

# Winslet leads titanic fight to sink the fish farms

The actress is joined by DiCaprio in warning against animal agriculture in a film shot partly in Scotland

Mark Macaskill

Farmed salmon in Scotland are set to play a starring role in a film narrated by Kate Winslet that casts an unforgiving light on animal agriculture.

The highly anticipated documentary, *Eating Our Way To Extinction*, champions a plant-based lifestyle and warns that dependence on farm-reared fish and meat poses a threat to human health and the planet.

Directed by Otto and Ludo Brockway, the nephews of Sir Richard Branson, it promises to be a huge success after a short "taster" clip released by the brothers on Facebook was heavily promoted by Hollywood actor Leonardo DiCaprio. It went viral with over 25 million views.

The Brockways, who are based in London, travelled to countries such as Brazil and Switzerland to explore the effects of animal farming. They visited salmon farms in the Highlands last May and some footage captured with a drone and submersible camera has made the film's final cut, according to sources close to the production.

Farmed salmon were filmed in cages at Quarry Point, on Loch Fyne in Argyll, where thousands of fish were suffocated by an algal bloom a month earlier.

Dead fish piled in a skip at Stronroir Bay, also in Loch Fyne, were caught on camera and a controversial machine known as a thermolicer that heats water to kill sea lice was filmed at Mow's Loch Leven farm in Inverness-shire.

Footage was taken at Loch Creran in Argyll, where salmon are reared by Scottish Sea Farms, and the crew also visited

Europe's largest fishing port in Peterhead, on the northeast coast of Scotland.

The film is expected to be released within months amid recent claims by the Brockways of positive feedback from test screenings.

"We feel that we have a powerful film that will become a great tool to inspire and educate millions of people to the impact animal agriculture has on our beautiful planet," they said.

With backing from some of Hollywood's biggest hitters, it is almost guaranteed commercial success as the plant-based lifestyle movement, which discourages consumption of meats, dairy products and eggs as well as all refined and processed foods, gains momentum.

It is estimated that, worldwide, meat, poultry and dairy farming contributes to 9% of greenhouse gas emissions, with more than 70 billion land animals killed for food every year. The number of farmed fish slaughtered globally for human consumption is at least 50 billion a year. The World Health Organisation has classified red and processed meats as cancer-causing, although some scientists claim there is no conclusive evidence of a link.

Winslet, who is married to the Brockways' half-brother, Ned Rocknroll, revealed that she was vegetarian in 2018. The actress, who lent her voice to a 2010 film calling for a ban on foie gras, said creating vegan juices packed full of green vegetables such as spinach, kale and cucumber is a key part of her "self-care" routine.

DiCaprio, who starred with Winslet in the 1997 film *Titanic*, has used his influence as one of



Winslet, left, who revealed that she was vegetarian in 2018, is wary of fish farms

Hollywood's biggest stars to warn against eating too much red meat. Last year, he urged his 40 million Instagram followers to cut out beef, pointing to cattle-ranching as a key driver in deforestation of the Amazon. He described a viral clip of the Brockways' pro-vegan movie as "the video future generations will be wishing everyone watched today".

Last weekend, this newspaper highlighted concerns of Lynne Sneddon, an academic at Liverpool

University, that using a thermolicer to kill parasites is likely to cause distress and pain to fish.

Hamish Macdonell of the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation said: "Scottish salmon has a great environmental story to tell: it has the lowest carbon footprint of any comparable livestock protein and is part of a growing global aquaculture sector which is playing a key role in helping conserve wild fish stocks and feed the world."

## RSPCA paid over £500,000 to back salmon industry

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) has revealed it was paid more than £500,000 by Scottish salmon farmers for membership of an ethical food scheme, writes Mark Macaskill.

The charity admitted the money was received this year from 150 farms – about 60% of the industry – who have signed up to RSPCA Assured, a food label dedicated to farm animal welfare.

The disclosure has triggered fresh criticism of the RSPCA for supporting salmon farming amid claims that millions of fish suffer despite the industry's efforts to improve standards.

This weekend, naturalist Chris Packham, a vice-president of the RSPCA, said he intends to raise concerns with the charity's top executives. In a tweet to his 386,000 followers, he wrote: "Open cage salmon farming is fraught with very serious issues and clearly needs reform/regulation/cessation. I will liaise with @RSPCA\_official to work urgently towards a renewed position from their POV. I'm on it!"

Under the RSPCA scheme, salmon farms pay an annual membership – currently £583 – and a quarterly licence fee based on the amount of produce sold in the UK. Last year, about 150,000 tons of farmed Scottish salmon was produced, about half of which was exported.

According to figures that will be published later this year, RSPCA Assured generated a total income of more than £3.3m in 2019-20. The charity does not usually provide a breakdown of income by sector but released data following a request from this newspaper.

The figures show that of the £3.3m, salmon farms in

Scotland contributed £513,000, 15% more than in 2018 (£446,481) and 9% more than in 2017 (£468,808).

Critics argue the charity's support of salmon farming is unsustainable because millions of fish die every year from sea-lice infestations and disease. It has been challenged for not publishing a list of farms certified under the scheme or robust data to enable scrutiny of whether it has improved husbandry on Scottish fish farms.

"It's great that the RSPCA wants to improve welfare



Packham: will raise concerns

standards in fish farming, but they need to be driving standards up and we cannot see any evidence of that," said Bob Elliot, director of Scottish animal welfare charity OneKind. "The level of fish deaths is eye-watering."

The RSPCA said the scheme benefits tens of millions of fish every year, with members subject to inspections to ensure minimal suffering of animals.

A spokeswoman said that last year one Scottish salmon farm was suspended for "non-compliance". "RSPCA Assured is a charity and non-profit-making," she added. "All income is ploughed back into the running of the scheme and promoting farm animal welfare."