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# Farmed fish: Almost organic, and always polluting

by Rick Attig, The Oregonian

Sunday November 23, 2008, 2:45 PM

You're going to hear, if you have not already, that the feds are preparing to allow farmed salmon and other fish to be labeled "organic," as if there is something wholesome and natural about raising millions of fish in polluting net pens, and sweeping the seas of menhaden, mackerel and other small fish to feed them.



Steve Nehl/The Oregonian

The new "organic" standard for farmed fish would allow use of wild fish for feed and more pollution.

No one ought to be under any illusions about most of the world's fish farms, especially those that grow carnivorous species such as salmon. These farms are terrible polluters, "floating pig farms," in the words of Daniel Pauly, professor of fisheries at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Their wastes and uneaten food coat the bottom of sea floors, and they spur enormous clouds of lice that cling to and kill countless wild fish trying to pass by the growing number of farms in places such as British Columbia.

The new organic standard that a federal advisory board is considering is far from pure, too. The standards approved by the National Organic Standards Board would allow "organic" fish farmers to use wild fish as part of their feed mix provided it did not exceed 25 percent of the total, and did not come from the forage species that have been most decimated by the rush to find food for farmed salmon.

Every other animal certified as organic -- cattle, pigs, chicken -- must eat 100 percent organic feed to be considered organic. Those cheap farmed salmon that are damaging the natural environment in such places as B.C.'s Inside Passage are the first to get this easier "organic" standard.

Yet again, consumers won't know what they're getting into. The group Consumers Union released a poll last week in which 93 percent of respondents said fish labeled organic should be produced with 100 percent organic feed. Ninety percent said organic fish farms should have to recover their wastes and not pollute the environment.

But that's not what "organic" farmed salmon is going to mean, if the National Organic Standards Board has its way. It will mean that the "organic" fish you are buying could have been fattened up on rapidly declining forage fish and could still have contributed to the pollution and disease that is having an effect on wild salmon all over the world.

Does that sound "organic" to you?

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Posted by **Laetitia** on [11/23/08 at 4:19PM](#)

Those of us who are concerned about eating truly organic foods need to make sure we check the label and reject foods that have been certified by the National Organic Standards Board. Aside from that, if it says "farmed fish" I will not buy it anyway. After all we have Oregon Tilth and if they don't certify it one can always choose to consider the organic label meaningless.

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Posted by **Luckydog1** on [11/23/08 at 7:33PM](#)

When will people learn that whatever "organic" may have meant at one time, it is now become simply a marketing term.

Part of the problem is that instead of sticking with the original definition - raised without the use of man made chemicals and fertilizers, the people who were making money in the organic business tried to skew the definition to mean something else.

Now it is all just BS. Marketing terms and businesses fighting over who gets to