

## Scottish Parliament elections 2026 – manifesto position

### Summary

We urge parties to support the continued success of Scotland’s salmon sector – the nation’s largest food export. We will work with government to:

- deliver sustainable economic growth
- generate jobs in remote communities
- provide the highest standards of animal welfare.

We identify three key challenges for the 2026-2031 Scottish Government to deliver:

- **Efficient government:** faster consenting through better regulation, and a greater focus on economic growth.
- **Streamlined business regulation:** reducing the costs imposed by regulation.
- **Thriving coastal communities:** anchoring rural and coastal population strength.

### Efficient government

The **protracted consenting process** for aquaculture in Scotland remains complex, placing Scottish businesses at a competitive disadvantage with other salmon producing nations. International investment considers Scottish regulation. Without a faster process Scotland risks losing inward investment, new jobs, and revenue. We note the Cabinet Secretary’s aim to introduce Scotland-wide improvements by spring 2026 and will closely monitor progress.

We need to see **less government waste**. There is consultation fatigue across Scotland – in both the private and third sectors – and a demand for action, not words. Governments across the world are exploring ways to cut red tape. New Zealand has set up a ‘ministry for regulation’ and the European Commission has pledged to cut corporate reporting requirements by 25%. We commend these initiatives to a future Scottish government. Regulation costs and Crown Estate Scotland charges only go up; this is now a revenue tax by the backdoor. We urge a comprehensive review.

Our member companies need Scotland to be **open for business**, stimulating greater levels of private investment to lift economic growth and generate more jobs, wealth, and tax revenues to support public services. This is made harder with an **ever more complex tax system** in Scotland compared to the rest of the UK.

### Streamlined regulation

Scotland still has four statutory consenting bodies. A one-stop-shop was recommended in the 2022 [Griggs Review](#). This provided a clear blueprint to streamline aquaculture regulation, including a 10-year framework, a single licensing payment, and support for community benefit. **These recommendations remain undelivered by the Scottish Government.** Implementing them would enable sustainable sector growth, improve jobs and investment in rural areas, and bring Scotland more in line with best-practice models like Norway’s. We believe this would provide clarity and reduce the number of missed statutory deadlines (60 and rising since 2020). **We support better regulation, not less.**

## Thriving coastal communities: growing Scotland, growing salmon

Scottish salmon is an extraordinary global success story. Grown in the cold waters off the Highlands and islands, our salmon is recognised as the best in the world and is the **UK's biggest food export**. Sales reached £844 million in 2024, driven by increased growth in key markets including France, the USA, China and Taiwan. Salmon is the most popular fish among UK consumers. Sales are worth around £1.5 billion-a-year at retail. We ask that a future government recognises this export potential. The UK-India trade deal is a huge market opportunity for Scotland, and we need government support to utilise this.

Salmon farming directly employs more than 2,500 people in economically fragile, coastal communities on the west coast, Northern and Western Isles, with around a further 8,500 Scottish jobs dependent on the sector. The sector produces a direct economic contribution of £231 million in Gross Value Added (GVA) with a combined **GVA total of £953 million** with supply chain businesses.

Scottish salmon farms uphold the highest welfare standards globally. Virtually all farms are certified by RSPCA Assured, ensuring low stocking densities and ample space for natural movement. To support wild salmon populations, the industry has established the Wild Fisheries Fund, committing £1.5 million to conservation work with local fisheries organisations.

## Conclusion

The success of Scottish salmon must not be taken for granted. Our businesses face many regulatory burdens: planning consenting delays, cumbersome regulation, and red tape. Scotland must have a competitive business regime in comparison to other nations.

Scotland's salmon sector is a growth opportunity – **growing Scotland, growing Salmon**. Enabling business success to create growth, secure more employment, deliver better wages and anchor rural and coastal population strength is what our businesses do. We ask a future government to enable us to be even better.