Summary of changes for aquaculture consultation November 2023 – Soil Association GB standards

These proposed changes will apply to the Soil Association organic standards for aquaculture in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. They are listed below with the changes to the existing standards and guidance displayed for reference.

If you have any additional views or feedback on the proposed changes, then please contact us at standards@soilassociation.org.

Key to text changes:

- ~~strikethrough~~ = delete
- underlined in red = new wording
- normal text = no change

We are consulting on a number of areas in these standard documents:

Please note that amendments to tables show only relevant updated rows.

Soil Association Organic Aquaculture standards

13.2.8 Prohibiting the use of species listed as 'threatened' by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) For animals listed as 'threatned' on the IUCN Red List of endangered species, the authorisation to use wild-caught specimens as breeding stock or the collection of juveniles for on-growing may only be granted in the context of conservation programmes recognised by the relevant public authority in charge of the conservation effort and approved by the Soil Association; *Soil Association higher standard*	

13.4.3 Organic production of salmonids in fresh water

Includes: Brown trout, Rainbow trout, American brook trout, salmon, charr, grayling, American lake trout (or grey trout), huchen

Production system	On-growing farm systems must be fed from open systems. The flow rate must ensure a minimum of 60% oxygen saturation for stock and must ensure their comfort and the elimination of farming effluent.
Maximum stocking density	Salmonid species not listed below: 15 kg/m^3 Salmon: 20 kg/m^3 Brown trout and rainbow trout: 25 kg/m^3 Arctic charr: 25 kg/m^3 *(EC) 889/2008 Annex XIIIa*

Mortality reporting requirement	Where the level of fish mortality exceeds the threshold figures shown below, this must be recorded and reported to Soil Association Certification within 72 hours Atlantic Salmon* Egg to 1st feed – 10 weeks – 6% weekly 1st feed to 5g – 10 weeks – 3% weekly 5g to smolting – 20 weeks – 1.5% weekly Mortality levels exceeding these limits must be investigated and a plan approved immediatly detailing how you will address and reduce the number of mortalities. *Soil Association higher standard* *Please contact the Soil Association for requirements for other salmonid species.

13.4.4 Salmonids in sea water

Includes: Salmon, brown trout, rainbow trout

Production system	In open water containment systems (net pens/cages) with minimum sea current speed to provide optimum fish welfare, or in open systems on land.
Maximum stocking density	10 kg/m^3 in net pens *(EC) 889/2008 Annex XIIIa*
Mortality recording and reporting requirement	1. Where the level of fish mortality exceeds the threshold figures outlined in this standard, this must be recorded and reported to Soil Association Certification within 72 hours Atlantic Salmon* **Site weight average under 750g**: maximum weekly mortality 1.5%, Maximum 5-week rolling mortality 6% **Site weight average greater than 750g**: maximum weekly mortality 1%, Maximum 5-week rolling mortality 4% 2. Mortality levels exceeding these limits must be investigated immediately and a plan approved detailing how you will address and reduce the number of mortalities.

	Soil Association higher standard *Please contact the Soil Association for requirements for other salmonid species.
Sea lice monitoring and sea lice plan	1. You must assess and document your infestation rates of sea lice regularly. * 2. To protect wild salmonids, leading up to and during defined sensitive periods you must take regular samples. You must keep sea lice levels below the thresholds relevant to your farming location**. 3. Your animal health management plan must include all necessary measures taken to reduce the risk of sea lice levels to wild salmonids before the sensitivity period. Where possible this must be written in coordination with local organisations and public authorities. 4. Where sea lice levels exceed thresholds established in your farming area, you must inform the Soil Association within 14 days of sample date. You must provide evidence of what action is taken to reduce levels. *Soil Association higher standard* **Sampling may be suspended for a short period to protect animal welfare. The reasons for this must be recorded in writing and be agreed in partnership with local authorities. Soil Association must be informed promptly.* ***For the production of Atlantic salmon in Scotland, the Soil Association follows the sensitivity periods defined in the Code of Good Practice (CoGP) - 1st February to 30th June* *Sea lice infestation levels in Scotland should comply with national legislation and thresholds for treatment should follow the CoGP:* • *An average of 0.5 adult female L. salmonis per fish during the period 1st February to 30th June inclusive.*

	• *An average of 1.0 adult female L. salmonis per fish during the period 1st July to 31st January inclusive.*

