



How the World is Responding to Industrial Aquaculture

Offshore Fish Farming (OFF), also known as Open Ocean Aquaculture, is the industrial farming of carnivorous fish in giant net pens out at sea. These operations pollute the surrounding environment with fish feces, antibiotics, and pesticides, lead to the net loss of fish due to overfishing for fish feed, hurt small-scale fishermen by flooding the market with cheap, low-quality fish, and provide consumers with low-quality, toxic fish. Though OFF is being globally pursued, countries like Argentina and Denmark have taken a stand against the corporate interests pushing for this destructive industry.



In 2021, **Argentina** led the charge by effectively **banning salmon farming** in the entire country. This was only possible with outreach and **community organizing** throughout the region to protect the marine environment and the communities that depend on healthy oceans.



To the west, communities in **Chile** are fighting their own battle after a 10 year moratorium on salmon farming **ended in 2020**. Chileans, who have been protesting **fish farming for years**, were reminded of how important their fight is when in May of 2023 the salmon farming industry resulted in a red tide off the coast of Patagonia. This harmful algae bloom carried dangerous neuro-toxins and **closed down the area's fishery**.



Meanwhile, in Europe, **Denmark** enacted its own ban on offshore fish farming in 2019 after years of protests and **citizen opposition**. Key stakeholders, like the Denmark Sports Fishermen's Association and Denmark's Nature Conservancy Association, applauded the decision and the benefits for Denmark's environment and wild fish populations.



In **Norway**, the country with one of the most prolific and technologically-advanced fish farming industries in the world, measures are being taken to disincentivize farmed fish. In May of 2023, the Norwegian government implemented a 25% tax hike on farmed salmon companies that operate in **Norwegian waters**. This tax is similar to the tax levied on the oil industry, to compensate the Norwegian public for when an extractive private industry exploits public resources. It is meant to ensure that coastal communities, which bear the **brunt of the damage** caused by offshore fish farms, are receiving a share of the profits generated by the industry. It will likely drive many Norwegian companies to countries with less-regulated waters for fish farming, such as the United States. We are already seeing companies, like Nordic Aquafarms, American Aquafarms (Norwegian), and others, developing massive facilities in U.S. waters.



Iceland is also beginning to take steps to disincentivize the industry in their waters. In October 2023, Icelandic Food, Fisheries, and Agriculture Minister Svandís Svavarsdóttir proposed **new regulations** to offshore aquaculture after a **farmed salmon escape** from a Norwegian-owned farm in Patreksfjörður. After these escapes, farmed salmon, many with sea lice, have been found in 32 rivers throughout North Western Iceland, prompting activists to call for stricter regulations. These regulations include limiting the number of companies operating in a fjord to one, requiring aquaculture companies to bear the responsibility of cleaning up environmental harms, such as escapes or sea lice outbreaks, and increased taxes that will be allocated towards the research and implementation of techniques and technologies that limit environmental impact.



The tides are beginning to turn in **Canada** as well, with British Columbia turning away from the **floating industrial farms**. First Nations communities have been in the forefront of this movement, spreading their message that offshore fish farming can only exist at the expense of the wild fish populations that they, and other Canadians, have relied on for generations. The recent limits to offshore fish farming include the commitment from Minister Murray to ban open net-pens around the Discovery Islands and the announcement from the 'Namgis, Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis, and Mamalilikulla First Nations that the seven salmon farms operating in their territory must close down.

Throughout the world, nations that once enthusiastically embraced offshore fish farming are taking meaningful steps to reverse, limit, or outright ban the practice. In the United States, we have the opportunity to avoid repeating their mistakes by choosing better alternatives to this destructive industry altogether.



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