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THE HUMANE LEAGUE 
UNITED KINGDOM

**INSPIRING ACTION
FOR FARMED FISHES:**

Finding Messaging that Motivates

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
INTRODUCTION	4
STAGE 1 Focus group research	5
Aims, methodology and sample	5
Key themes	6
Three unique audiences	9
Overarching guidelines	16
STAGE 2 How do we motivate people to take action?	19
Aims, methodology and sample	19
Results	21
CONCLUSION	25



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years, the plight of farmed fishes¹ has begun to rise up the agenda of groups working in the animal advocacy space. Previously, many groups have channelled their energy into improving the lives of farmed land animals with a demonstrable track record of success. For example, all major food companies in the UK have committed to go cage-free for laying hens by 2025, thanks to the dedicated work of animal organisations. Now, the expansion of aquaculture and the clear welfare issues associated with intensive fish farming means that we must seek to make the same concrete progress for aquatic animals.

In 2020, The Humane League UK began to dive into the world of fish advocacy. As a starting point, we identified the need to understand how the public view issues relating to fish farming and, most notably, what will motivate them to take action. We worked with [KSBR Brand Futures](#) and [Rethink Priorities](#) to run two research projects.

¹At The Humane League UK, we choose to use the word 'fishes' as the plural for fish. This is inspired by the ethologist Jonathan Balcombe in his book 'What a Fish Knows' and seeks to emphasise that fishes are individuals with personalities, as opposed to lumping them together as a collective. There are times in this report where the plural 'fish' is used - this is only when referencing material from the studies in which we used 'fish' so that participants were not swayed in their responses by picking up on the language difference.

²Fishes' cognitive abilities, intelligence and sentience

OUR FINDINGS REVEALED

- Key messages around the topic of farmed fish welfare resonate with different audiences. Three potential messaging routes, and the respective audiences they are most suited to, are:
 - **Emphasising the “disgusting” elements of fish farming** through messaging about lice, lesions and deformities - this resonates with all audiences
 - **Challenging unconscious biases** by demonstrating that fishes suffer much like land animals, but are treated even worse - this resonates with 'conscious eaters' (those who care about where their food comes from, particularly those who already choose not to eat land animals)
 - **A named corporation is contributing to the suffering of farmed fishes** and is deceiving its customers about the fact - this resonates with 'anti-corporate vegans' (similar to supporters of animal organisations)
- Using the disease and disgust angle not only resonated with all our audiences but it also proved most likely to encourage people to take action
- The topic of a lack of enrichment/fish complexity² appears to be a less convincing and less motivating route to take; this did not particularly resonate with our audiences and failed to inspire them to take action
- People appear to be generally reluctant to donate to charities working for farmed fish causes. Although we can speculate why this may be, the scope of our research did not explore the reasons behind people's reluctance.



INTRODUCTION

There is reason to believe that humans may struggle to empathise with fishes. One of fishes' key sensory systems—a lateral line along their body detecting movement, vibration, pressure gradients and even electrical impulses—is almost incomprehensible to us. They lack facial expression, they move completely differently to us, and they (mostly) can't call out when they are in distress. It is claimed that humans prefer animals who are similar to us, both physically and behaviourally.³ For this reason, when it comes to fishes, the animal advocacy movement must endeavour to find the most effective imagery and messaging that can overcome these obstacles. Innovation will be essential for success in efforts to reduce fish suffering. To be the most effective activists, we first need to understand how the public view the issues relating to fish farming and what will best motivate the public to engage.

Recent corporate campaigns focused on chickens raised for meat have shown us just how difficult it can be to communicate complex welfare issues when compared to simple messaging like “stop caging hens.” One of the critical challenges facing the whole animal protection movement is identifying effective ways to communicate complex and varied fish welfare issues. If we are to secure widespread improvements, it is imperative that we take steps to build public and policy-maker empathy for fishes, and to do that we must use well-informed campaign messaging. It is crucial to our success in making change for fishes that we build empathy for their plight.

This research project was designed to identify the most effective ways to communicate fish welfare issues to a wide audience in order to trigger engagement and action. From November 2020 - February 2021, we commissioned two pieces of research which aimed to gather detailed insights on the public's perception of fishes and test a range of potential messaging routes on them. Using the findings of this research, we now have guidance to assist us in our communications on farmed fish welfare. These are practical, evidence-based guidelines produced to help animal organisations be as effective as possible when advocating for fishes.

It is worth noting that this project focused only on people's attitudes towards farmed fish welfare, and that attitudes to wild fishes, or fishes as companion animals, were not covered within the scope of this study.



³ Soniak, M. Why you want to save the whales, but not the crickets. *The Week* <https://web.archive.org/web/20210329171240/https://theweek.com/articles/450037/why-want-save-whales-but-not-crickets> (2014).

STAGE 1: Focus group research

AIMS, METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

The first research project was conducted with KSBR Brand Futures in November 2020. Our aim was to determine the effectiveness of various campaign messages on a selection of audiences. This involved developing messages in a brainstorm with campaigners, communications specialists and fish experts that highlighted various issues relating to fish farming.

WE GENERATED ELEVEN MESSAGES TO TEST

- The farmed fish market falsely trades off the idea of an idyllic Scottish loch
- Farmed fishes are diseased and disgusting
- Consumers put false faith in certifications
- The treatment of farmed fishes is more cruel than other farmed animals
- Supermarkets are hiding the truth about the fish they sell
- You can spot a salmon that has been farmed
- Big fish producers are making large profits selling you a lie
- Feeding farmed fishes empties our oceans, harming other animals
- Fish farming is ruining Britain's environment
- Fish farming could cause the next pandemic through antibiotic resistance
- Fishes are complex, feeling creatures who deserve better treatment

Please note that these messages were not generated to be completely robust with regards to accuracy and viability as campaign messaging but rather to experiment with different angles.

Hand-drawn posters⁴ were developed to bring each of these messages to life and were accompanied by supporting facts/statements.

