



# Cooke Aquaculture Scotland and Orkney

**A summary of our impacts  
for people and communities**











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Cooke Aquaculture Scotland first came to Orkney in 2014, and it's a pleasure to be here. The people and places, the natural environment and the heritage are unique, and we've been determined since day one that our impact on them is positive.

Eight years later, we're proud of what we've achieved. We've put money into the local economy, supported communities, invested in local jobs and skills, helped people to stay on the islands, and made every effort to be a good neighbour.

But rather than just say that ourselves, we wanted to get an independent assessment of our impact in Orkney. On the following pages, you can see the results.



# Supporting Orkney as a place to live and work

**When we first came to Orkney, we understood immediately that the jobs we provided mattered – really mattered. They keep people and their families on the islands, attract new people to live here, and help businesses to thrive and schools to stay open.**

**We have never forgotten that.**

*The aquaculture sector has been key to our local island economy, and the sustainable production of high-quality salmon will continue to be important in the years ahead.*

**Liam McArthur**  
MSP for Orkney

*Cooke is the best place I've worked so far. The staff are really friendly and work really well as a team ... If anyone is thinking about a career in aquaculture or processing, I'd say go for it.*

**Shawn Alexander**  
Processor and  
Modern Apprentice,  
Cooke Aquaculture Scotland

We employ **122 people in Orkney**, 51 of them on our farms. That includes **25 new jobs** created in 2016-2021, all of them helping to keep remote communities viable.

These jobs generate other jobs too. These include:

- processing / packing jobs in Orkney
- jobs in local supply chain businesses
- jobs elsewhere in Scotland, in Cooke and other businesses.

In total, our operations in Orkney are supporting **over 300 jobs across Scotland**. Or, in other words, each job we create on our Orkney salmon farms supports another 4-5 jobs in the wider economy.

\* Unless stated otherwise, all figures come from an independent report by Enscape Consulting (2022), *Cooke Aquaculture Scotland, Social and Economic Impacts 2016-2021 in Orkney*.

# Orkney

Each Cooke farming site in Orkney tends to employ 4-5 people in full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs. For the remote islands especially, a new farm can be transformational in terms of tackling local depopulation.



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### Stronsay

Our two newest organic sites in Stronsay were unanimously approved by the community council. As a result, we created **5 seawater jobs** there in 2020, as well as new jobs at our Hatston packing station on Mainland.

### Mainland

As the only salmon farmer in Orkney to process our fish locally, we employ over 41 people at our processing and packing facility in Kirkwall. That's in addition to our management and operational jobs on Mainland Orkney.

### Westray

In Westray, we now provide over 23 local jobs (up from 12 in 2016), with each job giving the opportunity for people and families to stay on the island. Over the past 5 years, the school roll at Westray Junior High School has increased from 60 to 90.

### Hoy

Our five sites in Hoy have protected 13 local jobs – crucial in a remote island where the population is around 400 and every job lost or created makes a difference to the local economy and community.

### Rousay

The availability of good local jobs makes a huge difference to whether young people can – or want to – stay on an island. Our farms in Rousay employ 5 people, and the average age of our team in 2021 was just 30 years old.



# Jobs that make a difference

When we talk about protecting and creating jobs in Orkney, we're talking about high-quality jobs. Jobs that work for individuals, families and the wider community.

That means **jobs for all ages.**

Age range of Orkney staff (2021)



# 16-74

That means **jobs with a growing contribution** to the local economy.

2016 **£3.06m**

2021 **£4.49m**

That means **skilled, permanent jobs**, paying more than the national average.

Average salary in Orkney (2021) **£28,132**

Average salary in Scotland (2021) **£32,344**

Average Cooke salary in Orkney (2021) **£32,214\***

Average Cooke farm salary in Orkney (2021) **£35,112\***

\*including bonus and overtime payments during period 2020-21

That means **jobs with prospects**, providing training and transferable skills – for example, in quality and management, business administration, engineering and marine/boat operations.

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## SVQs in progress

Scottish Vocational Qualifications, as part of our ongoing CPD programme, 2016-2021

*I love the thrill of working for a company that is doing so well, sending beautiful salmon all over the world, especially the organic salmon we raise in Orkney.*

*We need to shout out more about how good it is. Young people getting a job in aquaculture really have won the lottery.*

**Ken Laird**

Processor and Maintenance Assistant, Cooke Aquaculture Scotland

That means **dependable jobs**. During Covid-19, we did not make anyone in Orkney redundant, nor put anyone on furlough, demonstrating our resilience and commitment to the islands.

