

SALMON FARMING CERTIFICATIONS: FAILING TO LIVE UP TO THEIR PROMISES



Eco-labels make farmed salmon appear sustainable.
But do they live up to their claims?

FARMED SALMON CERTIFICATIONS IN



The three prominent eco-label schemes are: the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) and GlobalG.A.P. (GGN). All major supermarkets use at least one of these certifications.



Certified farms in: Canada, Chile, Norway, U.K.

Salmon farming companies: Mowi, Cermaq, Grieg

Retailers: Costco, Loblaws, Save-On-Foods, METRO, Walmart*, Federated Co-operatives Limited



Certified farms in: Canada, Chile, Norway, U.K.

Salmon farming companies: Mowi, Cermaq, Grieg, Cooke Aquaculture: Kelly Cove and True North

Retailers: Loblaws, Sobeys, METRO, Walmart*, Federated Co-operatives Limited, Buy-Low Foods



Certified farms in: Canada, Chile, Norway, U.K.

Retailers: METRO, Walmart*

*Walmart's purchasing policy cites "Global Seafood Sustainability Initiative (GSSI) equivalent" certifications, which includes ASC, BAP and GGN.

HOW DO FARMED SALMON CERTIFIED LABELS STACK UP?

Canadian salmon farms have been certified under these standards despite large fish deaths, marine mammal deaths and high sea lice loads.

DO LABELS REQUIRE LIMITS ON...	ASC*	BAP	GGN
Sick, diseased, or dead fish?	—	✗	✗
Sea lice?	—	✗	✗
Chemical use to combat sea lice?	—	✗	✗
Antibiotics use?	—**	—	✗
Waste pollution (e.g. feces)?	—	✗	✗
Wild fish used in feed?	—	✓	✗
Farms in high conservation value areas (e.g. protected areas)?	—	✗	—
Fish escapes?	—**	✗	✗
Harm to wildlife (e.g. seal deaths)?	—**	✗	✗
Wild fish held and/or killed inside farm?	✗	✗	✗

LEGEND: ✓ Yes — Partly ✗ No Full analysis: seachoice.org

*ASC does not assess the interim farm stage of the production cycle, which means standards limits (e.g. mortality, antibiotics, wild fish use, etc) are applicable for only some of the cycle time. Therefore 'partly' is applied.

**ASC is currently reviewing its aligned Farm Standard (which will be used to assess farmed salmon) and the current draft proposes removing these limits, which would downgrade these rankings.

WHAT'S REALLY BEHIND THE LABELS?

SeaChoice's reviews of these eco-labels have found concerning loopholes that benefit the salmon farming industry - not the consumers, wild salmon or local stakeholders affected by the industry.

LOOPHOLE #1: No guarantee of "farmed responsibly" from egg to harvest

The production cycle of B.C. farmed salmon can include an interim net-pen farm that are used between the hatchery and the final grow-out net pen farm stages. ASC allows auditors to exclude these interim farms from audits - meaning up to a year of a farmed salmon's three-year production cycle avoids any assessment for environmental impacts.

LOOPHOLE #2: Farms exempt from certification criteria

ASC often grants exemptions from some of the requirements of their standard, known as "variances", to farms. As a result, for seven years, B.C. salmon farmers benefited from a variance that allowed farms to have dangerously high sea lice numbers.

LOOPHOLE #3: Audits behind closed doors

BAP and GGN do not publish audit reports and there is no consultation with outside stakeholders such as local communities or independent scientists.

LOOPHOLE #4: A case of the "fox guarding the henhouse"

GGN lacks civil society stakeholder representation on its standard-development and governance bodies. The only "external representation" on these bodies are members of the salmon farming, retailer and supply sectors.

CERTIFICATIONS FAIL TO PROTECT WILD SALMON FROM DISEASE

Strategic Salmon Health Initiative (SSHI) scientists have identified that farm-origin transmission of a highly infectious bacteria, *Tenacibaculum maritimum*, and virus, Piscine Orthoreovirus (PRV), are of serious concern to some Pacific salmon populations. Both are ubiquitous in B.C. salmon farms and hatcheries. None of the certifications assessed prevent farms with PRV or *T. maritimum* infected fish from being certified. Simply put, these certification standards are not doing nearly enough to eliminate the transmission risk that net-pen operations pose to vulnerable wild salmon.

SHOULD YOU BUY CERTIFIED FARMED SALMON?

Claiming "best practice" or "responsible practice" doesn't cut it when those practices are largely industry norms that continue to threaten wild salmon populations.

To truly protect wild salmon, **land-based closed containment** farmed salmon is a more responsible alternative. The Canadian government has committed to the removal of open net-pen salmon farms from Canada's Pacific coast by 2025. SeaChoice is working in support of a similar transition commitment for Canada's Atlantic coast.

SHOPPERS SHOULD AVOID OPEN NET-PEN FARMED SALMON – CERTIFIED OR NOT. INSTEAD, PURCHASE SUSTAINABLY-CAUGHT WILD PACIFIC SALMON OR ATLANTIC SALMON GROWN IN LAND-BASED, CLOSED CONTAINMENT FACILITIES.