The messages were then tested on UK focus groups during nine 75 minute teleforums, where discussion was generated among participants to gauge their reaction to the different messages. Each group consisted of five people, with a total of 45 participants in total. People were recruited for the teleforums based on their dietary preference and previous support for animal charities, and were separated into three groups based on their response.⁵ Following the teleforums, three audiences were identified, which will be detailed in a later section.



⁴Campaign posters tested in KSBR focus group study

⁵These groups were: fish-eating campaign supporters, who do eat fish and have given meaningful support to animal welfare charities within the past 12 months; non fish-eating campaign supporters, who do not eat fish and have provided meaningful support to animal welfare charities within the past 12 months; and non-rejectors, who do eat fish and haven't demonstrated support for animal charities in the past but are sympathetic* to some of the aims of charities working to end the abuse of animals for consumer products.

*This was established by participants stating they felt at least uneasy or conflicted about the idea of farrowing crates for sows or cosmetics being tested on animals.

KEY THEMES

The research produced five key contextual themes about people's attitudes towards farmed fishes. These are useful findings to consider when exploring the specific audience guidelines presented later in this report. These themes are statements that applied across the board in the first phase of our research, and enable us to meet our audiences where they are at, by understanding their outlook on farmed fish issues. Please note that these themes apply to the samples we studied and therefore we are unable to say for certain that these would apply to the 'general public.'

1 'Animal lovers' don't necessarily care about farmed animals

Many people talk very emotively about companion animals, or even wild animals, who are perceived to be more relatable, cuddly or cute, and often make impassioned references to the work of charities like the RSPCA when animal cruelty is broached. However, it is clear that many self-professed 'animal lovers' neglect to extend this compassion to farmed animals. In fact, they actively avoid thinking about welfare issues related to animals raised for food. They draw a convenient distinction between farmed animals and other animals, and have made a conscious decision not to concern themselves with the welfare of the animals they eat.

“ We've always donated to Guide Dogs for the Blind, they do really important work.

2 Fishes aren't seen as fully sentient and people are used to seeing them cruelly treated

Fishes are not seen as feeling pain or experiencing life in the same way as more 'complex' animals do. People generally believe that fishes are more simplistic and therefore may not be as sentient as other farmed animals. Not only this, but people are used to seeing fishes cruelly treated and are consequently somewhat desensitised to imagery of fishes suffering. Imagery that we hypothesised to be shocking (for example, of a gutted fish or fishes asphyxiating out of water) were not perceived as such, with people reporting that it is similar to what you would see walking along the seaside or in photos of anglers, fishermen and chefs handling live fishes.

“ You see fish flapping around but that's just a default reaction to survive, you don't think of them actually in pain.

KEY THEMES

3 Fishes, especially salmon, are seen as an ethical/virtuous food choice

People generally feel quite good about eating fish. Salmon in particular is viewed as an upmarket, healthy food choice which people often eat as a treat, or at special occasions. These themes were not exclusive to omnivores: some vegetarians stated that salmon was the one thing they missed the most (or even occasionally allowed themselves to eat in 'relapse') and even vegans reported that they would rather people ate fish than meat. It is clear that a distinction is drawn between the ethics of eating fishes and of eating other land animals. Many also express that salmon is good for our industry and seem to build a picture of serene Scottish lochs and of salmon production as a virtuous and honest trade.

“ You get lulled into an image of serenity when it comes to fish.

4 There is little awareness of - or interest in - fish labelling and certification schemes

Labelling for fish is not well-recognised and people are not primed to look out for welfare-related labels. Whereas Red Tractor and RSPCA Assured are more well-known for certified chicken or beef, people are unaware of fish certification schemes and don't even consider the fact there is such a thing as 'lower welfare' fish. Dolphin-friendly tuna was the only fish label which was referenced by participants. In addition, people are sometimes cynical about labels and feel they are there to lull you into a false sense of security. Those who were interested in labelling were motivated mostly by sustainability.

“ I think your attention gets turned elsewhere... I read about the Happy Egg Company not being free-range recently, that really annoyed me.

KEY THEMES

5 Fish farming doesn't feel like a big problem or something that's connected to other big issues

It is stark that many people don't seem to appreciate that fish farming exists at all, and those who do know hadn't thought of it as a big problem, or one that exists on the scale that it does. There is also difficulty in demonstrating that fish farming is connected to bigger issues such as pollution, pandemic risk and the environment in the way that land farming is. It requires numerous steps of logic rather than instigating an immediate connection. For example, many people assume that farming fishes is preferable to catching them in the wild as they understand that the oceans are depleted. Connecting fish farming to ocean populations - through explaining fishes used as fish meal and fish oil (FMFO)⁶ - is confusing for a general audience as it requires several steps to connect the wild fishes being taken from the ocean to the fishes in the farm. The person would need to understand not only that the ocean populations are decreasing rapidly, but also that some fishes are carnivorous and eat other fishes and that these fishes are taken from the wild. These bigger issues seem more difficult to communicate in campaign messaging that ultimately seeks not just to educate but to get people to take action.

These five themes provide us with obstacles to overcome in our communications about farmed fishes. We are speaking to audiences who are often desensitised to standard cruelty issues when it comes to fishes, so we can't rely on the same types of imagery and messaging to explain welfare concerns that we do for other farmed animals. We will also need to work hard if we want to persuade people that fish farming is a contributing factor to wider issues. These connections are not sufficiently established within the public yet. We are also dealing with audiences who know very little about fish farming as an industry and must also reckon with the fact that a large portion of the population does not want to be educated for fear of having a revelation which may require them to reevaluate their eating habits.

⁶Fish meal and fish oil is used to feed carnivorous species of farmed fishes and usually produced using wild-caught fishes.