In short, that means **stronger communities**, from Westray to Rousay to Stronsay to Mainland to Hoy. Today, and tomorrow too.







Orkney and other island communities are often portrayed as being on the edge of things – not just geographically but economically.

Cooke's activities in Orkney shift the story, putting the islands very much at the centre of things. We're not only driving growth and jobs in the rest of Scotland but also pioneering technologies that could transform the UK's biggest food export.

In the past couple of years, the Scottish and UK governments have talked a lot about 'place-building'. That's exactly what we've been doing in Orkney, putting it on the map as a thriving place to live and work. We'll continue to do that.





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# Putting Orkney on the map

Orkney is important to Cooke. We're proud of what we do here and proud to be part of the communities where we operate.

As a place to farm and process salmon, Orkney is a place like no other. Its pristine marine environment, strong tides and currents, skills base and physical assets (from harbours to piers) allow us to produce some of the very best seafood in the world. It's why we're here and why we continually invest here.

- In 2021, we farmed a total of 13,713 tonnes of salmon in Orkney, up from 9,875 tonnes in 2016.
- We raise all our organic salmon in Orkney, the only salmon producer doing this here. We now have 10 Soil Association organic certified seawater sites here, and production of premium, organic salmon fits well with Orkney's reputation as a food and drink destination.
- We're the only salmon farmer in Orkney to process our fish locally. As well as creating jobs, this gives our customers a fresher product, with a shorter time from harvest to processing.
- The new technologies we're progressing in Orkney could transform the future of aquaculture, helping the sector to grow sustainably. That includes developing innovative 'high-energy' farming sites further out from land – such as our farm at East Skelwick, North Sound in Westray. We have also deployed Orkney's first hybrid-electric powered feed barge at our Mill Bay site in Stronsay.
- As we said earlier, through farming and processing salmon in Orkney, we support over 300 jobs in Mainland UK, for example, in Invergordon (where we produce feed), Argyll, Clackmannanshire and Sutherland (where we hatch and grow our young salmon), and Glasgow (where we have our corporate office).



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# What this means for the Scottish economy

Usually, when we talk about our activity in Orkney and its benefits, we prefer to think in terms of people and communities (as well as our salmon). It's why we talk about jobs, salaries and skills.

But it's also useful to look at a measure much loved by economists and governments: GVA\* (or 'gross value added'). Put simply, this figure shows the contribution that individual companies, sectors or regions make to nation as a whole. So, our GVA for Orkney illustrates the contribution that our work here is making to the wider Scottish economy.

As you'll see, our GVA has risen significantly since 2016, thanks to our operational expansion and improved productivity across our different Orkney farms and processing operations.

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**Additional value to  
Scottish economy in 2016**

**£22.4**  
**million GVA**

**Additional value to  
Scottish economy in 2021**

**£38.4**  
**million GVA**

**Additional value to  
Scottish economy over 2016-21**

**£177.6**  
**million GVA**

**Contribution to  
Orkney GVA 2016-21**

**£64.2**  
**million GVA**

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\*GVA, or gross value added, is the 'difference between the value of goods and services produced and the cost of raw materials and other inputs, which are used up in production' (from Scottish Parliament (2018), A Guide to Gross Value Added in Scotland).





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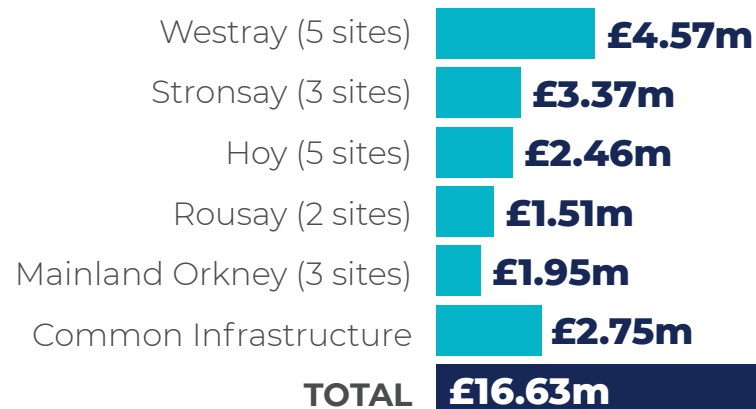
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# Putting money into the local economy

As well as paying salaries to our 122 staff in Orkney; we put money into the economy by investing in our farms and other facilities and spending with local suppliers.

