

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
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James Withers
Chief Executive
Scotland Food & Drink

26 January 2021

Via email: james@foodanddrink.scot

Dear Mr Withers,

I hope this message finds you well. I'm writing from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) to offer an olive branch. As the UK fishing industry is in freefall because of the pressures of Brexit, the pandemic, and the increasing number of people moving away from eating sentient beings, we suggest an animal-friendly alternative to help boost the Scottish economy – kelp farming.

Nutrient-rich with a savoury flavour, kelp is a popular superfood containing high amounts of iodine and vitamin K – and it's easy on the environment, too. Macroalgae, such as kelp, play an important role in reducing the effects of climate change, and kelp forests are a greater carbon sink than woodlands. They also restore ocean ecosystems, acting like a rainforest canopy to offer a home to marine life.

SeaGrown, a kelp-farming business off the coast of Scarborough, is paving the way for commercial off-shore kelp farming – and while it's still early days, the owner, ex-fisher Wave Crookes, is looking to acquire more sites as business booms. Kelp can be used to make everything from sushi to seaweed “bacon” to crunchy seaweed crisps, so it's a versatile weed indeed. Some types, such as sugar kelp, can even be used to make gin.

In addition to having eco- and border-friendly benefits, farming plants also leaves sentient marine animals in peace. Fish are social animals who feel pain and have distinct personalities. Fishing is the largest killer of animals on the planet: between 1 and 2.8 trillion fish and other marine animals are hauled out of the ocean every year and killed for their flesh in a terrifying ordeal. The fishing industry also kills tens of millions of “non-target” fish, dolphins, turtles, seals, and seabirds such as albatrosses.

As the Scottish export market for sea animals dries up, it's time to explore new opportunities. According to fisher William Clark, sales volumes are down dramatically at places like Peterhead Fish Market and this is part of a bigger trend. He says, “Every year I have seen it decline.” Millions of people in the UK are making conscious food choices to reduce the harm they do to animals and the planet, and demand for vegan food is at an all-time high – including for vegan versions of traditionally

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fishy foods, like vegan fish and chips and plant-based fish fingers. And, of course, humble seaweed.

To aid the transition to a kinder, greener future, PETA is on hand to *kelp* cover some of the costs of re-training fish industry workers to become seaweed growers and producers.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Carys Bennett
Senior Corporate Liaison, PETA UK

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