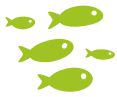


Aquaculture Fact File



What is aquaculture?

Aquaculture, or fish farming, is a general term for the farming of aquatic species, from fish and shellfish to seaweed. It incorporates everything from a few mussel ropes on a Scottish croft, to huge salmon farming companies on the New York stock exchange.

Aquaculture is the fastest-growing food production sector, growing at a rate of 3.5% per year. In 2022, aquaculture produced over 130.9 million tonnes, including plants. Over 94 million tonnes of this were aquatic animals. In 2024, over 560 species were farmed globally, via an array of scales and methods.

Fish are usually raised from eggs in hatcheries and moved to bigger pens or tanks until they reach the size for harvest. Different fish are grown in different ways depending on their needs and the country they are grown in. For example, here in the, UK Atlantic salmon are cultivated in floating pens in the coastal waters of Scotland.

Why do we farm fish?

- As 94% of global fish stocks are fully or overexploited, we're increasingly reliant on aquaculture to meet global demands for seafood. It's critical that we meet our future protein needs whilst ensuring the health, diversity and productivity of our marine environment.
- Fish stocks such as salmon, which used to be wild caught, are now in very low numbers. Nearly all of the salmon we eat now is farmed.
- Fish farming can provide us with seafood all year round. Aquaculture supports wild fish populations and reduces stress on the ocean.



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Potential impacts

It's important to consider the potential impacts of fish farming on the marine environment, including:



Farmed fish like salmon, prawn, bass and bream all need to be fed for their health and welfare. The food they eat is made of lots of ingredients, including other fish, and some of these are from unsustainable sources. Plants like soya are also included in the feed and it's really important that this comes from a sustainable supply, but this isn't always the case.



The pens that some fish, like salmon, are grown in are open to the surrounding sea. Therefore any uneaten fish food, waste chemicals and fish waste sinks to the seafloor causing pollution.



In some areas, diseases and parasites can be a real problem, especially if they spread outside the farming area and infect wild fish.



Sometimes farmed fish escape due to large storms or holes in the nets, which has the potential to have negative effects on wild fish in the area due to spreading disease or interbreeding.

Is aquaculture sustainable?

Good management and regulation is vital to reduce negative environmental impacts and work towards sustainable aquaculture.

Check out the latest [Good Fish Guide](#) sustainability ratings for wild and farmed fish to help make more informed choices on the food we eat.



Fish farm at Loch Awe
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