On average, we've invested an average of almost £3 million of capital a year in new buildings, infrastructure and farms around Orkney – a total of £18.27 million during 2016-2021. That includes investing more than £1.25 million in our Kirkwall packing station and £16.63 million in our farms.

## Our capital investment across different farm locations, 2016-2021



This spend covers a wide range of infrastructure and equipment, including vessel purchase and overhaul, vehicles, salmon pens, buildings, mooring systems, nets and housing for staff. We've been able to do this thanks to the financial strength of our parent company, Cooke.

Of course, numbers are just numbers, so it's worth translating all this back into real-life impacts. This £16.63 million of investment in farms has:

- supported local businesses and jobs
- maintained local populations
- sustained the uptake of local schools, ferries, shops and cafes
- created ongoing operational spending with local businesses.

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# Day-to-day backing for businesses

To operate our farms and facilities, we buy materials, equipment and services from other businesses in Orkney and wider Scotland.

In total, we had **over £3.98 million operational spend with dozens of local suppliers** in Orkney in 2021 (ie, in addition to our *capital* investment in new farms etc). These included businesses working in transport, net and boat repairs, diving, fuel and consultancy.

Our Orkney operations support businesses elsewhere in Scotland too. In total (including our Orkney spend), we bought over **£16.8 million worth of goods and services** from businesses in Scotland and the rest of the UK in 2021.

Cooke Aquaculture Scotland's production and supply of smolt, feed and fish resulted in a spend of £27.34 million in 2021. In addition, we bought £16.79 million worth of goods and services from other businesses in the supply chain (£3.98 million of this in Orkney). **This resulted in a total spend of of £44.1 million.**

Each time we are able to open or expand a farm, this operational spending tends to rise.











## Case Study: **Roving Eye**

Our salmon farms are secured to the seabed with multiple anchors and rigging, and every one of our sites has to be inspected at least once a year.

These surveys are done for us by local Orkney company Roving Eye Enterprises, which started life in 1997 offering ROV (remotely operated vehicle) tours to visitors who wanted a peek at the scuttled German fleet. The growth of aquaculture and more recently marine renewables has transformed the business.

“Roving Eye has seen a surge in aquaculture business over the past 5 years or so, helping to create steady year-on-year growth for us,” says owner Keith Bichan. In 2021, Cooke spent over £110,000 with the company, which now employs five people, all working in skilled jobs as boat skippers or ROV vehicle pilots.

“As a result of our work with aquaculture clients, we’ve invested in a faster vessel – able to operate at 20 knot transit speeds. This means we can now reach more remote salmon farms on the North Coast, such as Cooke’s farms in Westray, within two hours from Stromness.”



## Case Study: **Malakoff**

**Jonathan Haynes**, Diving Manager, Malakoff Ltd

Our diving support in Orkney comes from Malakoff Ltd, and our spend with the company in 2021 was over £300,000. Malakoff employs five FTE staff working from our premises in Kirkwall, three of them local residents and the other two based here long-term.

Local knowledge is important for Malakoff, and the growth of business from clients like Cooke has encouraged them to invest locally. “Training and investing in locally-based staff helps us to develop staff who have more of an affinity or passion towards us and our clients,” explains Malakoff’s diving manager, Jonathan Haynes. “Until now, our Orkney divers had already trained elsewhere, but we recently trained our first diver in Orkney. He’d been working part-time as a tender with us and expressed a desire to move into commercial diving.”

“We are also looking at options to offer potential engineering and diving-related apprentice schemes for school leavers here.

“Cooke are a valued client for us in Orkney and Shetland, and last year we completed over 600 commercial dives across various sites in Orkney.

“We hope that, together with Cooke, we can continue to develop and evolve as a company in what is an exciting time within the aquaculture sector,” says Jonathan Haynes.





## And there's more ...

As well as buying from local suppliers, we spend money with businesses owned by our parent company Cooke, creating further jobs and opportunities.

Take feed, for example. In 2021, Cooke spent over £21.6 million on feed for our Orkney farms, with ripple effects reaching across Orkney and northeast Scotland:



**Feed supplies:**  
Northeast Nutrition, Invergordon, sells feed to Cooke's Orkney and Shetland fish farms. Employs 28 people.

