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



Abel & Cole has announced its decision to halt the sourcing of sea-farmed salmon, a move driven by increasing scrutiny surrounding the sustainability of fish farming practices. The online organic retailer’s commitment to environmental responsibility aligns with its broader ethos, established since its inception in 1988 as a purveyor of organic produce. Recognised for its high standards, Abel & Cole has been B Corp certified since 2018, reflecting its dedication to sustainable business practices and its goal to cut carbon emissions by 50% by 2030. The company intends to transition to an electric delivery fleet in urban areas by 2025, further enhancing its sustainability credentials.

The decision to stop sourcing sea-farmed salmon comes against a backdrop of mounting criticism regarding the impacts of fish farming on marine ecosystems. A report by the Dutch NGO Changing Markets highlights that UK supermarkets, despite marketing their Scottish salmon as sustainable, may inadvertently contribute to the collapse of wild fish stocks in regions such as Asia and Africa. The fishmeal and fish oil used in farming practices often derive from unsustainable sources, exacerbating the issues of marine degradation and species depletion.

The Sustainable Restaurant Association has echoed these concerns, raising alarms about the inherent issues within the farmed salmon industry. Their reports indicate that over 25% of Scottish farmed salmon die prematurely, primarily due to high mortality rates and disease prevalence. Moreover, farms often serve as breeding grounds for parasitic sea lice, which pose significant threats to wild fish populations. According to the association, the notion of a truly sustainable source of farmed salmon is increasingly being called into question.

In addition to ceasing its salmon sourcing, Abel & Cole has recently discontinued its use of compostable plastic packaging, further illustrating its stringent stance on sustainability. The retailer is now exploring alternative packaging methods, with an objective to eliminate unnecessary packaging altogether wherever safety and quality can be preserved. This decision underscores a commitment not only to responsible sourcing but also to comprehensive environmental stewardship.

Overall, the current landscape of fish farming raises crucial questions about sustainability, welfare, and ecological impact. Despite some retailers promoting “sustainable” farmed seafood, the realities often tell a different story. The absence of robust regulation in the UK regarding farmed salmon welfare and the environmental toll of farming practices call for increased consumer awareness and stronger legislative measures. As companies like Abel & Cole take decisive steps in response to these challenges, the hope remains that the broader industry will follow suit in striving for genuinely sustainable seafood practices.

## 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 – [[1]](https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/abel-and-cole-stops-sourcing-sea-farmed-salmon-over-sustainability-concerns/705029.article), [[3]](https://www.the-independent.com/news/business/news/supermarkets-sustainable-fish-scottish-salmon-sainsburys-asda-a9155636.html), [[4]](https://offthetable.org.uk/sustainable-restaurant-association-is-there-such-thing-as-sustainable-salmon/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/abel-and-cole-stops-sourcing-sea-farmed-salmon-over-sustainability-concerns/705029.article), [[5]](https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/abel-and-cole-scraps-compostable-plastic-packaging-due-to-sustainability-concerns/672887.article)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://thegreenlondoner.co.uk/why-this-may-be-the-right-time-to-stop-eating-farmed-salmon/), [[7]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/12/07/selfridges-remove-marketing-claiming-salmon-sustainable/)

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## 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, demonstrating its dedication to high social and environmental standards. The retailer aims to reduce its carbon emissions by 50% by 2030 and plans to use only electric vans in cities by 2025 to further its environmental goals.
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, disease, and environmental impact. The report highlights that over 25% of Scottish farmed salmon die prematurely, and that farms act as breeding grounds for parasitic sea lice, which can affect wild populations. The SRA suggests that no truly sustainable source of farmed salmon currently exists.
5. <https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/abel-and-cole-scraps-compostable-plastic-packaging-due-to-sustainability-concerns/672887.article> - Abel & Cole has discontinued the use of compostable plastic packaging due to sustainability concerns. The online retailer is actively seeking alternative packaging options and aims to remove packaging altogether where it does not compromise food safety or quality. This decision reflects the company's ongoing commitment to environmental responsibility.
6. <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 regulation, environmental degradation, and the impact on wild fish populations. It highlights the absence of specific UK legislation protecting farmed salmon welfare and calls for stronger regulations and consumer awareness to address these issues.
7. <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 animal welfare.