

Open letter to the New Zealand Government May 2025

Kia ora,

This letter, signed by 168 organisations, including members of the [Aquatic Animal Alliance](#), a global coalition working to improve the welfare of aquatic animals in the food system, is a call to the New Zealand Government to decline any new funding of projects that aim to develop octopus factory farming. While this new form of aquaculture is still in the research phase, it will cause extensive harm should it become a reality. It is both unethical and unsustainable. Early-stage research has not demonstrated any pathway to achieving high-welfare farming or ecosystem-neutral farming for octopuses. These concerns are not speculative but evidence-based.

Government money spent on octopus farming includes [one million dollars already](#) awarded by the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment's Endeavour Fund to research at the University of Auckland to develop octopus farming. Official Information Act requests regarding further funding applications have been refused. We call for this new form of factory farming to be rejected, not enabled by the New Zealand Government and government institutions.

Octopus farming is highly problematic from an animal welfare perspective, and also presents risks to biodiversity and biosafety, environmental degradation, and public health:

- Octopuses are complex, highly intelligent and inquisitive, and would require a level of enrichment impossible in a farm. A 2021 [London School of Economics review](#) of 300 scientific studies concluded that high-welfare farming of octopuses is not possible
- The New Zealand Animal Welfare Act recognises that octopuses are sentient animals, meaning they feel pain and have feelings, emotions, perceptions, and experiences that matter to them
- Octopuses are solitary, wild animals who are incompatible with being raised in captivity and would suffer greatly on industrial farms
- Due to their physiology, it is impossible to slaughter octopuses without significant suffering
- Octopus farming raises significant environmental concerns due to effluents being produced and discharged into surrounding ecosystems. Even where mitigation measures are claimed (e.g. effluent dispersal or filtration), studies show that nutrient loading (nitrogen, phosphorus) can disrupt coastal ecosystems, drive algal blooms, and harm biodiversity. Relying on ocean currents to "dilute" waste does not eliminate the environmental burden but simply displaces it
- The risk of octopuses escaping from farms poses a risk to local habitats and wild populations. This is both from transmission of on-farm disease and also ecological imbalance, as introduced farmed species can compete with or prey upon native species, compounding biodiversity threats
- Octopuses are carnivorous, and it can take multiple kilograms of animal protein to produce one kilogram of farmed octopus. This is unsustainable. Any increase in the

use of fish and other aquatic animal products required for farmed octopuses will exacerbate pressure on overfished stocks

- Octopus farming poses public health risks, as farmed aquatic animals are vectors of multiple pathogens and zoonotic diseases. This includes the *Vibrio* pathogens associated with cholera
- Large-scale aquatic farms are a breeding ground for pathogenic bacteria and risk increasing antibiotic resistance

Rather than expanding aquaculture to include animals previously unfarmed and highly unsuitable for being farmed, New Zealand has the opportunity to be a leader in the field of sustainable and ethical food systems that benefit all New Zealanders instead. More sustainable alternatives to invest resources in include:

1. Sustainable plant-based aquaculture, including seaweed farming
2. Critical restoration of marine ecosystems
3. Support for innovation in alternative non-animal-based proteins

Octopus aquaculture is a bad investment in every sense. Campaigns and legislative processes are underway across the globe to ban octopus farming, and New Zealand could be at the forefront of this progress.

Applying the precautionary principle, we urge the government to cease funding research into the unethical and unsustainable octopus farming industry and to prohibit any octopus farming in New Zealand.

Signatories

Aquatic Life Institute

Acción Océanos

Action for Protection of Animals Africa

Action For Dolphins

AEL Advocacy

African Marine Mammal Conservation Organization

Alexandria Turtle And Wildlife Rescue

Alianima

Alliance for Human Animal Coexistence

Angolan Vegetarian Association

Anima International

Anima Naturalis

ANIMAL

Animal Action Greece

Animal Advocacy Africa

Animal Advocates International

Animal Empathy Philippines

Animal Equality

Animal Friends Croatia

Animal Justice Canada

Animal Interfaith Alliance

Animal Kingdom Foundation

Animal Law Focus

Animal Law Italia

Animal Libre

Animal Nepal

Animal Rights Center Japan

Animal Rights Initiative

Animal Save Movement

Animal Society e.V.