THREE UNIQUE AUDIENCES

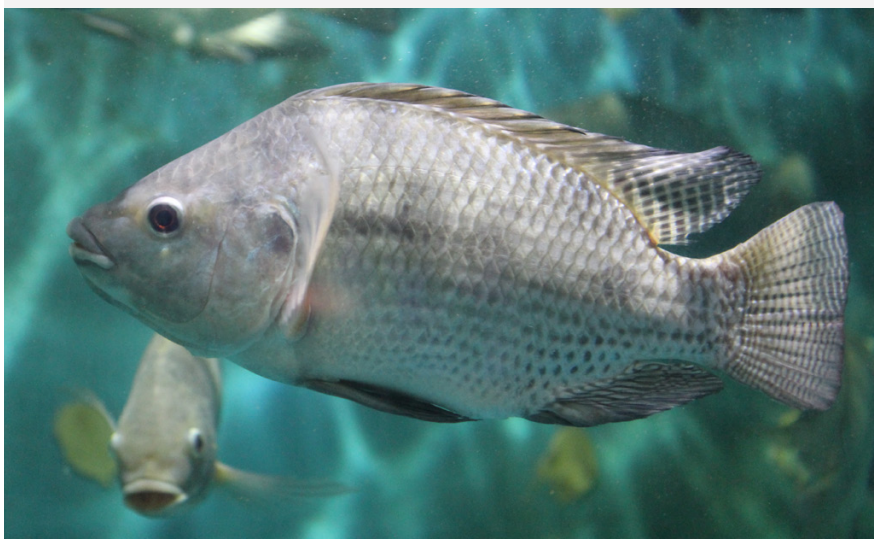
From the focus groups, the researchers identified three unique audiences who, using different messaging approaches, could be inspired to take action for farmed fishes when strategically targeted with communications. For ease of use, these audiences were given the monikers:

1 'CONSCIOUS EATERS'

2 'ANTI-CORPORATE VEGANS'

3 'UNCRITICAL EATERS'

Please note that while generalisations are made when describing these audiences as necessary for the purpose of this study, there are variations and nuances within these groups of society.



STAGE 1: Focus group research

ENGAGING 'CONSCIOUS EATERS'

Conscious eaters were identified as the group with most opportunities to engage. They include pescatarians, vegetarians and flexitarians. Some vegans also fell under this umbrella, but only those who have a plant-based diet for motivations besides animal welfare, such as for health, the environment or those who grew up vegan.

A defining characteristic of the conscious eater is that they aim to consume more ethically. This means that engaging them on welfare is relatively easy - they are already predisposed to this way of thinking and so they just need to be activated in the right way. They are in the process of educating themselves on ways to consume ethically and sustainably and therefore are receptive to further information, as long as it's not presented in an overly strident or ideological manner. Not only are the conscious eaters willing to learn more, they are also generally optimistic that they can make a difference.

When it comes to fishes, the conscious eaters freely admit they have a blind spot. They feel somewhat guilty or embarrassed that they've assumed fishes are acceptable to eat, or that they are less of a concern than other farmed animals. As soon as they are presented with evidence relating to fish welfare issues or fish sentience, they sense their unconscious biases. They are receptive to being challenged.

KEY TO ENGAGE Make them realise they've overlooked fish welfare.

GRABBING THEIR ATTENTION

Use arresting, hard-hitting parallels to other farmed animals. There is no need to persuade them that fishes feel or that they deserve humane treatment - they are already predisposed to thinking this way and they just need to realise it's a blind spot.

ENGAGING THEM FURTHER

Educate them about the scale and nature of fish farming. Draw a stark contrast between the image people are sold of the origin of their fish (an idyllic Scottish loch, for example) and the reality (cramped conditions in sea cages, ravaged by sea lice).

ALIGNING THEM WITH YOUR AIM

Marshall their anger at big broad targets (the Government or industry sectors) for wilfully overlooking fish welfare/science. Ask them to support simple, no-brainer welfare measures that will put fishes on an even footing with terrestrial animals. Educate and empower them so they can avoid unethical fish.

LESS SUCCESSFUL

Attacks on specific brands. The conscious eater generally does not get motivated by campaigns that target individual entities, as they see these issues as endemic and believe they should be treated as such, without companies being unfairly singled out.

'CONSCIOUS EATERS'



This poster performed well with conscious eaters. The element of anthropomorphisation worked alongside the shocking and subversive nature of the image. It compares the poor treatment of fishes to that of a land animal. This effectively challenged their biases and led to a lightbulb moment.

You see people fishing them and catching them on hooks. But when I see that chicken being drowned my blood starts to boil.

STAGE 1: Focus group research

ENGAGING 'ANTI-CORPORATE VEGANS'

The second group posed slightly fewer opportunities but were still quite receptive. As the name may suggest, the anti-corporate vegan is more ideologically motivated and interested in proselytising about veganism. They believe that eating fish is wrong for many reasons but most importantly from an animal welfare standpoint. They strongly believe that society needs to reevaluate their fish consumption.

Many anti-corporate vegans do not know how cruel fish farming is - the state of intensive aquaculture is generally news to them. However, they are not overly surprised upon discovering these facts; they assume it would be awful because they believe all factory farming is awful. The facts serve to reinforce their decision to be vegan and they do get some satisfaction from this, but they don't get more excited/agitated about fish farming than any other animal welfare issue.

The anti-corporate vegans therefore need a big story to motivate them to prioritise fish welfare. They want to act on things that matter the most and at present, this may be the welfare of other species such as cows, pigs, or maybe even chickens. We must persuade them that fish farming is urgent and needs our attention. They are also enticed by opportunities to turn meat-eaters off eating fish and latch onto big scandals associated with farming that can be used to affirm their choice to go vegan. It is more evidence to cement their worldview.

KEY TO ENGAGE

Make fish farming feel scandalous and/or persuade them there's a way to unsettle callous meat eaters through being active on this issue.

GRABBING THEIR ATTENTION

Highlight corporate hypocrisy - show them a company that is profiting from cruelty and hoodwinking their customers, while presenting themselves as an ethical brand. Show them why fishes are a priority - demonstrate that this is a topical and urgent issue. Equip them with the ammunition to shock and repel meat-eaters.