**Supply chain in Invergordon.** Northeast Nutrition supports another 48 jobs (est.) in local area - eg in engineering, machine parts, logistics.



**Transport of feed from Invergordon (via Aberdeen) to Kirkwall, and then Stronsay, Hoy, Westray etc, creates ferry and haulage jobs on both mainland and Orkney.**

**Planned development in Invergordon feed mill could see £1.5 million spent annually over 3-5 years. Northeast Nutrition is also a partner in Cromarty Freeport bid, which could attract further inward investment and jobs to the area.**













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# Contributing to island life

**On top of the jobs we create and the incomes we provide, we take pains to contribute in other ways too.**

**We consider ourselves part of the social fabric in the different locations where we operate and have a role in making them great places to live, grow up and work.**

**To do that, we listen to what people tell us, rather than tell them what they need.**

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**Community support and  
donations across Orkney, 2016-21**

**£267,714**

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One thing people told us was that they wanted their jobs at Cooke to fit with other aspects of island life, such as farming. In response, we created part-time roles at some of our locations, enabling people to work two weeks on, two weeks off so they can split their time easily.

Another thing people tell us is how they want us to contribute. That's why we have supported a wide range of activities and organisations, from the Hoy Half Marathon to Stronsay Community Hall to Westray Junior High School to Stromness Museum to Orkney Young Carers to food banks - we responded to what people wanted.



## Case Study: **Orkney Young Carers**

Lynn Bartlett is a support worker with Orkney Young Carers, which offers activities, advice and a listening ear for young carers, and she also works at Orkney Youth Café in Kirkwall.

For the past few years, Cooke has helped both organisations with various initiatives and funding shortfalls. We've provided grants to help with the day-to-day running of the youth café – which pre-lockdown was getting as many as 60-70 people in a weekend. We bought reusable water bottles for Orkney Young Carers, and in 2020 and 2021, when social distancing rules meant they couldn't hold their annual Youth Awards in person, we funded them to go online.

"Our ease of access to Cooke is really good. Their team in Orkney are very approachable, coming to our events and getting involved," says Lynn Bartlett, Orkney Young Carers and Orkney Youth Café.

"Some of our youngsters have gone on to work for Cooke. It's very positive for them that there are opportunities in fish farming."



## Case Study: **Stronsay JHS**

Stronsay Junior High School has a school roll of about 40 children, reaching from nursery age to S4. As a local employer, we have strong connections with the school: not only do some staff members have children there, some of our team went to school there themselves.

We also hope to provide future jobs for those currently on the school roll, offering them flexible career options in the place they've grown up, and transferrable, in-demand training and skills. To help make this happen, we work with Skills Development Scotland and Developing the Young Workforce Orkney to organise careers events and opportunities at Stronsay JHS and elsewhere.





# Summary of Cooke community donations and support in Orkney, 2016-21



**£22,059**

Music / Culture



**£45,238**

Education



**£79,088**

Community  
Donation



**£36,631**

Health / Social Care



**£84,698**

Sport

Total Spend 2016 - 2021

**£267,714**



# Going beyond the 9 to 5

As an employer in Orkney, we're not arm's length. We're part of the community, not just mindful of our responsibilities but affected by what happens here. So...

## **We roll our sleeves up.**

We give money across Orkney, but also do more. If we provide funding for a community group, we go to their events, use our skills or infrastructure to support them, or create jobs or opportunities for the people they help.

## **We make a difference.**

Our presence in Westray was a factor in the £3m upgrade of the harbour at Pierowall, funded by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and Orkney Islands Council.

## **We get our feet wet.**

As a local boat owner, we assist others in the community when they need our help.

- We tow fishing boats or other vessels if they develop problems.
- We sent a boat to rescue the Papa Westray Ferry when it broke down near rocks with schoolchildren on board.
- An agreement with Orkney Ferries means that, from 6pm to 6am, the Cooke team is on call to get the doctor to Papa Westray if needed.

## **Skills and training: taking the long view**

For any young (or not so young) person in Orkney, aquaculture can be a career for life as well as a source of valuable transferable skills. So, we work closely with schools and Developing the Young Workforce in Orkney to help young people think about their career options and different opportunities.

We support schools' learning activities, go to their assemblies and careers events, answer children and parent's questions, and invest in young people. More than 10% of our staff are on Modern Apprenticeships in Aquaculture, Engineering or Business Administration, enabling them to work, earn and learn.

