



SALMON SET TO CATCH UP WITH TROUT

MARA OLSEN

Over the past few years, Vestsalmon, the leading Faroese exporter of farmed fish has successfully focused on the production of rainbow trout for the Japanese; however salmon production is about to be back on track—a sign of recovery for the aquaculture industry.

SIGNS ARE THE Faroese fish farming industry is poised for a healthy recovery this year as production of Atlantic salmon inches upward again with a re-stabilized price structure. During the fall of 2006, Vestsalmon, the leading exporter of farmed fish will release salmon smolt for a first round since 2003, a move which is largely seen as signaling the end of a state of dormancy that was triggered a few years ago when world market price drops coincided with fish health problems. Since 2005, following industry-wide consolidation and a series of across-the-board initiatives that included new regulative measures primarily designed to combat the Infectious Salmon Disease (ISA), the fish farm-

ing sector has been, in effect, “totally renewed,” said Bogi Johannesen, head of Vestsalmon’s Sales Department.

According to Vestsalmon, the various steps taken by the industry and the Faroese authorities—including special provisions for the mandatory application of an internationally licensed vaccine against the ISA—appear to have worked satisfactory.



“On a national level,” Mr Johannesen said, “we’ve seen significant progress in the aquaculture industry over the past couple of years, not least in terms of increased hygiene and quality control.”

For Vestsalmon, exports of salmon trout (rainbow trout) have nonetheless remained relatively stable, much thanks to the company’s ability to satisfy an extremely demanding Japanese clientele. However, with new UK clients in the pipeline, fresh leads in Russia and no signs of declining demand in Japan, the company looks set for a substantial growth in business revenue in the months and years ahead.

“We’re gradually stepping up production,” Mr Johannesen said. “This

fall we’re going to release about half a million salmon smolt. As to trout smolt, we have scheduled two releases in the late summer and fall, one of them half a million smolt and the other three to four hundred thousand.” In addition, he said, between one and eight million salmon roe will be prepared for hatching.

Equipped with the best commercial fish slaughtering premises in the country, Vestsalmon is able to combine its high levels of productivity efficiency with a high degree of process control, which could be key to the company’s success in Japan. For instance, for the fish—from the moment of being gill cut in a chill tank after having been transferred there to alive, to being furthered through the processing system and stored in deep frozen state—it takes only two hours.

‘PERFECT CONDITIONS’: According to surveys conducted by the official Food, Veterinary & Environmental Agency, the levels of dioxin and dioxin-like PCBs [PolyChlorinated Biphenyls] found in Faroese salmon and trout are not only well below the maximum limits set by the EU—they’re virtually zero.

According to a recent inspection by a UK veterinary surgeons group, conditions for the fish held in Vestsalmon’s on-growing cages by far exceeded minimum requirements set for the ‘ecological’ standard.

In its summary, the veterinary surgeons report stated: “The fish seen on site and at the factory were of good quality and the farming operations were carried out to a high standard. Farm stock records were comprehensive and

Bogi Johannesen, head of the sales department (center); inspecting trout before shipment (right); salmon trout production underway to shock freezer (left); fish farming in the fjord of Vestmanna (top right);



VESTSALMON

PO Box 82, FO-410 Kollafjörður

<http://www.vestsalmon.com>

E-Mail: vestlax@vestlax.fo

Tel.: +298 477 000

Fax: +298 477 001

General Manager:

Frímund Hansen

Head of Sales Department:

Bogi Johannesen

Producer, processor and exporter of farmed salmon and trout.

Products – fresh and frozen:

Atlantic salmon (*Salmo Salar*)

Salmon trout (*Oncorhynchus Mykiss*)

easily retrievable.” In the audit findings, it was likewise noted with regard to Vestsalmon’s trout production sites: “Average stocking density in 25m cages was 10.94 kg/m³ with maximum at 13.7 kg/m³, in cage G3, prior to 18 December harvest. Average stocking in 15m cages was 11.15 kg/m³ with maximum density at 13.6 kg/m³. Observations of fish in cages concurred with the stocking densities recorded.”

By comparison the maximum level of density acceptable to the veterinary standard is 25 kg/m³. Vestsalmon’s trout have not been vaccinated nor been treated with antibiotics, Mr Johannesen said.

Factors likely to contribute to the high product quality standard by which Vestsalmon has become recognized, ac-

ording to Mr Johannesen, include the freshness of the waters in and around the Faroe Islands with strong currents and tides, as well as the highly nutritious feed used, the broodstock developed, and the company’s fish farming methods and practices.

“As I’ve said before,” he remarked, “the confluence of cold currents and the Gulf Stream provide perfect living conditions for fish here. Our natural fjords and the clean environment yield ideal conditions to farm a first class product. We have always emphasized the necessity of increased knowledge of the environment and rigorous inspection of the production.”



MARA OLSEN