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International farmed salmon study supports groundbreaking Suzuki Foundation research

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VANCOUVER - Results of a large-scale scientific study on the toxicity of farmed fish released today in the journal *Science* support a pioneering study undertaken by the David Suzuki Foundation three years ago.

In 2001, the Foundation reported that potentially dangerous levels of toxic chemicals are contained in the feed given to farmed salmon in Canada and Europe. The study released today confirms these findings on a much larger scale.

Scientists tested approximately two tons of farmed and wild salmon, and salmon feed collected from fish farm wholesalers and retailers in major cities in North and South America and Europe, including Vancouver and Toronto. Their findings indicate that contaminants are significantly higher for farmed salmon than wild salmon.

The *Science* report argues that "consumption of farmed salmon may result in exposure to a variety of persistent bioaccumulative contaminants with the potential for an elevation in attendant health risks."

Dr. David Bates, former Dean of Medicine at the University of British Columbia, is an international expert on pollution. He concurs that there is a serious risk to health from ingesting contaminants such as PCBs in our everyday diet.

"Studies have shown that PCBs have a remarkable ability to potentiate cancer," Bates says. "The European Union and the World Health Organization have set acceptable levels and this was done after analysis of an array of scientific studies. Unfortunately, Canadian levels are much less stringent and the Canadian government has been lax in dealing with this issue."

The study also found that concentrations of contaminants in farmed salmon from Europe were significantly greater than farmed salmon from both North and South America.

"While European farmed fish are worse, Canadian farmed salmon are still a potential health risk," says Otto Langer, Director of Marine Conservation.

"The study found that even the least contaminated farmed salmon have significantly higher contamination levels of PCBs, dioxins, and other chemicals than wild salmon. This once again underscores the need for Canada to modernize our regulations regarding the amount of PCBs and chemicals acceptable for human consumption."

The *Science* report cites Environmental Protection Agency consumption advice, which, based on the new findings, would recommend against eating more than one meal per month of B.C. farmed fish. Those in high-risk categories such as children and expectant mothers should eat much less.

The report authors also recommend fish producers and retailers label salmon as farmed.

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