13.4.5 Cod, other Gadidae, sea bass, sea bream, meagre, turbot, red porgy, red drum and other Sparidae, and spinefeet.	
Production system	In open water containment systems (net pens/cages) with minimum sea current speed to provide optimum fish welfare, or in open systems on land.
Maximum stocking density	For fish other than turbot: 15 kg/m^3 For turbot: 25 kg/m^2 (EC) 889/2008 Annex XIIIa
Juvenile production	The larval rearing of marine fish must preferably be in extensive low input systems, such as the mesocosm or large volume rearing. The initial stocking density must be 20 eggs or larvae per litre. During the larval stage the tank must have a minimum volume of 20m^3. *Soil Association higher standard*

13.4.8 Fish in inland waters Species concerned: Carp family (Cyprinidae) and other associated species in the context of polyculture, including perch, pike, catfish, coregonids, sturgeon. Perch (Perca fluviatilis) in monoculture . • Fishponds must be fully drained periodically. • Lakes must be devoted exclusively to organic production, including the growing of crops on dry areas. • The fishery capture area must be a suitable size to provide optimal comfort for the fish and equipped with a clean water inlet. • The fish must be stored in clean water after harvest. • You may only use organic and mineral fertilisers in the ponds which are listed in Annex I, with a maximum application of 20 kg nitrogen/ha. • You must not use treatments involving synthetic chemicals for the control of hydrophytes or plant coverage present in production waters. • Areas of natural vegetation shall be maintained around inland water units as a buffer zone for external land areas not in organic aquaculture production. • If you operate a polyculture system for your grow-out production, you must comply with these standards for all other species in the lake. • The total production of species in polyculture is limited to 1500 kg of fish per hectare per year. *(EC) 889/2008 Annex XIIIa*	The frequency of drainage will depend on the type of pond, water flow, stocking rates and fish management. You need to demonstrate that the frequency will be sufficient to ensure good water quality, fish health and welfare. You can detail justification for the frequency of drainage in your aquaculture management plan. Record – records on the application of fertilisers will be checked at inspection

• The maximum stocking density for perch in monoculture is 20kg/m^3. *Soil Association higher standard*	

13.5.4 Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) CCTV must be used at farmed fish slaughter sites, with recordings saved for at least 90 days and kept available to inspectors. *Soil Association higher standard*	

13.5.5 ~~13.5.4~~ Lighting You may only prolong natural day-length to levels that respect the ethological needs, geographical location and general health of the aquaculture species. You may only prolong natural day-length to beyond 14 hours ~~16 hours~~ per day for reproductive purposes. You must avoid abrupt changes in light intensity at changeover time by using dimmable lights or background lighting. *Soil Association higher standard ~~(EC) 889/2008 Art.25h (2)~~*	In your aquaculture management plan, detail for which reproductive purposes you are prolonging natural day length to beyond 14 hours ~~16 hours~~ per day for, and the light intensity levels used. Artificial lighting of any level is not permitted for non-reproductive purposes beyond 14 hours ~~16 hours~~ in outdoor facilities.

13.6.3 Rearing on land 1. For land-based rearing units with flow-through systems it must be possible to monitor and control the flow rate and quality of in-flowing and out-flowing water. *(EC) 889/2008 Art. 25g (2)*	Your records for this will be checked at inspection.
2. At least ~~5 percent~~ ten percent of the perimeter (land-water interface) of land-based rearing units must have natural vegetation. *Soil Association higher standard*	

13.7.2 Feeding priorities for carnivorous aquaculture species 1) You must source feed for carnivorous aquaculture animals with the following priorities: i. organic feed products of aquaculture origin ii. fish meal and fish oil from organic aquaculture trimmings iii. fish meal and fish oil and ingredients of fish origin derived from trimmings of fish already caught for human consumption in sustainable fisheries iv. organic feed materials of plant or animal origin v. feed products derived from whole fish caught in fisheries certified as sustainable under a scheme recognised by the competent authority in line with the principles laid down in Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council. 2) The feed ration may comprise a maximum of 60% organic plant products. *(EC) 834/2007 Art. 15d(ii)* *(EC) 889/2008 Art. 25k(1)(2)(3); Art. 79b (d)*	You can choose from the above sources of feed in order to meet the animals' nutritional requirements at the various stages of their development, but where possible they must be used in order of preference. In GB, Defra (the competent authority) has provided additional guidance on the sustainability criteria for whole fish. We can provide you with a copy on request. **Reporting and record keeping requirement** Your records must include information on the origin, nature and quantities of feed materials, additives, sales and finished products. In addition to these record keeping requirements, we require an annual report on the use of whole fish. This should detail the quantity used, information on the fishery products used and chain of custody, the intended purpose of the feed (for what species of aquaculture animal and what growth stage) as well as the documented justification for its use

