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October 8, 2021

The Honorable David Y. Ige
Governor, State of Hawai'i
Executive Chambers
State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii

Dear Governor Ige,

Compassion in World Farming is concerned about the potential development and expansion of octopus farming in the United States, particularly the State of Hawai'i's support for Kanaloa Octopus Farm on Hawai'i Island. These animals are fundamentally unsuited to farming, and there are serious animal welfare and sustainability problems associated.

The Kanaloa Octopus Farm, located at the Hawai'i Ocean Science and Technology (HOST) Park, is currently the only active octopus farm in the United States. The facility works as both a cephalopod aquaculture research facility and a tourist attraction. Here, juvenile octopuses are collected from the ocean and fattened in tanks. Research on the environment and feeding requirements of the larval phase is also being studied to develop octopus farming at the commercial level.

Compassion recently launched a report, [Octopus Factory Farming – a recipe for disaster](#). The scientific evidence we reviewed shows that octopus farming is an unsustainable practice, and octopuses are likely to suffer in farming conditions.

Octopus farming is unsustainable

Octopuses are carnivorous, and therefore farming these animals requires that other marine animals are fed to them. This is wasteful and unsustainable, as it requires catching vast amounts of fish and shellfish to feed them. This is food that people could otherwise eat directly and puts further pressure on the planet's already threatened marine stocks.

Octopus farming does not meet animal welfare requirements

Octopuses are sentient animals, and so their welfare must be protected. However, octopus farming is an attempt to farm wild animals who have never been farmed before. It is therefore likely that their welfare needs will not be properly met on farms, and they will suffer as a result.

Videos of the Kanaloa Octopus Farm uploaded to YouTube show octopuses instantly changing color in an attempt to camouflage themselves from tourists who are being encouraged to touch, feed and play with the animals. These anti-predatory strategies demonstrate how complex and unique these animals are.

Octopuses are known for their extraordinary intelligence, and as a result of their natural inquisitiveness and tendency to explore, manipulate and control their environment, they would be deprived from essential natural sensory stimulation in captivity.

Octopuses are typically solitary animals, making them unsuited to farming, which is done intensively in large groups at very high densities. This creates the risk of aggression and territorialism that can lead to cannibalism.

Octopuses do not have internal or external skeletons to protect them, and their skin is fragile and easily damaged. Octopuses are likely to be injured in a farm environment, either through physical contact by a handler or aggressive interactions with other octopuses.

Their fast jet-propelled locomotion means that if they are confined in small spaces, they can easily be injured by crashing into tank walls or cages.

Octopuses belong to a group of animals called “cephalopods,” whose sentience has been recognized by the scientific community, The Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness and EU law with the inclusion of cephalopods in Directive 2010/63/EU on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes. In the United States, the two main pieces of federal legislation, the Animal Welfare Act and Humane Methods of Slaughter Act, do not apply to cephalopods. Cephalopods are currently not even considered “animals” by the US federal government when it comes to their treatment in research. Therefore, there is currently no American legislation that would protect octopuses if they were produced commercially for human consumption;

Even more concerning is the fact that there is currently no scientifically validated method for the humane slaughter of octopuses. While slaughter methods are currently being studied, none have been scientifically approved as humane. Therefore, it is not currently possible to kill them while avoiding severe pain and suffering.

Recommendations

Based on the critical concerns raised above, we strongly recommend octopus aquaculture or ranching is not further developed in the United States or elsewhere. We believe that octopus production has major negative welfare and sustainability consequences, leading to a negative image of American aquaculture.

Therefore, we request stopping any further investment in Kanaloa Octopus Farm and the future development of octopus farming in Hawai'i, and we would welcome a state-wide ban on farmed octopus.

If a ban is not forthcoming, we would ask for a moratorium on octopus farming until welfare requirements are addressed, and appropriate animal welfare legislation is established.

We would be happy to provide any further information if needed, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue further.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Williamson', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ben Williamson

Executive Director, Compassion in World Farming US

Cc:

Mike McCartney, Director, State of Hawai'i, Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism

The Office of Congressman Kaiali'i Kahele

The Office of Congressman Ed Case