

Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform
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Dear Rob

Following the introduction of the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013, the then Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Paul Wheelhouse wrote to the RACCE committee concerning sea lice issues raised during consideration of the Act by Parliament.

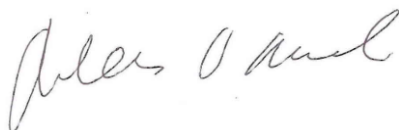
Mr Wheelhouse committed to keep the new voluntary publication arrangements for sea lice data under review during the current Parliamentary session, noting powers to legislate for data release could be used if the voluntary arrangements agreed with the salmon farming sector were not operating as expected.

There have now been 3 years of quarterly reports published by the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation (SSPO), beginning in March 2013. The reports provide the public with access to comprehensive sea lice data for 30 areas, as well as other fish health management information, in a user-friendly format.

The publication of the fish health management reports has been generally welcomed as proportionate and helpful, providing an appropriate level of granularity for public consumption. There have been no calls for any change to this system with the exception of the Salmon and Trout Conservation Scotland (S&TCS) who recently called again for the reports to be further disaggregated to an individual farm level. I have considered their view but concluded that publication of these reports is operating as anticipated, as a public tool to highlight the sea lice position around our aquaculture coast, identifying any areas of concern, and helping to drive positive behaviours to improve performance.

When also seen in terms of the 2 year marine production cycle of farmed salmon, the system is still in its relatively early stages. As such, I believe there is no convincing case for change at this time and the voluntary sea lice reporting system should continue as currently.

Kind regards



AILEEN MCLEOD