



Report on Aquaculture debate at Fishmongers' Hall on 4th October 2010

A first-rate debate on the subject of “Should aquaculture in the UK double by the year 2020” took place at the Fishmongers’ Company. The day was split into four mini debates covering salmon, trout, shellfish and emerging species. Each topic had an expert speaking for and against the motion followed by a short Q&A session. The day was moderated by Paul Knight of the Salmon and Trout Association who, despite his obvious bias towards one of the subjects, managed on the whole to maintain his neutrality and marshal the speakers and the audience proficiently throughout the day.

A vote on the motion was taken at the start of the day and the audience was overwhelmingly in favour of the motion. However, following the debates a second vote was taken on the individual topics and the outcomes had changed somewhat.

The vote on increasing salmon farming was marginally lost. This was maybe not surprising given the make up of the audience that included several members of the wild salmon fraternity. It was, however, agreed that the concerns relating to salmon farming could be resolved if all parties were to accept that there is a need to work together. It was noted that WWF were establishing a new aquaculture ‘standard’ on salmon farming. It was proposed that this standard may be a means of resolving some of the issues, provided it was sufficiently robust and embraced by the big buyers of salmon.

The votes on trout and shellfish expansion were passed with large majorities. The cases for both of these were well made and in particular shellfish expansion appeared to be a no-lose situation. However, there were concerns about conflicting water usage for trout farming and whether it would be possible to expand shellfish aquaculture in the face of competition from other sea-users such as offshore renewables, the leisure industry etc. The trout industry has been fairly static with most of the players being small, medium enterprises but, generally, it was felt that there were opportunities to increase production for not only food sources but also for re-stocking for sport fishing.

Perhaps the disappointing point was the emerging species. The vote on this topic appeared inconclusive. Many in the audience believed it was possible to double production from emerging species but it was currently undesirable because of competition from cheap imports. However, it was felt that this situation might change in the future if developing economies started to utilise more of their own production making less available for export and/or standards and regulations increased to our levels.

**Chris Leftwich - Chief Fisheries Inspector of the Fishmongers’ Company
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