*I found out about my job at Cooke when I was still at school... They're one of the biggest employers in Orkney. They offer a great salary and they offer great training for a career ahead of you..*

**Craig Drury**

Seawater Site Assistant





## Case Study: **Westray**

Westray Heritage Centre, in the centre of Pierowall, attracts around 3,000 visitors a year. It's run by a small charity, the Westray Heritage Trust. Over the past few years, Cooke has covered the cost of printing the Trust's magazine and assisted in providing information and photographs for displays. Trustee Alasdair McVicar is upbeat about Cooke and aquaculture's contribution to Westray.

"I'm very positive about fish farming. When I was head of Scotland's Fish Disease Inspectorate in the Marine Lab in Aberdeen, we identified Westray as one of the best sites for sustainable fish farming because of the characteristics of local tidal flow and the close proximity of sites to open ocean.

"By making sustainable use of these natural resources, we can help to keep young people in the community."



## Case Study: **Papdale Primary School**

After the loss of learning time during the Covid-19 crisis, Papdale Primary School, in Kirkwall, wanted to roll out a new programme of teaching reading and phonics to its 190 P1-P3 pupils, helping them make up for the time lost at such a crucial stage of their education.

The school and the parent council had paid for some of the new books needed for the new scheme but needed a further £6,000 to pay for enough books for every child – they needed 24 copies of each book and could only fund 10.

Aware that some of our staff have children at the school, Head Teacher Wendy Bowen approached us for help, explaining the situation and their desire to further promote reading in school.

Agreeing with Wendy how important and urgent this project was, we said yes, donating the full £6,000 she had asked for.

“Thanks to Cooke’s quick response to our request for support, we’ve been able to buy 2,432 additional books for the new phonics scheme at Papdale. As a result, all our P1-P3 children will now have the reading materials they need to make up for lost learning time.”





*Aquaculture is a significant contributor to our rural economy, providing well paid jobs in some of Scotland's most fragile communities and will be an essential part of our green recovery and transition to net zero.*

**Mairi Gugeon**

Scottish Government Cabinet  
Secretary for Rural Affairs  
and Islands





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# Minimising our impact and farming responsibly

**Making Orkney a great place to live, grow up and work also includes looking after its natural resources and keeping them that way for future generations.**

**Indeed, our own farming operations are dependent on Orkney's pristine marine environment, so we take our stewardship role seriously.**

We're also serious about raising healthy fish, applying the highest standards of animal welfare in all our Orkney farms.

And we're serious about our wider environmental responsibilities, recognising the role we can play in tackling the climate crisis and protecting healthy ecosystems.

We'll give you just a few examples.

## **Healthy fish**

Our sea farms in Orkney have low stocking densities with at least 98.5% water (or 99% in the case of our organic farms). Fish have the space to swim and shoal just as they would in the wild.

## **Healthy food**

More than 70% of the salmon we farm in Orkney is organic. As the largest producer of organic Scottish salmon, we now have 10 sites in Orkney with Soil Association organic certification.

## **Healthy seas**

As part of the certification requirements, we limit the use of lice treatments. That's made possible by positioning our salmon pens in fast-flowing waters and our continuing investment in fish husbandry and welfare.





## Case Study: **Jollys of Orkney**

**George Stout**, Owner, Jollys of Orkney

Jollys of Orkney has been supplying premium-quality fish and shellfish to Orkney for almost 70 years, and now sells in its shop in Hatston, its Brig Larder deli in Kirkwall and online, as well as to trade customers within and outwith Orkney.

Current owners George and Anne Stout took over the business around 10 years ago, and we supply them with premium local salmon (including organic salmon) week in week out all year round. They sell it both fresh and kiln-smoked.

“The waters of Orkney are so clear and clean, and the quality of fish raised here reflects that – supporting our reputation for premium food and drink.”

“It’s really important to us to sell local fresh produce to our customers in Orkney and elsewhere, and our relationship with Cooke is brilliant for that – their packing station is about a quarter of a mile from us, I can see it from my window. You can’t get more local or fresher than that, and that works well for both of us.”



## How we choose our sites

Every new farming site we develop in Orkney is selected after a rigorous Environmental Impact Assessment. This ensures we only raise fish in places where we can minimise the impact on the marine environment and marine ecosystems.

