

THE AUSTRALIAN

Farmed salmon health claims 'a big fat lie' as lab tests prompt investigation call

EXCLUSIVEBy **MATTHEW DENHOLM**, TASMANIA CORRESPONDENT6:49PM DECEMBER 14, 2021 •  27 COMMENTS

New data suggests some farmed salmon has dramatically higher total fat and “bad” fat content than publicly stated, prompting expert calls for investigation into its healthy food status.

An analysis of shop-purchased farmed salmon found far higher total, saturated and trans fats in some Tasmanian salmon companies' fish, compared with industry-published figures.

The tests were funded by a Melbourne businessman concerned about the salmon industry but conducted by an accredited, independent laboratory, Eurofins, in Victoria.

Testing two fillets from each of the three salmon producers, purchased several weeks apart, the lab analysis showed total fat of 21.2 per cent and 28.5 per cent in Tassal salmon, compared with the 16.1 per cent the company cites.

Huon Aquaculture's fillets contained 24.2 per cent and 23.7 per cent total fat, while Petuna's recorded 16.3 per cent and 19.8 per cent.

Tassal's samples recorded saturated fats of 4.04 per cent and 5.68 per cent, compared with the 3.1 per cent on its website, and 0.39 per cent trans fats, compared with 0.1 per cent stated.

University of Sydney professor of nutrition and cardio-metabolic health Michael Skilton said the data was troubling and justified further larger-scale tests. “Of concern to me is the increase in overall fat within these samples, compared to historic samples,” he said.

“There is increased ... calories per serving. That can increase your risk of obesity.

“Even more of a concern for me is that changing of the fatty acid profile of the salmon: a higher proportion of the fats as saturated fats, a lower proportion relatively speaking as the long chain omega-3 fats, and a not insignificant amount of trans fats.

“Saturated fats are a strong predictor of higher blood cholesterol levels, especially bad cholesterol levels, which is a strong risk factor for heart disease.”

Professor Skilton said the jury was out on whether farmed salmon, overall, remained a healthy food. “Whether those particular changes outweigh the benefit you would be receiving from the long chain omega-3s in the fish is a bit of an unknown.”

Tassal dietitian Susie Burrell said the results were “unsurprising” and farmed salmon remained a “superfood”. “Any animal-based food, including meat, chicken, eggs and fish, would contain a mixture of all three types of fat,” she said.

“Animal-based foods ... all contain small amounts of trans fats naturally. This is expected, and does not act the same way as trans fats from processed foods.”

The Tasmanian Salmonid Growers Association said “consumer-focused spot testing” was not a comprehensive scientific study. “We expect an acceptable level of variation in results due to size of fish and seasonal diets,” a spokeswoman said. “The ingredients in salmon feed, like all stock feed in Australia, are rigorously controlled and audited, and publicly available.”

Environment Tasmania said the results were “shocking” and justified further investigation by Food Standards Australia and New Zealand. “The constitution of farmed salmon flesh has changed over the years because they’ve been using more and more unnatural feed ingredients – largely poultry fat,” said ET’s Jilly Middleton.

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Matthew Denholm is a multi-award winning journalist with more than 30 years’ experience. He has been a senior writer and Tasmania correspondent for The Australian since 2004, and has previously worked for newsp... [Read more](#)

