# Abel & Cole stops sourcing sea-farmed salmon amid growing environmental concerns



Abel & Cole has made a significant decision to cease sourcing sea-farmed salmon, reflecting an evolving landscape of sustainability scrutiny within the aquaculture industry. This move aligns with the company’s long-standing commitment to ethical sourcing and environmental stewardship, as demonstrated by its B Corp certification since 2018, which underscores its dedication to rigorous social and ecological standards. Founded in 1988 as a humble potato delivery service, Abel & Cole has expanded its offerings to encompass a wide array of organic products while aiming to cut its carbon emissions by 50% by 2030. The retailer's plans to transition to electric delivery vans in urban areas by 2025 further illustrate its commitment to minimising environmental impact.

The decision resonates amid growing awareness of the inherent issues with farmed salmon. A report by the Dutch NGO Changing Markets highlights troubling practices within the industry, where salmon certified as sustainable often contributes to the depletion of marine ecosystems. The feeding of farmed fish with fishmeal and fish oil derived from unsustainable practices has raised alarms about the broader repercussions on wild fish populations globally. This has prompted a request for greater transparency and accountability within the sector, as many retailers struggle to ensure that their seafood sourcing practices genuinely reflect sustainability.

Sustainability experts have emphasised various serious concerns related to fish farming. The Sustainable Restaurant Association has critiqued the industry for high mortality rates, the prevalence of parasitic sea lice, and the pollution of marine environments. These challenges underscore a pressing need for industry-wide reforms aimed at enhancing the sustainability of salmon farming. The “Off The Table” campaign advocates for restaurants to reject open-net farmed salmon, citing environmental degradation as an urgent reason to re-evaluate current sourcing practices.

Further exacerbating the situation is the recent controversy surrounding misleading sustainability claims made by retailers like Selfridges. The store promoted their salmon as sustainably sourced and reared in closed-loop systems; however, investigations revealed that the fish was derived from open cages in coastal waters, a practice that raises serious environmental and ethical concerns. This incident underscores the importance of consumer awareness and the need for rigorous standards in the marketing of seafood products.

In an echo of Abel & Cole’s decision, Chris Packham, president of the RSPCA, has publicly urged other food industry players, including restaurant chains like Wagamama, to discontinue their use of farmed salmon, labelling it an “environmental disaster”. His appeal reflects mounting pressure from environmental organisations urging businesses to scrutinise their sourcing choices more diligently, particularly in relation to fish sourced from vulnerable fisheries.

The narrative surrounding farmed salmon is one of growing concern and calls for reform. As Abel & Cole takes a bold stance in favour of sustainability, it may well influence the wider industry to reassess its practices in the face of increasing environmental accountability.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/abel-and-cole-stops-sourcing-sea-farmed-salmon-over-sustainability-concerns/705029.article), [[2]](https://www.fruitnet.com/fresh-produce-journal/abel-and-cole-sustainability-sticklers/256545.article)
* Paragraph 2 – [[3]](https://www.the-independent.com/news/business/news/supermarkets-sustainable-fish-scottish-salmon-sainsburys-asda-a9155636.html), [[5]](https://thegreenlondoner.co.uk/why-this-may-be-the-right-time-to-stop-eating-farmed-salmon/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://offthetable.org.uk/sustainable-restaurant-association-is-there-such-thing-as-sustainable-salmon/), [[6]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/12/07/selfridges-remove-marketing-claiming-salmon-sustainable/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[7]](https://www.salmonbusiness.com/rspca-president-demands-chain-cease-use-of-environmental-disaster-farmed-salmon/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/abel-and-cole-stops-sourcing-sea-farmed-salmon-over-sustainability-concerns/705029.article> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.fruitnet.com/fresh-produce-journal/abel-and-cole-sustainability-sticklers/256545.article> - Abel & Cole, an online organic retailer, has been recognised for its rigorous commitment to sustainability. The company, which began as a door-to-door potato seller in 1988, now offers a wide range of organic and ethically sourced products. Abel & Cole has been B Corp certified since 2018, reflecting its dedication to high social and environmental standards. The retailer aims to reduce its carbon emissions by 50% by 2030 and is transitioning to electric delivery vans in urban areas by 2025 to further minimise its environmental impact.
3. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/business/news/supermarkets-sustainable-fish-scottish-salmon-sainsburys-asda-a9155636.html> - A report by Dutch NGO Changing Markets reveals that UK supermarkets selling 'sustainable' Scottish salmon may be contributing to the collapse of wild fish stocks in Asia and Africa. The report highlights that farmed fish, often certified as sustainable, are fed with fishmeal and fish oil produced through unsustainable practices, leading to environmental degradation and depletion of marine ecosystems.
4. <https://offthetable.org.uk/sustainable-restaurant-association-is-there-such-thing-as-sustainable-salmon/> - The Sustainable Restaurant Association questions the sustainability of farmed salmon, citing issues such as high mortality rates, parasitic sea lice, and environmental pollution. The article discusses the challenges in achieving truly sustainable salmon farming and highlights the need for industry-wide reforms to address these concerns.
5. <https://thegreenlondoner.co.uk/why-this-may-be-the-right-time-to-stop-eating-farmed-salmon/> - The article discusses the environmental and ethical concerns associated with farmed salmon, including weak regulations, lack of specific UK legislation protecting farmed salmon welfare, and the impact of salmon farming on wild fish populations. It also highlights the 'Off The Table' campaign, which encourages restaurants to refuse serving open-net farmed salmon due to environmental damage.
6. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/12/07/selfridges-remove-marketing-claiming-salmon-sustainable/> - Selfridges was instructed to remove misleading claims about the sustainability of farmed salmon sold in its London store. The retailer had promoted salmon as 'sustainable' and reared in closed-loop systems, but investigations revealed that the salmon was sourced from open cages in coastal waters, raising concerns about environmental impact and fish welfare.
7. <https://www.salmonbusiness.com/rspca-president-demands-chain-cease-use-of-environmental-disaster-farmed-salmon/> - Chris Packham, president of the RSPCA, called on Wagamama to cease using farmed salmon in its dishes, describing it as an 'environmental disaster'. The open letter, supported by environmental charity WildFish Scotland and campaign group Feedback, urges the restaurant chain to move away from sourcing Norwegian salmon due to the industry's reliance on fishmeal and fish oil sourced from vulnerable fisheries.