**Introduction**

* I would like to thank Salmon Scotland for inviting me to this reception and for asking me to say a few words.
* Before I do, I’d like to compliment Salmon Scotland on its rebranding and the striking new logo.
* This change is fitting, highlighting the important work which you do to support producers and across the entire supply chain.

**COP26**

* The world has gathered here in Glasgow to address the pressing questions of our age: how do we respond to the challenges posed by the climate crisis? How can we move to a sustainable future, achieve net zero emissions and make sure our transition to that future is fair for all?
* These questions will not be answered easily but, in coming together to discuss them, we are taking important steps and building on the foundations that all of us in Government and the sector have made.
* As we transition to a more sustainable future. Questions of food production and security will become ever more pressing. Aquaculture is uniquely placed to contribute and increasingly seen as vital to our ability to feed a growing global population.

**Scottish Aquaculture**

* Aquaculture is a vital part of our economy. As I am sure you are all aware, the Scottish aquaculture sector supports almost 12,000 often highly skilled and well paid jobs.
* It contributes approximately £885 million to the wider Scottish economy and around 76% of industry spend is in Scotland.
* We tend to think of aquaculture in terms of our island and coastal communities but the sector’s supply chain is represented in every single constituency across Scotland.
* Scottish aquaculture is dominated in terms of value and volume by salmon production and farmed salmon is the UK’s number one food export. It is no coincidence that our world leaders are going to be eating Loch Duart salmon during the main programme of events.
* The Scottish salmon sector is dynamic, highly skilled and innovative. It is embracing innovation to improve fish heath, reduce environmental impacts and mitigate climate pressures.
* We see examples in action across the sector, for example;
	+ Diverting salmon farm waste from landfill by conversion into biogas energy generation at an award-winning project on Lewis.
	+ Significant fuel and CO2 savings from the introduction of Mull based hybrid powered workboats.
	+ A whole host of sustainability projects supported in partnership with the Sustainable Aquaculture Innovation Centre in Stirling. Established by the Scottish Government, SAIC has funded 65 collaborative research projects the most recent example of which is a new project to more accurately model salmon farms’ environmental impact.
* These innovations are hugely valuable to Scottish producers but they are also part of a much bigger picture of technology and expertise being shared across the globe from right here in Scotland.

**Sustainability**

* Tonight Salmon Scotland is publishing a report on the progress made against the targets set in the Sustainability Charter, A Better Future for Us All. That report sees progress being reported on almost all of the targets.
* To make the excellent progress that has been achieved would be impressive under any circumstances. To make such progress in the incredibly difficult last few years is remarkable.
* Scotland’s salmon producers have weathered the storm of the pandemic, maintained and even increased production volumes, kept their people safe and progressed sustainability targets.
* I am sure everyone will join me in congratulating all involved. This progress has taken effort, dedication and ingenuity.
* Because of these qualities, I am confident that the sector is better positioned than many to rise to the challenges of achieving net zero. And there are many challenges.
* If we are to succeed in making salmon farming and aquaculture truly sustainable it is vital that we, government, industry and our communities, continue to work together.

**The role of Government**

* Salmon Scotland’s ambitious sustainability charter aims to build sector resilience, end reliance on fossil fuels, enhance fish health and environmental outcomes, increase opportunities in the rural and island economies and expand the market for Scottish salmon.
* The Scottish Government supports these aspirations and looks forward to engaging positively to help turn these goals into real and measurable outcomes. We continue to support the sustainable growth of the industry.
* The Programme for Government makes clear our intentions and so we will set out in 2022 our long term Vision for sustainable aquaculture in Scotland.
* We also need to look with fresh eyes at how the sector is regulated in Scotland. We have commissioned an independent review of the regulatory landscape and we look forward to receiving recommendations for further work from Professor Griggs at the end of the year.
* Where those recommendations identify regulatory obstacles to realising our goal of a sustainable industry on the pathway to net zero, the Scottish Government will consider them carefully and will act. Effective and efficient regulation is in everybody’s interests.

**The future**

* The salmon sector can only be a truly sustainable success story if economic growth goes hand in hand with positive outcomes for Scotland’s communities and Scotland’s natural environment.
* The transition to net zero emissions is crucial to this. We welcome and share the aspirations of the sector.
* Interlinked economic, social and environmental progress underpins how the Scottish economy at large should, and will, develop.
* Few other sectors are so directly and visibly connected to all three outcomes as aquaculture.
* We aren’t going to feed the world on Scottish salmon, or solve all the challenges before this congress, but the industry is making a hugely valuable contribution to Scotland and to our collective future.
* The sector is producing food, generating valuable export revenue, supporting jobs and communities, innovating and sharing its hard won lessons. Tonight clearly demonstrates the commitment, and the progress, to sustainability.
* I’d like to congratulate Salmon Scotland and all those involved in the success of the Scottish salmon sector. I look forward to Government and industry working together to build on this excellent progress.
* Thank you