

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 Ebey's 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 Oddekav, 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-
 Aitolokarnania 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-
 Aitolokarnania, 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>