While overall performance is good in the sector, it recognises that there are areas where it must improve and is determined to do so.

Turning to the questions you raised in your letter of 1 June, the SSPO committed to publishing sea lice and mortality data on a farm by farm basis. In May, we began publishing sea lice data on a farm by farm basis and we will continue to do so. We believe the data is published on a consistent and comparable basis. The Code of Good Practice (CoGP) sets out the methodology for sampling salmon and counting sea lice. Farmers are required to inform the Scottish Government's Fish Health Inspectorate (FHI) if levels exceed 3 adult female lice per fish on a farm (as an average) and notify FHI what action will be taken in response. This commences a regular dialogue between the farmer and FHI, and improvements are expected to result. Within the defined regulatory process, FHI is able to take appropriate enforcement action if lice are not managed to a satisfactory level.

In addition to this regulatory requirement, FHI undertake farm inspections related to the health and welfare of farm stocks. This includes regulatory functions relating to lice management. FHI publish their inspection case files at regular intervals; the SSPO does not hold this information.

Since 2010, the SSPO has been collating and publishing lice data and reports have become more detailed since then. In 2013, we began publishing lice data on a regional basis. Importantly, these regions are aligned with those used to report wild fisheries catch statistics to the information held by the fisheries organisations, allowing matched farm and wild fisheries data to be matched should those organisations publish the data (which we believe

they do not presently). Farmed salmon data are available on our website [here](#) for regional data and [here](#) for the new farm by farm data.

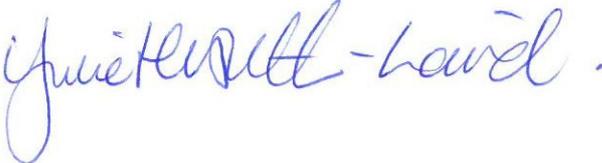
Turning to mortality data, unlike lice counts, there is no standard methodology available for reporting mortality data for farmed salmon. SSPO is working with our member companies to establish an approach that allows companies to report simply and easily and that creates outputs that can be communicated in a straightforward way to interested stakeholders. We expect to begin to publish farm level mortality data this summer on our website.

The SSPO has committed to publishing mortality data moving forward. There is an existing regulatory requirement for farmers to report unexplained mortality events to FHI; SSPO does not hold that information.

There is a considerable amount of information on mortalities at a farm level on Scotland's aquaculture database at <http://aquaculture.scotland.gov.uk/>

I will be back in touch when we publish our industry-wide mortality data and in the meanwhile I wish you a productive, though hopefully a little more restful, summer recess.

With kind regards,



Julie Hesketh-Laird
Chief Executive, Scottish Salmon Producers' Organisation