Animals Aotearoa

Animals Don't Speak Human

Animal Welfare Advocates Association the Gambia

Animal Welfare and Environment Network for Tanzania

Animal Welfare Concern

Animal Welfare Institute

Animal Welfare Observatory

Animal Justice Party

Animals Australia

Animals Now

Apon Welfare

ARAF-PLATEAU DOGON

ARBA

Arusha Society for the Protection of Animals

Australian Alliance for Animals

Aware

BC SPCA

Better Food Foundation

Beyond Animal Research

Black Sheep Animal Sanctuary

Catholic Concern for Animals

Congo Basin Conservation Society CBCS-Network

Coalition of African Animal Welfare Organisations

Compassion in World Farming

Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation

Crustacean compassion

The Dark Hobby

Depana

Deutscher Tierschutzbund

Dharma Voices for Animals

Dieren Bescherming

Djurens Rätt

Dyrenes Alliance

Environmental and Animal Society of Taiwan (EAST)

Education for African Animals Welfare

Environmental and Animal Rights Consultants Pakistan

Essere Animali

Estonian Union for the Protection of Animals (MTÜ Eestimaa Loomakaitse Liit)

The European Institute for Animal Law & Policy

Ethical Farming Ireland

FAADA

fair-fish international

Farmállatvédelem

Feedback Global

Fish Welfare Initiative

La Fondation Droit Animal, Éthique et Sciences (LFDA)

Fórum Animal

F.R.E.E

Frente Animal

Friends of Phillip

Fundación Abogados Por Los Animales APLA

Fundacion defensa y derecho animal

Fundación Veg

Future For Fish

Ghana Animal Welfare Society

Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand

Greenpeace

Green REV Institute

Humane Africa Trust

The Humane Global Network

The Humane League

Humánný pokrok

HUHA (Helping You Help Animals)

In Defense of Animals

Institute of Animal Law Asia

International Centre for Animal Rights and Ethics (ICARE)

Invisible Animals (Nevidimi Zhivotni)

Kitwe Animal Welfare Society

Kurdistan Organization for Animal Rights Protection

KYMA sea conservation & research

L214

Lady Freethinker

The Last Cage

Lever

Life of Pachamama

Lilongwe Society for Protection and Care of Animals

Luv 4 all: Uganda

Meru Animal Welfare Organization

National Council of SPCAs

Nepal Animal Welfare and Environment Society (NAWES)

Nepal Animal Welfare and Research Center (NAWRC)

New Roots Institute

New Zealand Anti-Vivisection Society

Nurture Imvelo Trust

Nuru Animal Welfare Organization

Oikeutta eläimille

OIPA - International Organization for Animal Protection

One Health and Development Initiative

ONG Sante Animale Afrique (SAA)

Podrska foundation

PlantBased Treaty

Plataforma ALTO

Planet For All

Protección Animal Ecuador (PAE)

Proyecto ALA

PAZ

RENTAS

Rwanda Animal Welfare Organization (RAWO)

SAFCEI

SAFE (Save Animals from Exploitation)

Samayu

Sea Shepherd Brasil

Seastemik

Sentience

Sentient Media

Shellfish Network

Shrimp Welfare Project

Sibanye Animal Welfare and Conservancy Trust

Sinergia Animal

Somali Animal Welfare Society (SAWS)

Sống Thuần Chay

SPCA Montreal

SPCA Selangor

Tanzania Animals Protection Organization

Tanzania Animal Welfare Society (TAWESO)

Te Protejo

Terranimal Ecuador

Teuluu Sustainability Foundation

Tikobane Trust

Todos Somos Animales

Tourists Against Trophy Hunting

University of Guilan

Uganda vegan society

Utunzi Animal Welfare Organization

Vegan Planet Africa

Vegan Society of Aotearoa

Vege zajednica

Veterinarians for Animal Welfare Aotearoa

Vissenbescherming

Vivamar Society

Voices for Animals

Voters for animals rights

We Animals

Welfare Footprint Project (Center for Welfare Metrics)

West Africa Centre for the Protection of Animal Welfare (WACPAW)

World Animal Justice

World Animal Protection

WTS