

# INVESTIGATION INTO EU FISH FARMING AND SLAUGHTER

**INVESTIGATOR'S ACCOUNT**

## WARNING

THIS REPORT CONTAINS  
DISTRESSING IMAGES  
AND DESCRIPTIONS OF  
ANIMALS SUFFERING

## THE TRUTH BEHIND THE FISH SOLD IN OUR SUPERMARKETS

In 2018 I undertook an investigation for Compassion in World Farming into the treatment of animals in the European fish industry. I felt I was prepared for the worst. Yet I was still taken by surprise at the level of suffering I witnessed.

Animals were crammed together, many suffering from disease. Sometimes there were even dead fish floating amongst the remaining, crowded, stressed animals.

Just like factory farmed mammals and birds, many farmed fish are subjected to unnatural, inhumane conditions. Whether kept in tanks on land, or in pens in the sea, I found they can face a wretched life and a cruel death.



### CASE 1 - GREECE

#### Sea Farm - sea bass, sea bream

I found this factory farm so completely out of place - such a beautiful, idyllic setting, yet home to so many confined and suffering animals.

See my full report inside into factory fish farming in France and Greece.



**"I witnessed sea bass that remained alive throughout the 60-minute packing process. Many gasping for oxygen inside the packages at the final station of the plant."**

CIWF Investigator

Sea bream and bass take up to two years to reach maturity. That's nearly two years living in unnatural and extremely confined surroundings.

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**CASE 1 - GREECE** - continued

Artificial sea pens hold the fish until they're ready for slaughter. Many people might assume that, because of their names, sea bass and sea bream are wild-caught.

But most are not, they are mass farmed. And I mean mass - these companies slaughter thousands of fish every day and the pens can hold around 150,000 fish at a time.



First, I witnessed nets, hoisted by cranes, scoop up hundreds of flailing fish at a time from the sea pens. These animals were then dropped into large tubs of ice slurry.

The farmer claimed that the fish became unconscious after 20-60 seconds in the ice - which is still too long to be defined as humane slaughter - but my footage shows fish struggling desperately for several minutes to breathe and escape the slurry. In fact, research has shown it can take gilthead sea bream as long as 40 minutes to become unconscious in ice slurry.

And I saw some animals who were still breathing over an hour later while being packaged ready to be shipped to market. The truth is, they were slowly dying of asphyxiation.



When the nets were emptied into the ice slurry tubs, fish were fighting to escape, to find water where they could breathe. While this is going on some get injured and lose scales.



Next, the ice slurry boxes are moved to inside the packing plant. I saw fish still alive, still breathing and jumping at this stage; many were still conscious. The fish are then transferred again to a bigger tank, where the half-melted ice became pink with blood.



The entire process took about an hour. From removing the sea bass from the sea rearing pens, to chilling, processing and finally packing them. Many fish were alive at every stage.

I saw fish gasping for oxygen inside the boxes at the final station of the packing plant.



At the first farm, when the fish were fed and rose to the top, I got a real indication of how intensively they were farmed. Some tanks were extremely crowded. Mouth grazes and fin damage were visible on some fish.



At the second farm I saw several dead fish floating in the tanks and, appallingly, I also witnessed fish that had jumped from the water and had been left writhing on the concrete floor.

## CASES 2 AND 3 - FRANCE

### Inland Farms - rainbow trout

The vast majority of rainbow trout sourced in Europe for restaurants and supermarkets have been factory farmed - not wild-caught. In fact, the species isn't even native to the continent.

And the rearing conditions I witnessed shocked me. We visited two farms where I saw large outdoor concrete tanks sunken in the ground, packed with thousands of fish.

## CASE 4

### Processing Plant - rainbow trout

This inland investigation revealed yet more practices I found hard to stomach. The plant I visited was slaughtering fish from farms across the region. Unlike the Greek sea farm, this plant used a stunning system, designed to render the fish unconscious. But the system was flawed because I saw fish bleeding to death whilst still conscious.

#### The process



1

Trucks arrive from across the region, delivering live fish to be slaughtered.



2

Next, the fish are dumped into large, crowded tanks and killed by a 'bleeding machine' that automatically moves the fish one-by-one, gives them a stun and then makes a small cut under their throat.



3

Finally they land in a tank to bleed out. I witnessed fish jumping and fighting in bleeding tanks, despite being 'stunned'.

**Thank you so much for taking the time to read this report.**

I will never forget the suffering of the fish I witnessed during this investigation. However, I hope that bringing the plight of these animals to light will help end such terrible suffering.

Already, my evidence has hit the press, TV and social media across Europe. And, with your help, Compassion in World Farming will take the next vital steps in their campaign to **Rethink Fish**.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

**Please make a donation today. Whether the needless suffering of factory farming takes place on land or beneath the water, together, we will stop it. Thank you.**

You can also help bring an end to inhumane slaughter and the cruel treatment of fish by sharing our Rethink Fish campaign with friends and family: [ciwf.org.uk/HelpFish](http://ciwf.org.uk/HelpFish)



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(OR +44 (0)1483 521 953 FROM OUTSIDE THE UK)

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VISIT

**[ciwf.org.uk/HelpFish](http://ciwf.org.uk/HelpFish)**

# THANK YOU

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