

## 'Slow Food' celebrities break link to farmed salmon boycott

Two prominent members of the Slow Food Ireland movement have distanced themselves from a call by environmental watchdog, Friends of the Irish Environment, to boycott farmed salmon, saying they had not been contacted in advance of the campaign.

Food journalist and publisher Sally McKenna of the *Bridgstone Guide* and Darina Allen, founder of the Ballymaloe Cookery School, told *Inshore Ireland* they did not support the pre-Christmas call to boycott smoked Irish farmed salmon.

A press release issued by Friends of the Irish Environment in the run-up to Christmas welcomed Slow Food International's opposition to intensive fish farming and its contention that open-net pen aquaculture was not a solution to over-fishing.

*'In Ireland, Slow Food counts amongst its members Bridgestone's Sally McKenna and that icon of Irish sustainable food, Darina Allen. To have the support of these top names in Ireland in our campaign to bring about sustainable aquaculture is a real boost,'* the FIE statement says.

### **No permission**

When asked by *Inshore Ireland* where they stood in relation to FIE's call, Sally McKenna and Darina Allen however said they had not been asked for permission to link them to the boycott, and that this paper's enquiry was the first they knew of the issue.

Sally McKenna added that while standing by Slow Food's contention that open-net aquaculture was not the solution to the problem of overfishing, she did not support the campaign by Friends of the Irish Environment to boycott farmed salmon.

"The Christmas season is a time of critical importance for Irish salmon smokers. To mount a boycott would destroy the livelihoods of salmon smokers and their staff who live in coastal communities.

"Nobody from Friends of the Irish Environment contacted me before using my name on a press release suggesting I was in favour of the boycott."

In a written comment to *Inshore Ireland*, Darina Allen declared she fully concurred with Sally McKenna's response and sentiments and *'could not express it any more succinctly'*. She added that Slow Food Ireland's name had been referenced and used by both sides in this debate *'without express permission'* from Slow Food Ireland.

*'Slow Food is not a political football, and permissions need to be sought before any government submission or press release use its name.'*

The FIE press release also quoted Richie Flynn of IFA Aquaculture describing the call to boycott farmed salmon as *'reckless posturing, an ill-thought out and malicious protest, and an act of sabotage against marine communities'*.

Speaking later to *Inshore Ireland*, he said the attempt to boycott Irish farmed salmon was “an irrelevant, lazy and desperate stunt to mislead consumers and hurt people who actually work for a living”.

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Written by Gery Flynn

<http://www.inshore-ireland.com/News/slow-food-celebrities-break-link-to-farmed-salmon-boycott.html>

Statement in response from the Irish Boycott Farmed Salmon campaign:

The statement by two of Ireland’s leading food celebrities - Sally McKenna and Darina Allen – to ‘Inshore Ireland’ that they do not support the boycott of farmed salmon came as a complete surprise to the Boycott Farmed Salmon campaign as Slow Food international has been strongly opposed to farmed salmon.

Boycott Farmed Salmon has in the last two years grown into an international campaign supported by an increasing number of retail food outlets, including those of Slow Food members here in Ireland.

Perhaps the individuals involved should review Slow Food’s policy on farmed salmon - or the meaning of the word ‘boycott’.

The Slow Food policy was made crystal clear last year by Piero Sardo, President of the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, when this issue arose over the proposed Galway Bay mega-salmon farm and the implication taken by some from the Environmental Impact Statement contents that Slow Food supported the project. He wrote:

“Open net pen aquaculture is not a solution to the problem of overfishing: It damages natural ecosystems on a local and a global level, including wild stocks, habitats and water quality. Feeding carnivorous salmon in farms means other wild species must also be harvested, resulting in a larger carbon footprint - since the fish feed must be fished, processed and transported”.

Slow Food devotes a specific listing to farmed salmon in its ‘Not On My Plate’ section of its website (url below) which makes it clear that ‘salmon is anything but a sustainable fish’ (including wild Atlantic salmon); those who claim to be following the sustainable principles of Slow Food should surely support Slow Food’s public positions.

‘Not On My Plate’ means ‘boycott’. ‘A boycott is an act of voluntarily abstaining from using, buying, or dealing with a person, organization, or country as an

expression of protest, usually for social or political reasons. Sometimes, it can be a form of consumer activism.’ [Wikipedia]

It is not up to Slow Food’s Irish celebrities to determine which of that organisation’s policies they will adhere to and which they will not. Members of Slow Food, with all the market credibility and advantage that this prestigious name confers, have no choice but to ensure the products they promote meet Slow Food’s requirements.

Indeed, as President of Slow Food Ireland, Darina Allen on the Slow Food website only last year appeared to profess the greatest fidelity to their philosophy:

‘I understand that for many nowadays, it’s about survival and even though they may not be able to renew their [Slow Food] membership, many are still living their lives by the principles of Slow Food – good, clean and fair. This philosophy underpins everything we do at Ballymaloe and the students who spend 12 weeks with us seem to feel deeply committed to spreading the Slow Food philosophy.’

Sally McKenna and Darina Allen must decide what side they are on and what message they have for the Irish consumer, over whom they hold the greatest influence. As Slow Food points out elsewhere on its website, ‘One of the keys to change, as in other areas, is collective consciousness from consumers’.

If celebrities wish to support the fish farming industry and its down stream activities, of course they have the perfect right to do so.

But to do so while teaching and calling for people to be ‘living their lives by the principles of Slow Food’- even to holding high office in the Irish Slow Food movement – is simply hypocritical. If they wish to ‘break the link’ to the boycott, then they must ‘break the link’ with Slow Food.

Boycott Farmed Salmon

Slow Food url:

[http://www.slowfood.com/slowfish/pagine/eng/pagina.lasso?-id\\_pg=85](http://www.slowfood.com/slowfish/pagine/eng/pagina.lasso?-id_pg=85)

Darina Allen 2014 statement

<http://slowfoodireland.com/aboutus/slow-food-ireland-darina-allen/>

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Attribution: Boycott Farmed Salmon campaign and website

Verification: Tony Lowes 027 74771 / 087 217163