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## A run on salmon?



Posted by Willie on 16 February 2010.



It's worth stopping to think about the true price of the salmon you eat. And there's quite a lot to think about.

Salmon is one of the biggest international seafood commodities, and in the UK it's easily one of the most consumed and most conspicuous species in our supermarkets and restaurants. But the vast majority of the salmon you'll find on shelves or plates these days has been farmed rather than fished. Partly that's because there's hardly any wild Atlantic salmon left, but it's also because salmon's popularity has grown and it has gone from being a delicacy to become more of an everyday food in the past few decades.

Today sees the online launch of a short film exposing some of the more unpleasant side of the global salmon industry, called Farmed Salmon Exposed - watch the first instalment above.

Internationally, the UK (and Scotland in particular) is a big salmon farming country, producing proudly branded products that are sold worldwide. But the reach of this industry flows around the world the other way too – in particular with the demand for feed fish, small species like anchovies that often come from places like South America, where they are caught in vast numbers and rendered down to fishmeal. Alternative options could be [palm oil](#) or [soya](#), which of course bring their own set of concerns.

Perhaps surprisingly for some people, salmon farming generally uses many times more fish - weight for weight - than it produces. From that perspective alone it's questionable whether farming salmon and other

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### Red List Fish



- Which fish should we **NOT** be eating?
- How did these fish end up on our red

carnivorous species of seafood can ever be truly sustainable.

Lately there have been some quite hard-hitting criticisms of the impact that fishing for feed fish has on the oceans, with the mighty [Dr Daniel Pauly](#) equating this as "[robbing Pedro to pay Paul](#)". There are others trying to change the system from the other end, and at the [SCA Seafood Summit](#) in Paris I was happy to meet the dynamic [Patricia Majluf](#) who is working tirelessly in her native Peru to convince people to cut out the middle-fish, and eat anchovies rather than feed them to salmon!

As a result of Greenpeace USA's work, the retailer [Target](#) recently announced it was to stop selling farmed salmon, and would only stock wild-caught certified salmon from the Pacific instead. This is great news, but slightly marred by the huge concerns being raised by many groups in Canada about [the alarming state of Pacific sockeye salmon](#), which, confusingly seems [about to be recertified by the MSC](#).

The irony here is that even if you, as a conscientious consumer, want to avoid that particular species then it's likely to be very difficult to do because a number of different species are just called 'Pacific salmon'.

Some parts of the industry have already had to change because of catastrophes and bad news stories – up until last year, for example, Chilean farmed salmon was readily available on UK supermarket shelves. [A string of disease outbreaks and bad PR](#) means you won't find it there today. Elsewhere the bad news stories just keep coming, like the [escape of thousands of non-native salmon](#) just a few weeks ago.

Over here in the UK there are clearly better options for salmon if you do choose to buy it, including the salmon from Scotland which has organic certification and is overall, a much lower-impact option.

But please do stop to think of the overall price you may be paying.

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