

Draft principles for environmentally, socially, and economically responsible salmon farming
Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue
February 2008

Background

The Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue is a science-based forum which was initiated by WWF in 2004 to credibly develop measurable, performance-based standards that minimize or eliminate the key environmental and social impacts of salmon farming. The Dialogue brings together a wide range of stakeholders including producers and other members of the market chain, researchers, NGOs, government officials, and investors to identify and agree upon the main environmental and social impacts of salmon aquaculture globally. The Salmon Dialogue is open to a wide range of interested participants and is a forum to listen and try to respectfully resolve potential negative impacts of salmon farming and conflicts among stakeholders. Working under the direction of a nine-person steering committee, participants have used a transparent, consensus-building process to approve the goals and objectives and identify and agree on the main impacts of salmon farming. The organizations represented on the steering committee are: the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR), Fundación Terram, Marine Harvest, the Norwegian Seafood Federation (FHL), the Pew Environment Group, Salmon of the Americas (SOTA), SalmonChile, Skretting, and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

The goal of the Salmon Dialogue is to develop and implement verifiable environmental and social performance levels that measurably reduce or eliminate key impacts of salmon farming and are acceptable to stakeholders. The Dialogue will recommend standards that achieve these performance levels while permitting the salmon farming industry to remain economically viable.

The key areas of impact identified by the Dialogue are feed, nutrient loading and carrying capacity, disease and parasites, escapes, benthic impacts and siting, chemical inputs, and social impacts. To gain a better understanding of how to address the environmental and social impacts identified, the Dialogue Steering Committee created geographically diverse and balanced technical working groups to research each impact in more detail. Members of the Dialogue were actively involved in choosing experts and developing a scope of work for each group. Each technical working group is responsible for producing a "State of Information Report" that reviews the status of existing research related to the impact, identifies gaps or areas of disagreement in the research, and suggests a process for addressing the gaps. Information in the reports will be used to guide discussions about creating principles, criteria, indicators and standards for salmon aquaculture. The reports are available for download and comment at <http://wwf.worldwildlife.org/site/PageNavigator/SalmonSOIForm>.

In order to arrive at a suite of performance-based standards, the Salmon Dialogue is developing broad-based principles for socially, economically, and environmentally responsible salmon farming. Corresponding criteria, indicators, and standards will then be sequentially drafted, drilling down from the broad to the concrete.

Principle - The guiding proposal for addressing an impact

Criteria - Specific areas to focus on in order to reduce an impact

Indicators - Points of measurement to determine extent of an impact

Standards - Quantitative performance level that will evaluate whether or not a principle is being achieved

Draft Principles

The following Draft Principles were developed by the Steering Committee and presented for initial feedback at the open Dialogue meeting in January 2008 in Barcelona, Spain. Additional feedback and comments on the draft principles are appreciated. Please send comments to Katherine.bostick@wwfus.org.

The seven key areas of impact are addressed by the full suite of standards and each impact falls under one or more of the principles.

Draft Overarching Principles:

1. Obey all applicable international and national laws, and comply with local regulations.
2. Continually improve practices.

Draft Ecological Principles:

3. Conserve natural habitat and local biodiversity
4. Protect the health and genetic integrity of wild populations
5. Use resources in an environmentally efficient and responsible manner
6. Manage disease and pests in an environmentally responsible manner

Draft Social Responsibility Principles:

7. Develop and operate farms in a socially responsible manner
8. Be a good neighbor and conscientious coastal citizen.

The Steering Committee is discussing the addition of a preamble or additional principles which would address one or more of the following themes:

- Transparency
- Monitoring
- Maintaining ecosystem function and ecosystem services, recognizing that aquaculture operations are not solely responsible for total ecosystem health.
- Standards are revisited and updated periodically
- Use dialogue and scientific information as a basis for decision-making and conflict resolution