

His Excellency Mr. Su, Ge  
Ambassador,  
China Embassy  
Víðimelur 29  
IS-107 Reykjavík

Reykjavík February 17, 2011

Dear Ambassador,

There are great concerns here in Iceland and throughout the North Atlantic region over the seriously depleted status of wild Atlantic salmon. So we are very distressed to learn that China is now importing huge quantities of farm-raised salmon from Norway and Scotland.

I write you on behalf of the North Atlantic Salmon Fund, a coalition of conservation organizations in Canada, USA, Greenland, Faroe Islands, Spain, France, Germany, Czech Republic, UK (including England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), Irish Republic, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Russia and Iceland. We are engaged in trying to protect and restore wild Atlantic salmon numbers throughout the North Atlantic.

We watch, with admiration, the huge steps China is taking toward improving the environmental protection of your unique wildlife species and habitat. Given China's strong interest in preserving our natural environment, we thought you would want to know that anything that increases the production of farmed-raised salmon as this industry is currently conducted in many Norwegian and Scottish farms will have a very adverse effect on our efforts to protect and restore this species class, whilst increasing the danger to already threatened wild stocks. Your purchases of farm-raised salmon produced in Norway and Scotland have just such an effect.

Wild Atlantic salmon face many threats which must be addressed to restore the stocks. But it is universally acknowledged by all the many scientists who have studied the international situation that aquaculture as it is practiced in Norway and Scotland today is one of the most serious. The intensive concentrations of penned fish in open water seriously pollute the water with excrement, chemicals and drugs used to combat infections caused by the overcrowded conditions. These crowded enclosures attract and create swarms of sea lice and other sub-lethal parasites and predators which then attack young wild salmon as they migrate to and from nearby rivers. In addition, large numbers of fish inevitably escape from pens to compete with the wild fish for food and habitat.

These artificially-raised fish also spawn in the rivers and by mating with wild fish they destroy the genetic purity of the native fish. The wild fish strains have evolved to travel thousands of miles during their migrations. The introduction of the genes of fish that have been specifically selected and bred for life in captivity has been shown to reduce the capability of the offspring to survive in the wild. There are now only relatively few wild Atlantic salmon left in the rivers of Norway and Scotland and

these precious few simply will not be able to survive and thrive in the face of the impact of these mismanaged fish farms.

China is known for being progressive when it comes to aquaculture and is regarded as a leader in insuring that this industry is conducted in a way that will not adversely affect the natural aquatic environment. If the officials in Norway and Scotland who regulate fish farms had the same level of environmental concern as their counterparts in your country, your purchases of farm-raised fish would undoubtedly have minimal impact.

This, unfortunately, is not the case.

Salmon farming in Norway and Scotland is an unsustainable practice because it takes up to five tons of wild fish feed to produce one ton of farmed salmon. Often this feed comprises of the very sandeels and capelin that our wild salmon used to thrive on in the North Atlantic. That is why our wild Atlantic salmon no longer grow to their potential and return under half their weight to their natal rivers to spawn.

In the interest of the wild Atlantic salmon and the broader interest of protecting our marine environment world-wide, we would ask that China join with other conservation-minded consumers of sea foods and restrict its purchases of farm-raised salmon from Norway and Scotland until these countries can demonstrate that they are regulating their fish farms in an environmentally responsible manner.

My organization, the North Atlantic Salmon Fund, would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss how we might jointly protect the wild salmon populations whilst improving the quality and integrity of the food produced for the consumers.

Thank you for your consideration,

Orri Vigfússon, Chairman  
North Atlantic Salmon Fund

c.c. Mr. Össur Skarphedinsson, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Reykjavík