In just the last year, there have been a frightening number of farmed fish spills from industrial facilities viewed by some as leaders in the industry:

- In the United States, in August 2017, more than 263,000 farmed, non-native Atlantic salmon spilled into Puget Sound from an industrial ocean fish farm in Washington State owned by Cooke Aquaculture Pacific, LLC. The cause: poor maintenance and cleaning of the nets.
- In August 2018, an industrial ocean fish farm in Chile reported the escape of 930,000 salmon – of which approximately 680,000 are still missing. The cause: a wind storm with high waves.
- In July 2018, an industrial ocean fish farm in Norway spilled up to 10,000 fish into nearby waters. The cause: a fire at the facility.
- In July 2018, a salmon hatchery plant in Norway allowed for the escape of approximately 20,000 smolt. The cause: complications during routine vaccination procedures.
- In December 2017, an industrial ocean fish farm owned by Bakkafrost located off Faroe Islands spilled more than 109,000 Atlantic salmon. The cause: extreme weather conditions.

Unfortunately, farmed fish spills are commonplace for industrial ocean fish farms. The above are only a small example of these routine disasters, which put our wild fish stocks at significant risk due to increased competition, genetic degradation, and spread of pests and disease.
“Farmed fish is a more sustainable choice than other meat.”

Although farmed fish process feed more efficiently than certain farmed animals, like pigs and cows, farmed fish still require feed that is protein-dense, and contribute to rising global demand for crop-based feed ingredients. Truly sustainable seafood comes from farmed fish produced by small, closed-loop facilities on land and wild fish sustainably caught by fishermen.

“Farmed fish in the ocean to feed the masses.”

Contrary to what NOAA and other industry supporters claim, most marine fish species proposed for ocean farming are more expensive, severely limiting their availability to the “masses.” Should the industry implement cheaper production methods to lower costs to consumers, we will likely be receiving lower-quality fish that will damage our wild-capture fishing communities beyond repair.

“Ingredients in fish feed have become more sustainable and no longer lead to overfishing issues.”

Although the industry has begun using feeds with lower levels of fishmeal and fish oil made from forage fish species, they are now substituting land-based crops such as soy, nuts, and grains, which are not naturally part of a fish’s diet. Relying on these types of crops for farmed animal feed simply increases demand and pressures for natural resources across-the-board. Moreover, these ingredients are often genetically modified, which could have unknown environmental and public health risks.

“We must farm fish in the ocean to feed the masses.”

We simply can’t be certain that marine finfish farming would decrease the need for imports. There is currently a trade deficit for seafood in the U.S, which is caused by many factors and cannot be solved by any single industry. More exports would decrease the deficit, but if farmed fish are exported, then Americans would still be eating mostly imported seafood. Moreover, seafood trade is a global issue. Many countries, including the United States, export expensive seafood and import cheaper fish products.

“Would-be fish farms need the federal government to remedy administrative burdens, heavy permitting processes, and unreliable timelines so the industry can get up and running.”

To date, the United States has only hosted a limited number of nearshore finfish farms. Placing facilities farther offshore introduces more risks. The federal government must ensure that it places adequate restrictions and conducts proper planning and studying prior to opening our oceans to this new industry. We should look before we leap into the deep end, especially with knowledge of how harmful the industry has been when located nearshore.

ACT NOW:
Tell your representatives to oppose S. 3138/H.R.6966, the “Advancing the Quality and Understanding of American Aquaculture Act”!