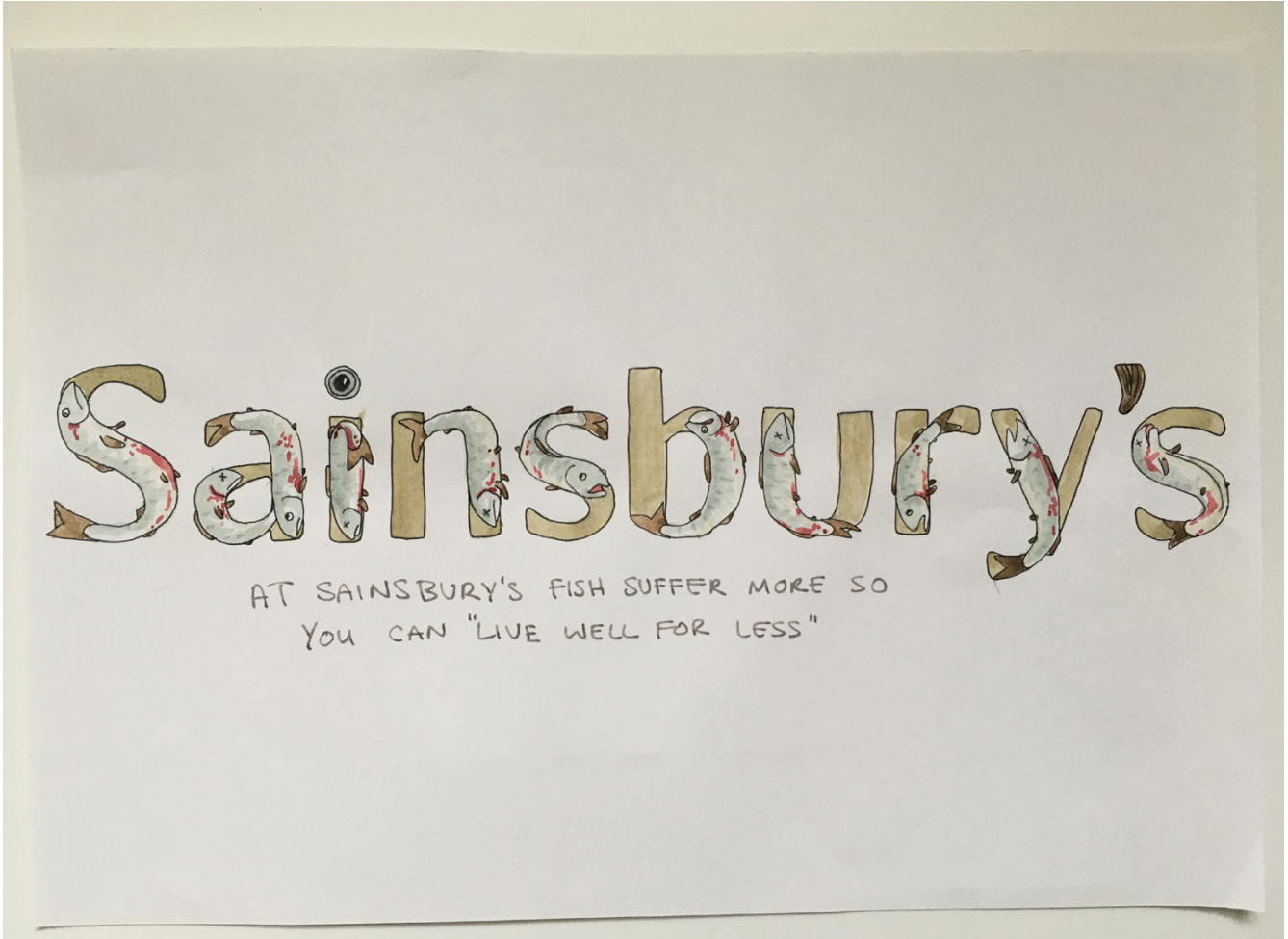
ENGAGING THEM FURTHER

Reinforce how big the fish farming industry is. For this audience, it may be worth focusing on the fishes as individuals - unlike other audiences, they are actively thinking about animal sentience and therefore are open to this kind of anti-speciesist messaging. Provide damning, incontrovertible evidence of cruelty.

ALIGNING THEM WITH YOUR AIM

Alert them to cruelty taking place on the corporation's watch. Recruit them to wake others up to poor welfare.

'ANTI-CORPORATE VEGANS'



In this poster, which was particularly motivating to anti-corporate vegans, Sainsbury's is used as an example campaign focus. It uses the supermarket branding alongside gruesome fish imagery, with a play on their slogan. This gave the group a target to direct anger towards and the modified slogan sparked anger at the brand's theoretical hypocrisy.

"I shopped at Sainsbury's because it was the only place you can buy wild salmon [when I used to eat fish]. If this [the fact all of Sainsbury's own brand salmon is farmed] is true, then I'm furious.

STAGE 1: Focus group research

ENGAGING ‘UNCRITICAL EATERS’

The final of our three audiences are known as ‘uncritical eaters’ and these present the most challenges when it comes to communicating with them on farmed fish welfare issues - or any animal welfare issue at all, for that fact. The uncritical eater consumes meat and fish and, perhaps most importantly, is actively trying to avoid information that would make them change their diet. It is worth noting that this group includes self-professed animal lovers but their attention is focused on the welfare of companion or ‘cute and cuddly’ animals. They express their support for organisations like the RSPCA and Brooke Donkey Sanctuary.

The uncritical eater is highly adept at avoiding inconvenient information. They have made peace with the cruelty involved with meat production - as long as it’s not shoved in their face. They know that it happens but suggest it is an inevitable fact of life and they prefer to keep it out of sight and out of mind. They are not interested in having their thoughts changed on this matter and are fairly hostile towards being challenged. It is unsurprising then that with regard to fish welfare, the uncritical eater sees it as a non-issue.

