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Data Article

Sustainability indicators for salmon aquaculture

Vilde Steiro Amundsen^{a,b,*}, Tonje Cecilie Osmundsen^b

^a Department of Sociology and Political Science, Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences, NTNU
- Norwegian University of Science and Technology/Studio Apertura, NTNU Social Research, Dragvoll allé 38 B,
7049 Trondheim, Norway

^b Studio Apertura, NTNU Social Research, Dragvoll allé 38 B, 7049 Trondheim, Norway

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we present and describe data comprising indicators of sustainability, collected from eight of the major certification schemes for salmon aquaculture and categorized according to the topics covered by each. These indicators cover most aspects of aquaculture production, including biotic and abiotic effects, feed, emission and waste, fish health and welfare, social assurance, and respect for native culture. In addition to being published in its entirety as supplementary material alongside this article, the data is available through a searchable database on the SustainFish project site: <https://sustainfish.wixsite.com/sustainfishproject/search-indicator-database>.

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Specifications table

Subject area	<i>Political science, anthropology, marine social science, economics, marine biology</i>
More specific subject area	<i>Sustainability, salmon aquaculture</i>
Type of data	<i>Table, figure</i>

* Corresponding author at: Department of Sociology and Political Science, Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences, NTNU - Norwegian University of Science and Technology/Studio Apertura, NTNU Social Research, Dragvoll allé 38 B, 7049 Trondheim, Norway.

E-mail addresses: vilde.amundsen@samfunn.ntnu.no (V.S. Amundsen),
tonje.osmundsen@samfunn.ntnu.no (T.C. Osmundsen).

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How data was acquired	<i>The data was obtained and categorized from certification scheme standards for (salmon) aquaculture</i>
Data format	<i>Raw and partially analyzed</i>
Experimental factors	<i>None</i>
Experimental features	<i>Qualitative data analysis</i>
Data source location	<i>Not Applicable</i>
Data accessibility	<i>Data is presented in this article and it is freely and publicly available for any academic, educational, and research purposes. Searchable database available at https://sustainfish.wixsite.com/sustainfishproject/search-indicator-database</i>

Value of the data

- The data gives an orderly overview of indicators used by certification schemes to regulate the salmon aquaculture industry.
 - The data is comparable to former and future sets of indicators, allowing insight into the evolution of focus areas in the regulation of aquaculture.
 - The data serves as a foundation for researchers in developing new indicators.
 - The data provides policy-makers and industry actors with an extensive and easily searchable collection of indicators applicable for improved regulation of the aquaculture industry.
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1. Data

The indicators collected in this dataset are obtained from eight of the major certification schemes and their standards pertaining to salmon aquaculture (see Table 1). The aquaculture industry, with its incredible growth and countless challenges [1–4], has seen a substantial increase in private regulatory agents such as these certification schemes. The recent surge of this type of schemes can be attributed to numerous motivations, such as the need for global standardization and product traceability [5], risk management for aquaculture companies countering negative publicity [6], and as a response to inadequate regulation from public authorities [5,7]. While they are in theory voluntary, certification schemes are becoming increasingly important to obtain access to certain markets, thus becoming a defining element of aquaculture regulation.

Often initiated by NGOs or retailers, certification schemes create standards and indicators of which companies need to comply to obtain the scheme's certification. We apply an understanding of standards and indicators which corresponds with that of the certification schemes. Hence, standards are understood as documented agreements with specific criteria that must be met in order to become certified. These standards can pertain to a specific species, a specific issue (e.g. fish health or food safety) or aquaculture in general. The criteria that make up the standards come in the form of indicators, each with corresponding requirements and guidelines for how to achieve compliance. These indicators must be measurable, transferable and comparable, allowing the same standard to be applied to a variety of local contexts.

An indicator is a measurement that can give an indication of something that is too difficult to measure in itself, such as sustainability. It is therefore not a neutral, nor a complete, representation of reality. The choice of which indicators to include in a standard, therefore, plays an important role in setting the agenda for the aquaculture industry, as it prescribes what issues are deemed important enough to address. By deciding what to count, these certification schemes are deciding what counts [8]. These choices are reflected in the data.

An important addition in this dataset is the categorization of each indicator according to topic. The list of topics was created through an iterative process between the coding of certification scheme standards and workshops with the SustainFish project's multidisciplinary members. This list provides a comprehensive overview of issues pertaining to sustainability of the salmon aquaculture industry,

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