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9 April 2009

Dr. David Suzuki, Founder
The David Suzuki Foundation
Suite 219, 2211 West 4th Avenue
Vancouver, BC, V6K 4S2

Dr. Suzuki,

RE: Contaminants in Farmed Salmon

The David Suzuki Foundation has reported that it is "the most credible voice in Canada" on major environmental issues.¹ I believe that, and that it is important that the information that you provide to the public, is accurate.

Further to my previous letters, I am writing to you specifically to re-iterate my concerns and my opinions about the information that you provide to the public about contaminants in farmed salmon. As I believe that this is a matter of public interest, this is an open letter. And as before, I am writing as a concerned member of the public.

For several years now, the David Suzuki Foundation has been telling the public that farmed salmon is "high" in PCBs and should be avoided, especially by pregnant women and young children.^{2,3,4} Dr. Suzuki, you have referred to farmed salmon as "poison" and said that you wouldn't feed it to a child.⁵ The seafood guide promoted by your foundation says that regular consumption of farmed salmon poses a "health threat."⁶

In 2002, you sent a letter (attached) to your supporters - including me. You said that we had helped you "to uncover the fact that B.C. farmed salmon is heavily contaminated with PCBs and other toxins." The problem is, you did not uncover what you said you did.

The truth is, studies show that farmed salmon is not high in PCBs.^{7,8} According to data compiled by Harvard researchers, tuna and sardines have higher levels of PCBs than farmed salmon.⁹

PCBs are found in trace amounts in all foods. At Idaho University, Dr. Ronald Hardy estimated the average yearly PCB intake from various foods. For farmed salmon, its about 30 units per year, for chicken - about 300, for milk - 700 and for beef - 2,400.¹⁰ Clearly, farmed salmon is not a major source of PCBs compared to other foods.

Farmed salmon is especially low in mercury. Wild halibut has 20 times more mercury than farmed salmon.¹¹ Tuna has much higher mercury levels than farmed salmon.¹²

According to a study reported by the International Pacific Halibut Commission, halibut from certain regions of Alaska has 45 times as much mercury as has been reported in farmed salmon.¹³

Health Canada says, "consuming farmed salmon does not pose a health risk to consumers."¹⁴ The European Food Safety Authority says that overall, "with respect to their safety for the consumer there is no difference between wild and farmed fish."¹⁵

Bad press about contaminants in fish scares people away from it. That's not good because health experts agree: the benefits of eating fish far out-weigh the risks except for shark, swordfish, king mackerel, and tilefish.¹⁶ Health Canada advises Canadians to also limit consumption of fresh and frozen tuna, marlin, orange roughy and escolar.¹⁷

Fish is an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids. According to the U.S. Institute of Medicine, farmed Atlantic salmon is *higher* in omega-3s than any other fish.¹⁸ And yet, the David Suzuki Foundation says that farmed salmon is *lower* in omega-3s than wild salmon.¹⁹

Here in Canada, at the U.B.C. Department of Paediatrics, researchers have found that Vancouver infants of well-educated mothers are born with deficiency in omega-3s because their mothers didn't get enough while pregnant.²⁰ The infants' eyesight was compromised. Their brain development may be affected. I believe that this situation is not helped by the fact that the David Suzuki Foundation tells women of childbearing age to avoid farmed salmon.

With all the bad press over farmed salmon, market demand and the value of Alaskan salmon has more than doubled as consumers have been swayed towards "wild" salmon, most of which is Alaskan. According to the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, since the market for Alaskan salmon has improved, 863 more boats are fishing for them.²¹

I can see how scaring people away from farmed salmon helps to protect *the market* for Alaskan salmon and the commercial fishing industry, but I do not see how this helps to protect the fish or human health - as your foundation claims to do.

In closing, I appeal to you to retract your bogus claims that farmed salmon is "high" in contaminants, and your flawed advice that women of child bearing age should avoid it. I appeal to you to tell the truth about contaminants in farmed salmon.

I hope that you will also revise your brochure entitled, "Canada's Seafood Guide" in order to omit its faulty information that farmed salmon poses a "health threat." In my opinion, this brochure should also indicate that it was funded by an American foundation, the David and Lucille Packard Foundation.²²

Since 1999, the Packard Foundation implements a formal strategy for Market Intervention Tools, as part of the Marine Fisheries program.²³ The Packard Foundation has reported to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service that it has granted about \$1.5 million to the David Suzuki Foundation.

Thank you for considering my opinions and my appeal to you. You may reach me at vivian.krause@mac.com or at 604.618.8110.

Sincerely,

Vivian Krause

SOURCES

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- ⁹ Mozaffarian, D. and E. Rimm. 2006. Fish Intake, Contaminants and Human Health: Evaluating the Risks and Benefits. Part 2 - Health Risks and Optimal Intakes. Cardiology Rounds Vol. 10(9). <http://www.cardiologyrounds.org/crus/302-060.pdf>
- ¹⁰ <http://www.ftai.com/articles/Farmed%20Salmon%20Contam%20Hardy.pdf>
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- ¹⁴ http://atn-riae.agr.ca/seafood/farmed_salmon-e.htm
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- ¹⁶ <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~frf/sea-mehg.html>
- ¹⁷ Health Canada. Mercury in Fish. Dated 15 February 2008. <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/chem-chim/enviro/mercur/cons-adv-etud-eng.php>
- ¹⁸ <http://www.iom.edu/CMS/3788/23788/37679.aspx>
- ¹⁹ <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/files/Aquabrochure.pdf> Pg. 4.
- ²⁰ Innis, S. and R. Friesen. 2008. Essential n-3 fatty acids in pregnant women and early visual acuity maturation in term infants. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 87(3), 548-557, March 2008. <http://www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/abstract/87/3/548>.
- ²¹ Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute Silvery Anniversary Report 1981 - 2006. Page 16. <http://www.alaskaseafood.org/industry/enews/ar-html/ar-final.pdf> A hard copy is available.
- ²² According to the grants database of the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, it granted \$500,000 to the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society for SeaChoice. <http://www.packard.org/searchGrants.aspx?RootCatID=3&CategoryID=226>
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