However, human-centric reasons can be used to encourage them to take action for fishes. Using food quality issues and thereby invoking a disgust response in them and ‘turning their stomachs’ provides an opportunity to encourage them to take action. Focusing on the poor quality of farmed fish once it reaches supermarket shelves is a way to potentially engage this group. Any arguments used to do this should be robust as this group, masters at avoiding inconvenient truths, need to be left with no wiggle room or way to challenge the facts.

For this group, higher welfare will be a fortunate byproduct of the main issue: higher food standards.

KEY TO ENGAGE

Connect fish welfare with food quality in a way they can’t ignore.

GRABBING THEIR ATTENTION

Hit them in the stomach. Make them see the fish that they and their loved ones are eating is disgusting and, ideally, unhealthy. Do this in a way that cannot be ignored or avoided.

ALIGNING THEM WITH YOUR AIM

Don’t focus on improvements in welfare - focus on improvements in quality. Publicise the link between low cost farming methods and cheap quality food.

ENGAGING THEM FURTHER

Ensure they realise that they are being affected and that this is representative of the real situation and truthful. Suggest that they’ve been sold a falsehood - the fish they buy is not what they see on the packaging.

TURN-OFFS

Much like the conscious eater, the uncritical eater dislikes attacks on specific brands. They also approach farmed animal advocacy organisations with scepticism and interpret them to be agenda-driven, thus increasing the need for any arguments to be water-tight.

'UNCRITICAL EATERS'



This poster resonated with the uncritical eaters. It shows a fish served on a plate but covered with lice, lesions and appearing generally unappetizing. This disgusted people and upset them

as they felt deceived. It was successful in getting the uncritical eaters to reevaluate whether fish really was the healthy treat they thought it was.

OVERARCHING GUIDELINES

POTENTIAL OF MESSAGING AVENUES

As referred to in the previous sections relating to our three audiences, there were **three messages which performed particularly well with specific audiences.**

These were:

- Informing people that **the farmed fish they are eating (particularly salmon) has key issues that they would likely find disgusting**, evoking a stomach-churning response. This angle performs well across the board, resonating with all audiences.
- **Farmed fishes are treated as, or more, cruelly than we treat other farmed, sentient animals.** This angle motivated the 'conscious eater' audience.
- **A well-loved supermarket is causing avoidable cruelty and deceiving its customers.** This angle was a success with the 'anti-corporate vegan' audience.



There were several territories identified by the research which seemed to have less obvious potential. These were:

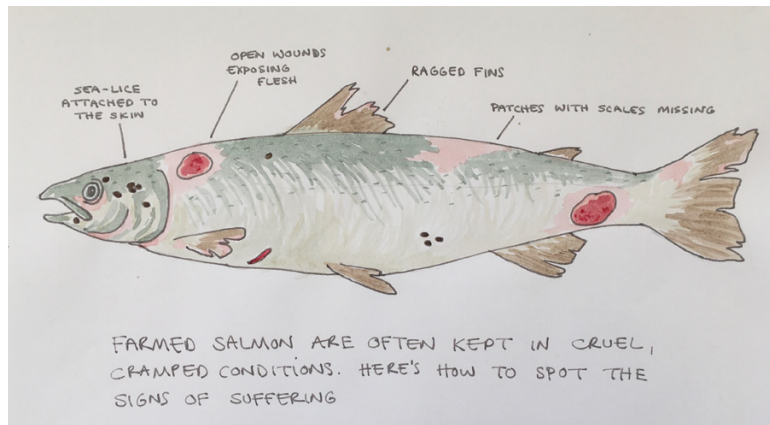
- Fish farming is depleting the ocean of wild fishes. This message attempted to demonstrate that rather than being a more sustainable alternative to wild-caught fish, aquaculture is a contributor to ocean depopulation (harvesting fishes for FMFO). This was too complex for our audience who did not know much about fishes or fish farming. The very fact that some fishes are carnivorous and would eat other fishes was confusing and surprising to people. This is not a clear and direct case to make easily as it requires too many steps of logic.
- Fish farming is an indirect killer of seals, dolphins and other marine species. Although this may seem like a message which would appeal to 'animal lovers', the issue of bycatch is associated solely with wild fishing and again, appeared too complex or indirect to effectively communicate.
- Fish farming is polluting Britain's seas and lakes. Environmental issues seemed to be depressing to our participants and felt intractable. It also relies on the knowledge that fish farming happens out in the open (salmon in sea cages) which is not information that our audience already has.
- Fish farming makes a future pandemic more likely/contributes to antibiotic resistant superbugs. This argument, while also feeling depressing/intractable, reportedly came across as tendentious and animal groups may seem opportunistic latching onto this argument in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

STAGE 1: Focus group research

OVERARCHING GUIDELINES

IMAGERY

The most effective images used in the research were those that are both shocking and subversive: those that made participants see fishes, or fish farming, anew. Visuals that provoked surprise and anger or revulsion were particularly motivating.



This image provoked revulsion among participants as the thought of buying a diseased or damaged fish unsettled them.



This image, which particularly motivated the 'conscious eater' audience, successfully challenged people's biases and distinction between land animals and fishes.



This image was also received quite well by participants as it made them question their assumptions that the salmon they eat comes from an idyllic Scottish loch. It also served as a reminder that much of the salmon meat they consume is farmed whereas many participants had assumed the salmon were wild-caught.

Images that performed worse were either those that were more benign and did not induce a shock or disgust factor in the participants, or those that attempted to convey a message which is complex and can be confusing. See page 5 for a link to all the images used.

OVERARCHING GUIDELINES

ACCOMPANYING MESSAGING

We also gained some insight into what makes effective written messaging.

- 1 Be simple and incontrovertible - avoid hyperbole and do not use weasel words (may, could, contribute etc.) which give people an avenue to ignore or disregard your message.**

"Yes, I suppose this is quite shocking, provided this is all really true."

- 2 If you're explaining, you're losing - don't invite more questions than you answer.**

"Feeding fish to fish sounds unnatural - why do they do it?"

