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## Shareholders and Whistleblower Raise Concerns about Costco's Farmed-Raised Salmon *Scientists Encourage Industry to Adopt Better Fish Farming Methods*

Seattle – Farmed salmon was the subject of heated debate today at local retail giant Costco's annual general meeting as shareholders, scientists and a Norwegian whistleblower expressed environmental and public health concerns about one of the company's most popular products.

Attending the meeting were Pure Salmon Campaign representatives and a Norwegian food safety scientist who has blown the whistle on the Norwegian Food Safety Authority for not taking adequate precautions to protect human health during two recent contamination incidents with salmon feed. Most of the farmed salmon Costco sells comes from Norwegian-based companies, which dominate the industry.

Starting in January 2005, cadmium was found in Norwegian farmed salmon and land animal feed according to the Norwegian Food Safety Authority. Some of the feed was used on Norwegian fish farms and some was exported to Scotland, Faroe Islands and Canada. In November of last year, Russian authorities banned the import of Norwegian farmed salmon after finding high levels of cadmium and lead.

“Norway took meat off the market because it was fed the contaminated feed, yet no precautionary or preventive measures were taken with regards to the salmon,” said Dr. Claudette Bethune, Senior Scientist at Norway's National Institute of Nutrition and Seafood Research. “Norway has yet to acknowledge the significant feed incident early last year as a possible explanation for the high levels of cadmium found by the Russians.”

In addition to the cadmium and lead contamination, Norwegian authorities disclosed that they had found the illegal use of nitrites in smoked salmon. In the E.U., nitrites are banned for use in food products as it reacts with foodstuffs and transforms into carcinogenic nitrosamines. Nitrites are used to stabilize food color and influence taste.

Costco received additional international pressure at today's meeting when the Pure Salmon Campaign released a statement signed by more than thirty U.S., European, Canadian, and other international scientists communicating their concerns about the salmon aquaculture industry and requested a meeting with Costco officials to discuss these concerns.

“If done right, salmon farming could be an incredibly positive industry,” said John Volpe, Assistant Professor of Marine Systems Restoration and Conservation in the School of Environmental Studies; University of Victoria, British Columbia. “As scientists, we stand ready to help the aquaculture industry adopt more sustainable fish farming techniques to fulfill the promise of relieving rather than deepening the debilitating human impacts on the marine ecosystem.”

The Pure Salmon Campaign contacted Costco, one of the largest purveyors of farmed salmon in the United States, several times in advance of this meeting regarding environmental and public health concerns associated with farmed salmon. Pure Salmon requested that Costco use its

considerable purchasing power to help transform the industry. But so far, Costco executives have refused to even meet with representatives of the campaign to discuss these issues.

“Farmed salmon as it’s currently produced—with contaminants like PCB’s, and illegal substances like nitrites—is simply not a product that Costco should be proud to have on it’s shelves,” said Andrea Kavanagh, Director of the Pure Salmon Campaign. “It is time company officials work with us to address the very real problems associated with this product.”

The Pure Salmon Campaign is a global project of the National Environmental Trust. It has partners in the United States, Canada, Scotland, the European Union, and Chile all working to improve the way salmon is produced. For more information: [www.puresalmon.org](http://www.puresalmon.org).

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