We're also reviewing the location of our existing sites, again to reduce our environmental footprint. In 2021, we gained planning approval to move our Chalmers Hope farm in Scapa Flow into deeper water with faster-flowing currents, which will have beneficial effects for both fish health and the marine environment.

## Pioneers in offshore farming

Our salmon farm at East Skelwick, North Sound in Westray is an exposed, 'high-energy' site, very much at the leading edge of aquaculture. Offshore farms like East Skelwick provide optimal growing conditions for our fish whilst minimising effects on potentially sensitive receptors.

The site is located 2.5km from the nearest landfall – making it further out to sea and more exposed than traditional farms. Monitoring equipment is used to measure wind, wave and hydrographic conditions in real time, providing data that will give other salmon producers good usable information for locating their own salmon farms further out from land.



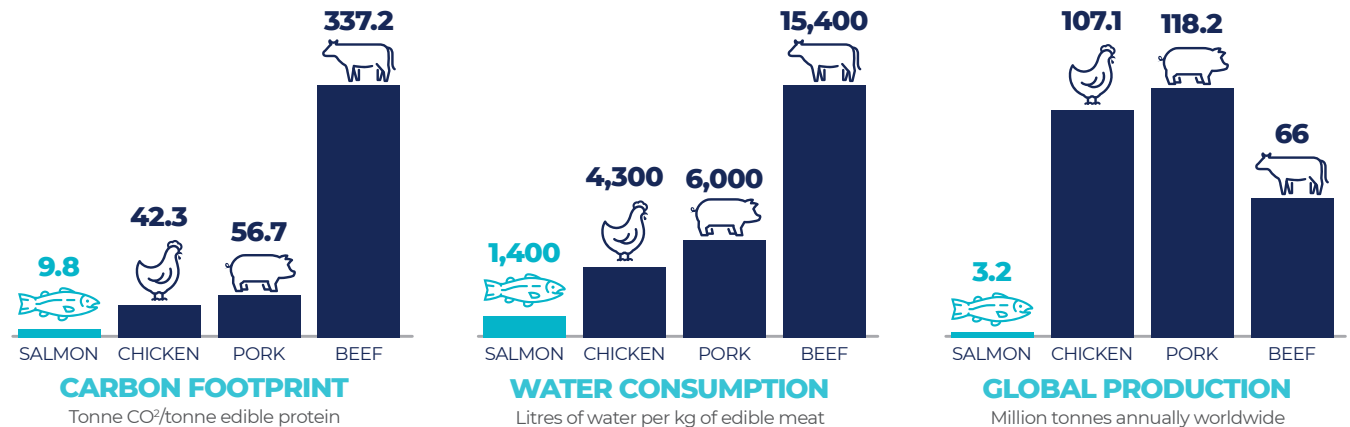


# The bigger picture

As well as paying great attention to our local footprint in Orkney, we look beyond it. Our role in maintaining healthy ecosystems, protecting natural resources and tackling the climate emergency has global relevance.

- Farmed salmon is a healthy source of protein which has a lower carbon footprint than most other farming sectors. Our sector also uses less freshwater and produces more edible meat for every tonne of feed used.
- We only use certified sustainable sources for our salmon feed, using only marine ingredients from Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) or MarinTrust certified sustainable fisheries.
- We deployed a state of the art hybrid powered feed barge at our Mill Bay site in Stronsay during March 2022. This system incorporates battery storage to significantly reduce diesel consumption.
- We are also signatories to the industry wide Sustainability Charter: A Better Future for us all which was published in 2020. The charter details five key pledges and 41 different actions including:
  - Working towards 100% renewable energy use
  - Working towards obtaining 100% of our feed ingredients from sustainable sources
  - The introduction of electric vehicle charging points

## A healthy and sustainable source of protein



\*Sources: Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations Statistical Division – FAOSTAT. FAO of the United Nations Fisheries and Aquaculture Department – Fishery Statistical Collections: Improving Productivity and Environmental Performance of Aquaculture – World Resources Institute. Feed Conversion Efficiency in Aquaculture: Do we Measure it Correctly? – Atlantic Salmon, the Super Chicken of the Sea.





The independent impacts report we commissioned from Enscape was based on our operations in 2016-2021. Since then we have invested more in our operations in Orkney, created more jobs there, and continued to work with all those who live around us.

We look forward to doing more of the same, sharing our success and prosperity with our employees and local community, and helping to safeguard their futures.