- 3 Beware of big figures - big numbers quickly become meaningless to people. It may seem like it highlights the gravity of the issue but humans have a lack of ability to comprehend them.**

"Is 2 billion a lot? It sounds like a lot but it's hard to know."

- 4 Other topics can steal the show - linking fish farming to big issues feels like a stretch. It can also remind people of other more glamorous/ relevant/interesting issues (climate change, pollution, pandemics).**

"It made me think all the other things we do to the sea, the plastics we throw in the ocean and all the horrible things we do to the planet."

STAGE 2: How do we motivate people to take action?

AIMS, METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

To expand upon our first phase of research, we wanted to explore whether certain variations in the messaging that we selected would impact how successful they were in motivating people to take action. THL UK took the three key messaging opportunities identified by the focus group research - evoking a disgust reaction, challenging biases and focusing on corporations hiding the truth about fish farming - and developed two variations within each of these categories.

In February 2021, we worked with think tank Rethink Priorities to conduct a survey on 8033 UK participants recruited from Prolific.co. All participants were first asked for demographic information and about their dietary preferences. Participants were also randomised to either receive or not receive three additional questions designed to identify the extent to which individuals endorsed anti-corporate attitudes, and were 'uncritical' or 'conscious' food consumers, based on the

audiences developed during the focus groups in Stage 1. This was done to ascertain whether we could replicate the three audiences from the first phase of the research and learn more about them. However, these were randomly assigned to only half of respondents due to a concern that the measures themselves might influence participants' responses.

Participants were then randomly shown one of eight short fish welfare statements (or a control message) and asked how likely they would be to take various fish campaign actions after reading them.



STAGE 2: How do we motivate people to take action?

THE STATEMENTS WERE:

COMPARING THE TREATMENT OF FARMED FISHES TO OTHER FARMED ANIMALS

'Compare Enrich'

Fish are intelligent creatures - they've been known to complete obstacle courses and learn games. However, farmed fish live their lives in barren sea cages with nothing to occupy them. Many farmed animals are entitled to basic enrichment to carry out their inquisitive behaviours but this is not the case for fish.

'Compare Death'

Fish suffer from the highest mortality rates of any farmed animal, with over ten million farmed Scottish salmon dying prematurely in 2019. The live fish are left to swim around the dead. You wouldn't expect to see a field of cows stepping over dead carcasses, so why accept this for fish?

A CORPORATION IS HIDING TRUTHS ABOUT FISH WELFARE

'Sainsbury's 1'

Sainsbury's doesn't need to sell fish that has come from intensive factory farms causing pain and suffering, but they choose profit over animal welfare. This is where your money goes. Sainsbury's are deceiving their customers by masking this truth.

'Sainsbury's 2'

Sainsbury's call their farmed salmon 'responsibly sourced' but in reality the salmon sold on their shelves are raised in inhumane and unsanitary conditions. Sainsbury's are deceiving their customers by masking this truth.

EVOKING A DISGUST RESPONSE

'Disgust 1'

Intensive fish farms are so overcrowded that often the water is filled with floating faeces and other bacteria which is ingested by fish and leads to disease outbreaks. Still think fish is a healthy treat?

'Disgust 2'

Investigations have found conditions on fish farms can result in salmon becoming deformed, with missing eyes, enlarged spleens and bloody lesions across their skin. Still think fish is a healthy treat?

CONTROL

Animals are raised in large numbers in terrible conditions, cruelly treated throughout their lives and slaughtered painfully in order to provide meat and other animal products. In addition, animal farming is bad for the environment, through pollution and promoting climate change.

Respondents were then asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with the statement they had just read, and how likely they would be to take five different actions after reading the statement.⁷ These calls to action were:

- Sign a petition asking the Government to improve farmed fish welfare
- Stop eating farmed fish
- Write to your MP to ask them to use their influence to improve farmed fish welfare
- Boycott a brand selling farmed fish
- Donate to a charity working to end the abuse of fish

⁷Agreement and likelihood of taking action were rated separately on a scale of 1 (certain not to do this/strongly disagree) - 7 (certain to do this/strongly agree).

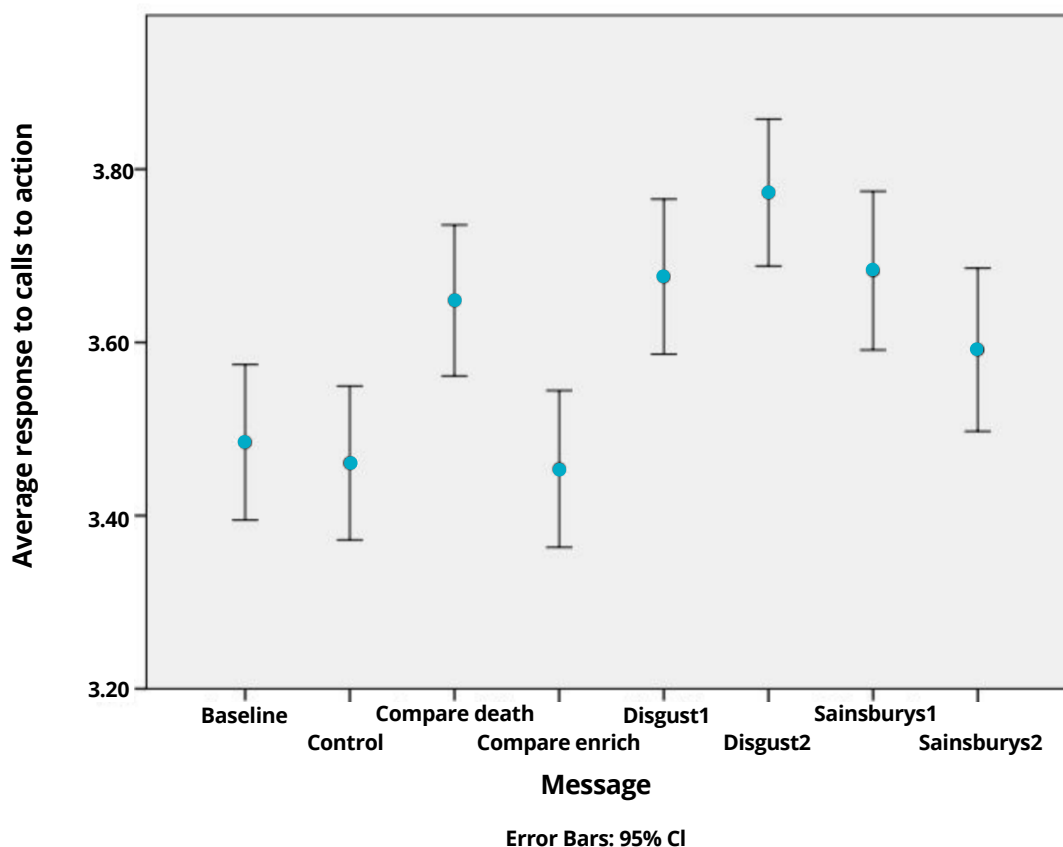
STAGE 2: How do we motivate people to take action?