13.10.3 Parasite treatments 1) With the exclusion of compulsory control schemes operated by national authorities, you may use parasite treatments to a maximum of twice per year. However, if the production cycle is less than 18 months you may use parasite treatments once per year. 2) You must give preference to the use of cleaner fish for biological control of ectoparasites or freshwater, marine water and sodium chloride solutions. *(EC) 889/2008 Art. 25s (6)* *(EC) 889/2008 Art. 25t (3)*	You must obtain prior approval from the Certification Team for all parasite treatments on each occasion. Identification, treatment and prevention of parasites can be detailed in your aquaculture management plan. Check with local agencies whether you need permission to use cleaner fish and outline how you ensure their welfare in your aquaculture management plan.
3) For all species, parasite treatments are limited to four courses of treatment in total, regardless of the length of the production cycle of the species. *Soil Association higher standard*	

13.12.1 Aquaculture conversion periods The following conversion periods for production units must be applied for the following types of aquaculture facilities~~ including the existing aquaculture animals~~. *Soil Association higher standard*	~~Defra, the competent authority in GB, has confirmed that the conversion of the production unit can take place when the site is stocked and being managed to organic standards. This allows the animals and the site to convert to organic production simultaneously.~~ Requests for a reduced conversion period must be submitted to the Certification Team who will seek approval from the competent authority. The conversion period cannot begin until your application has been approved. Your application will be assessed via an application review stage. The application review will cover a full assessment of your application documentation and management plans. This review will ensure that we have assessed that organic certification is appropriate for your operation, and that you are able to meet the organic standards. We estimate that the application review will take 6 weeks to complete, this is based on submission of all the required information. This timeframe may vary depending on the scope of the application.

Annex II - *Cleaner fish in organic aquaculture production.*

The use of cleaner fish in Soil Association organic aquaculture production must meet the requirements established in these standards for cleaner fish and be approved by Soil Association Certification.

The use of cleaner fish species is restricted to wild caught and hatchery reared Wrasse (Labridae spp.),and hatchery reared Lumpfish (Cyclopteridae spp.).

Soil Association higher standard

1 Origin of cleaner fish 1. Cleaner fish may only be stocked if they occur naturally in the farmed area. 2. Cleaner fish must be sourced from organic aquaculture production in preference to non-organic aquaculture systems. If no cleaner fish can be sourced from aquaculture production, then they may be sourced from fisheries with prior permission. *Soil Association higher standard*	The use of cleaner fish from wild fisheries will be reviewed annually.
2 Cleaner fish husbandry, health and welfare 1. The health and welfare of cleaner fish must be guaranteed 2. Cleaner fish must be provided with a sufficient number of shelters. These shelters must not be situated within the feeding zone of the primary species. 3. Cleaner fish must be removed from the sea pens when feed is withdrawn from the primary farmed species to avoid risk of predation. *Soil Association higher standard*	Details on your husbandry practices for cleaner fish must be contained in your aquaculture management plan We will refer to the Animal Welfare Committee's Update to the 2014 FAWC Opinion on the welfare of farmed fish at the time of killing for appropriate practice. The design and management of your aquaculture system must minimise stress on cleaner fish species. Particular attention should be paid to feed withdrawal, crowding and separation.

3 Cleaner fish treatments If a health problem arises, cleaner fish must be treated. Cleaner fish must be separated from the primary species before they can be treated with allopathic treatments. *Soil Association higher standard*	
4 Feeding cleaner fish 1. Cleaner fish must be fed supplementary feed throughout the entire production cycle that is suitable for the nutritional requirement for the species at all stages of their development. 2. Attention must be paid to climatic and aquatic conditions and feeding adjusted accordingly to ensure the nutritional requirements of cleaner fish are met. 3. Supplementary feed must be introduced in such a way that it is not available to other species. 4. Cleaner fish must be fed organic feed when available. *Soil Association higher standard*	
5 Humane slaughter 1. You must only use slaughter techniques that render fish immediately unconscious and insensible to pain. You must take into account harvest sizes, species and production sites when considering optimal slaughter methods. 2. Cleaner fish must not be released into the natural environment at the end of the production cycle. 3. Cleaner fish mortalities must be properly recycled *Soil Association higher standard*	We will refer to the Update to the 2014 FAWC Opinion on the welfare of farmed fish at the time of killing for appropriate practice. Please refer to standard 13.5.2 for more information on human slaughter. Pharmaceutical methods of slaughter should take account of dosage, exposure time, size and weight of fish, water temperature and other relevant factors to ensure a rapid and effective kill.

6 Record keeping You must keep records in the form of a register which is available at all times on the premises of your holding. These records must provide the following information: a) The species and number of fish b) The origin and date of arrival c) Mortality d) Feed e) Use of veterinary medicines The Soil Association must be informed of any mass mortality events. *Soil Association higher standard*	Please also refer to standard 12.8.4 for specific aquaculture animal production record requirements.