

44 sea lice per salmon at Marine Harvest Ireland farm

December 18, 2012, 4:12 pm
[Neil Ramsden](#)

A salmon farm belonging to Marine Harvest Ireland was one of two Irish farms found to have consistently high levels of sea lice over the past six months, according to Marine Institute findings.

Marine Harvest's farm at Lough Swilly, as well as the Mannin Bay Salmon Company's site in Corhoumagh, were found to have levels of sea lice which exceed the Marine Institute's protocol level of two pregnant female lice per fish.

In November 2012, levels of 6.23 pregnant female lice per fish were found at Lough Swilly, while 5.56 per fish was the level at Mannin Bay.

Counts also revealed a mean figure of 44.88 normal lice per salmon at the Marine Harvest site, and 15.23 at Mannin Bay.

The figures, which have actually fallen to those recorded in November, have prompted campaigning groups such as the global alliance against industrial aquaculture (GAAIA) to call for a boycott of farmed salmon.

"Lice-infested Irish farmed salmon – including 'organic' salmon – should be avoided like the plague," said Don Staniford of the GAAIA in a press release.

"The Irish Government should be controlling sea lice infestation on salmon farms not promoting even bigger feedlots such as the proposed 15,000-metric-ton farm in Galway Bay."

Since May 2012, levels of sea lice at Marine Harvest Ireland's Lough Swilly site have climbed from 4.35 per fish to as high as 71.72 in September, before falling to 54 in October and to 44.88 in November.

In terms of pregnant female lice, numbers have fallen from 11.05 in September to 9.35 per fish in October.

At Mannin Bay the numbers of lice have tended to be lower, though still over the protocol levels, peaking in October at 9.36 pregnant female lice per fish and 26.59 normal lice.

In a statement sent to *Undercurrent News*, Marine Harvest noted that the control protocols in respect of sea lice operated by the Marine Institute, a specifically Irish regulatory agency, are more advanced than those operated in other jurisdictions, as the inspection regime is independent of the industry.

“Data obtained as a result of inspections is published, and treatment trigger levels are set at a low level,” it said.

“These controls are widely accepted as representing best practice internationally. Marine Harvest Ireland conforms fully with this leading pest control strategy.”

The Marine Institute’s protocol levels are levels at which it recommends taking action against sea lice numbers, and Marine Harvest said that it employs tried and tested procedures for dealing with sea lice, and that it implemented them when needed, in full compliance with regulations.

The salmon farmer also said that given certain climatic conditions, lice can be more prevalent, and that this has occurred during the second part of this year, as the reports show.

“Best practice in fish farming is to optimize stock rotation and separation by having a greater number of sites. This is currently a lengthy process and currently subject to long delays due to the absence of conservation objectives for many candidate Special Areas of Conservation as designated under the Natura 2000 directive,” said Marine Harvest.

Source undercurrent news and ASF website