



Media Release/Communiqué

Latest Disease Fiasco Confirms Need for Land-Based Farmed Salmon

For immediate release

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St. Andrews... The Atlantic Salmon Federation (ASF) urgently calls upon Fisheries and Oceans Canada and provincial governments to restore public confidence in salmon farming by immediately imposing a moratorium on the expansion of open net pen salmon farming and seriously investing in closed-containment technology.

“The latest decision by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) that allowed Cooke Aquaculture to keep salmon infected by infectious salmon anemia (ISA) at their site at Coffin Island Liverpool Bay, Nova Scotia, grow them out for ten months to market size, process and sell them is appalling,” said Bill Taylor, ASF President.

With the open admission by CFIA that it is impossible to eradicate ISA in Atlantic waters, choosing instead to stress the importance of preventing the deadly virus, the first obvious step is immediate removal of the infected farmed salmon to prevent ISA from potentially spreading to nearby farmed fish and to prevent any risk of infection in wild fish. During the [Coffin Island](#) site outbreak and in the several months that the farmed salmon were allowed to sit in the ocean, the virus had potential to infect wild Atlantic salmon smolt migrating out and adult salmon returning to the Medway and Mersey rivers, both of which have salmon populations that have been designated as endangered by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC).

“Disease outbreaks in open net pens and the resulting negative publicity will only get worse,” said Mr. Taylor. He continued, “Based on our research with [The Conservation Fund Freshwater Institute](#) of West Virginia and actual operations using closed-containment technology throughout the world, I am fully convinced that farming salmon in freshwater, closed-containment facilities on land is the right choice to ensure that disease and parasites do not spread to wild fish populations. This is the absolute best approach to salmon farming from both business and environmental perspectives.”

ASF recommends that, until salmon farming is conducted in closed containment facilities, governments work with CFIA to adopt a precautionary approach in its protocols for removal and disposal of diseased fish. Wild fish susceptibility is especially problematic as they are not vaccinated against ISA as are many farmed fish. Wild fish entering rivers are not being examined for fish health so there is no way of knowing whether fish are infected upon entry.

During the widespread ISA outbreaks in New Brunswick farms in 1999, on the Magaguadavic River, 15 wild salmon that entered the river were tested for ISA, 93% of which were infected. Three died of the infection. The Magaguadavic River is located in the centre of New Brunswick’s salmon aquaculture industry and is one of very few rivers in eastern Canada that is monitored for interactions between wild and farmed salmon.

“Until we transition to closed containment, we must deal with the many negative consequences of open net pen salmon farming as best we can,” said Mr. Taylor. “There is urgent need,” concluded Mr. Taylor, “for protection of wild stocks until the potential impacts of the ISA are fully researched and understood. There is a need for consistent standard operating procedures throughout eastern Canada for immediate removal and disposal of ISA infected salmon until wild fish health surveillance programs are carried out and provide full disclosure on the impacts of ISA on wild fish. Government must hold the industry accountable to carry out these procedures.”

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The Atlantic Salmon Federation is dedicated to the conservation, protection and restoration of wild Atlantic salmon and the ecosystems on which their well being and survival depend. ASF has a network of seven regional councils (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Maine and Western New England). The regional councils cover the freshwater range of the Atlantic salmon in Canada and the United States.

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