RESULTS

EFFECT OF MESSAGES ON CALLS TO ACTION

There were substantial differences between peoples' reactions to the different calls to action. **Participants reported that they were most likely to sign a petition for the improvement of farmed fish welfare**, with a majority stating that they were likely to do this. Participants were more mixed in their responses towards stopping eating farmed fish or boycotting a brand selling farmed fish. Very few respondents reported being likely to donate to a charity working to end the abuse of fishes or to write to their MP.

In line with the findings from the first research phase, it was one of the **'disgust' messages that most encouraged people to consider taking action**. There is evidence based on the pattern of results that 'Disgust 2', which mentions deformities in farmed salmon, was the best performing message overall.⁸



The above graph shows how different messages influenced participants' likelihood to take action overall (based on the mean response to the various calls to action). Several messages are significantly higher than the control and baseline messages with 'Disgust 2' having the greatest likelihood for people to take action.

Most of the messages outperformed the 'control' message and baseline (no message) consistently across measures, indicating that being predisposed to information about fish welfare does to some extent positively influence people to take action. This is with the exception of 'Compare Enrich' which describes fishes' cognitive ability and the lack of stimulation in intensive systems. This message consistently performed lower than the other non-control messages and, for some measures, even worse than the control messages.

⁸The statistical significance of the difference in performance between 'Disgust 2' and the other messages varies across calls to action. However, there is good evidence to speculate that 'Disgust 2' would be the most effective message.

STAGE 2: How do we motivate people to take action?

RESULTS

EFFECT OF MESSAGES ON AGREEMENT

We found that there were significant differences between people's level of agreement with the different messages that were presented to them.

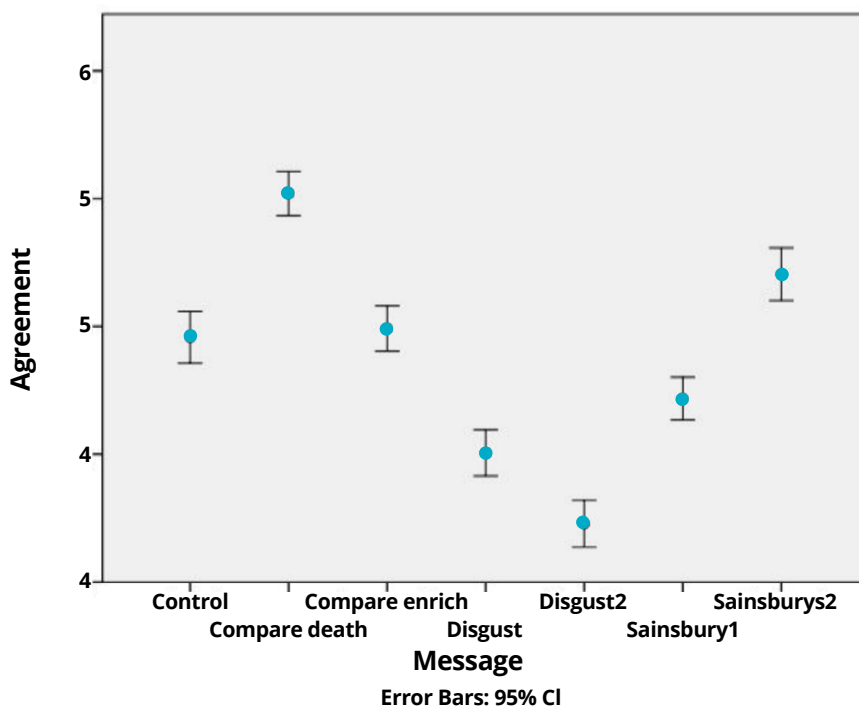
Due to confusion regarding the inclusion of a rhetorical question within the two 'Disgust' messages, many respondents emailed to ask whether they were supposed to be expressing agreement with the question or the content of the statement. As this is believed to have had an adverse effect on the results, we have excluded them in our analysis in this section as they are likely to be unreliable.

In terms of the remaining messages, **'Compare Death' received the highest level of agreement, which touched on high mortality rates in fish farming.** It is difficult to say whether this high level of agreement stems from a belief that mortality rates are very high, or whether people are agreeing that we shouldn't accept such high death rates as we wouldn't

accept it for other animals (like cows, referenced in the message). However, we can still speculate that claims regarding **mortality may be least controversial and more likely to be accepted.**

The next most agreed with statement was 'Sainsburys 2', which highlights the hypocrisy of labelling factory-farmed salmon as 'sustainably sourced.'

'Sainsbury's 1' performed the worst in terms of agreement, indicating that people agreed least with the idea that supermarkets don't need to sell farmed fish, and that they are choosing profit over welfare.



The above graph shows how, on average, participants rated their agreement with the messages they were presented with. The messaging of 'Compare Death' places highest and 'Sainsbury's 1' performs worst (when discounting the Disgust messages for the reasons stated above).



STAGE 2: How do we motivate people to take action?

