

Scotland's 'first open-ocean salmon farm' set to be tested by Norwegian owner

By Brian Donnelly

A SALMON company is set to trial what it describes as Scotland's first open-ocean fish farm.

Scottish Sea Farms said it plans to explore the biological and technological implications of farming in considerably deeper, more exposed waters, in a move it says marks the next step in its push to "maximise fish survival and minimise environmental footprint".

It said the trial would allow it to measure the potential of such locations to help meet growing demand for Scottish salmon farmed

in a sustainable way.

Scottish Sea Farms' Norwegian owner Norskott Havbruk AS, which is a 50/50 joint venture between Lerøy Seafood Group and SalMar ASA, would provide the multi-million pound investment needed to develop the concept, if given the go-ahead.

Jim Gallagher, Scottish Sea Farms' managing director, said: "For this ambition to be realised, however, we need an engaged, robust and forward-thinking regulatory framework that enables Scotland's salmon farmers to continue growing in a responsible

manner and helps the sector reclaim its competitiveness on the world stage.

"With this in mind, we're eager to take the next step by opening the dialogue with Marine Scotland, the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) and local authorities to see if this ambition is matched and if our aspiration of piloting a full-scale 'ocean farm' can be realised."

Fergus Ewing, Scotland's rural economy secretary, supported the move. He said: "This is exactly the kind of landmark inward investment opportunity that

Scotland needs to thrive and grow, and I am determined that we seize that opportunity.

"The potential benefits of farming in deeper, more exposed locations have been raised many times over recent years, by all sides of the debate. So to see Scottish Sea Farms step forward and commit the time and investment involved in exploring that potential here is hugely welcome news.

"Such a concept, if realised, promises significant advances in fish welfare and environmental protection, not forgetting new jobs and business for Scotland, and as

such it is something that the Scottish Government is keen to progress in partnership with the relevant regulatory and local authorities."

A previous offshore farm, Ocean Farm 1 anchored in the Trøndelag region of central Norway, was set up by SalMar ASA in 2017.

Costing £60 million and equipped with sector-leading aquaculture and offshore technology, the 110m x 68m farm saw strong first crop results with high survival, high quality and consistently low lice levels meaning no delousing treatments were necessary.