RESULTS

DIFFERENCES BASED ON PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES

As previously mentioned, half of our respondents were randomly assigned to receive questions about their attitudes in an attempt to roughly replicate the audiences identified in our first phase of research (uncritical eaters, conscious eaters and anti-corporate vegans). We could not replicate these audiences precisely but the questions gave us some indication of which participants might hold similar attitudes to the defined groups. These questions were in the form of statements with which the respondents could rate their agreement/disagreement.

"As a rule, I don't trust big corporations."

Agreement with this statement was positively correlated with an expressed willingness to take action across the board. This implies that the more distrust people have in corporations, the more likely they are to take campaign actions for fishes, although this correlation was only weak.

"The most important thing about food is that it tastes good."

Agreement with this statement was negatively correlated with an expressed willingness to take action. This implies that those who prioritise the taste of food above other concerns (such as sustainability or ethics) are less likely to take campaign actions for fishes. Although again this was supported by only a weak correlation, it does reiterate the findings from the first phase of our research that showed 'uncritical eaters' were particularly difficult to engage.

"I care a lot about whether the food I buy comes from sustainable sources."

Agreement with this statement was positively correlated with the calls to action. This could imply that participants who care about the sustainability of their food would be more likely to take campaign actions. This correlation was slightly stronger than that of the other two questions.

As well as being a poor performer throughout the results of the survey, it's interesting that 'Compare Enrich' performed significantly worse with those who agreed that the taste of food is the most important thing. This gives us the impression that 'uncritical eater' types are particularly unmotivated by messaging around fish intelligence and a need for stimulation.

STAGE 2: How do we motivate people to take action?

RESULTS

DIFFERENCES BASED ON REWEIGHTING OUR SAMPLE TO REPRESENT THE UK POPULATION

The sample was reweighted to be representative of the UK general population due to the disproportionate numbers of young, female, liberal respondents, as these groups tend to be more supportive of the calls to action. This slightly reduced people's reported likelihood to take action.

The differences between messages were also examined in the reweighted sample. In the reweighted sample, Disgust 2 was still the best performing message on average. However, 'Compare Enrich' performed substantially worse (worse than baseline), as did 'Compare Death' (performing similar to baseline).

You can view the full results of [the survey here](#).



CONCLUSION

The message that proved most effective at engaging the audiences we tested was talking about disease, deformity and provoking a disgust response from the audience member.

We can speculate that this may be because not all of our audiences are primed to extend their circle of compassion to include animals raised for food.

The best performing messages had the most explicit, vivid images (e.g. bloody lesions, missing eyes, floating faeces etc.). This could equally be interpreted as a concern for welfare as for human health, however feedback from focus group attendees did demonstrate that the images had disgusted participants for reasons associated with human health and food quality concerns. Therefore, even though some groups may be more motivated by welfare messaging, it is likely that messages with a focus on human-centric issues such as health and food quality may resonate the most with a wider audience.

Even those who don't eat fish and therefore would not be directly affected by poor quality were still motivated as it provided something for them to use to shock fish-eaters and reaffirm their choices. The results of the survey also indicate that 'disgust' topics that address health issues of the fish which may more obviously impact food quality (such as lesions or sea lice) are more agitating than messages which cover disgusting facts pertaining to the environment the fish lives in (e.g. dirty water and overcrowding). This is because 'Disgust 2', which talks about gross deformities of salmon, performed better across the survey than 'Disgust 1,' which aimed to disgust with facts about bacteria and faeces in the water of fish farms.

Messaging around a lack of enrichment for fishes does not encourage people (in general) to care, or take action.

The statement which covered fishes' intelligence and complexity, combined with the fact that fish farms often have no enrichment to occupy them, performed badly. This is in line with feedback from KSBR from the focus groups that images showing overstocking or barren cages did not provoke the intended reaction. We can speculate that this may be because people are desensitised to such images of fish: for example, it is common for people to have fish as companion animals and to keep them in near-empty tanks and people see imagery of fishes shoaling on television and may think as a result that fish prefer to be closely confined.

People are not likely to donate to a charity advocating for farmed fish welfare.

It does not come as a surprise that the animal protection movement has its work cut out if we want to encourage the general population to care enough about fishes that they will donate to help their plight. This means that, in the early days, raising funds for fish welfare is likely to fall heavily on the Effective Altruism community which recognises the scale and severity of the issue.

CONCLUSION

Audience-specific learnings

The focus group study indicates that different messages resonated with different unique audiences, which implies that if we want people to take action for farmed fishes, we should be aiming to motivate them in different ways. However, the survey did not show significant differences between which messages inspired specific audiences. We could conclude that certain topics are more likely to get people agitated about the issue of fish farming but that they are not enough to inspire a change in behaviour (i.e. to spur people on to take campaign actions). However, it is more likely that further research, in a real-world setting, is needed to reach firm conclusions on this.

A finding of particular interest to us was that targeting specific brands had the potential to ‘turn off’ conscious eaters. The focus group study concluded that conscious eaters are less motivated by brand-specific campaigns as they see the issues as endemic and that targeting individual companies was therefore unfair. It may be that this audience would be more motivated to take action in a multi-target campaign, or one that focuses on an entire industry or sector. This is a highly relevant finding for us to acknowledge as organisations that conduct corporate campaigns and so further research to explore this would be valuable.

There are of course limitations to these studies. Firstly, both samples were of UK participants and therefore we are unable to safely assume that the findings apply outside of a UK context. In terms of the focus group research specifically, any findings are relevant only to the three audiences that were tested and therefore can’t be taken as representative of the entire UK population. Finally, these findings can only indicate how people may react in a real-life setting and although examples of similar studies have proven to be representative of people’s true behaviours, we cannot say this with certainty. Further research in other regions with different samples and in real-life settings (for example, A/B social media testing) would be useful to further our understanding of this topic.

Lastly, we have made many generalisations throughout this report about our audiences but we must acknowledge that individuals are unique and do not fit perfectly into categories or expected behaviours, and therefore we advise that organisations take this guidance with that in mind.

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