

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St., NE
Salem, Oregon

February 3, 2025

RE: Support for HB 2557 – Prohibiting Octopus Farming in Oregon

Dear Members of the Committee,

I write today in strong support of HB 2557, which would prohibit raising or selling octopuses for human consumption in Oregon. I am a Visiting Assistant Professor at the Center for Animal Law Studies at Lewis & Clark Law School. I also hold an LLM in Animal Law from Lewis & Clark Law School.

The views expressed in this letter are my own and do not represent the official position of the Center for Animal Law Studies or Lewis & Clark Law School.

Octopuses are sentient animals with unique cognitive and behavioral traits that make them entirely unsuitable for intensive farming. A London School of Economics Report, reviewing over 300 scientific publications, found very strong evidence of sentience in cephalopod molluscs, including octopuses.¹ As a result, cephalopod molluscs were explicitly included in the definition of ‘animal’ and recognized as sentient beings in the UK Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022.

In terms of their unique characteristics, octopuses are naturally solitary animals. In confined, high-density farming environments, they are likely to exhibit aggression, stress, and cannibalism. Additionally, octopuses have demonstrated problem-solving skills, tool use, and the ability to navigate mazes, indicating their high intelligence. Farming conditions of intense confinement and inadequate enrichment would severely restrict their ability to express natural behaviors, and could lead to immense psychological suffering for these animals. Lastly, there is no widely accepted humane method for slaughtering octopuses. Proposed methods, such as death by ice slurry immersion or head spiking, are cruel and likely to cause immense suffering.²

Beyond welfare concerns, octopus farming also poses significant environmental threats. Octopuses are highly sensitive and prone to diseases. Given the limited scientific understanding of their immune systems, farmed individuals escaping into the wild could introduce novel pathogens and

¹ Jonathan Birch et al., *Review of the Evidence of Sentience in Cephalopod Molluscs and Decapod Crustaceans*, LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE (Nov. 2021) available at <https://www.lse.ac.uk/business/consulting/reports/review-of-the-evidence-of-sentiences-in-cephalopod-molluscs-and-decapod-crustaceans>.

² Why Cephalopod Farming Must be Rejected Before it Starts, AQUATIC LIFE INSTITUTE (Feb. 2023), available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/13CKkJJzmGA7bN8DtK9Nc_sF4XbBPMYs5/view

parasites, threatening Oregon's native marine ecosystems. Additionally, octopuses are carnivorous, and will require large amounts of fish for sustenance. Farming them could worsen the decline of already overexploited fish populations, creating further strain on marine biodiversity. Lastly, industrial octopus farming could produce nitrogen- and phosphorus-rich waste, exacerbating harmful algal blooms and polluting Oregon's waters.³

States across the U.S. are recognizing the risks associated with octopus farming and taking legislative action. In 2024, both Washington and California banned octopus farming, with California also prohibiting business owners and operators from transporting farmed octopus. Like Oregon, Hawaii is currently considering a similar prohibition.

Oregon is renowned for its strong environmental protection policies and animal welfare standards. By prohibiting octopus farming now, we can safeguard our environment, protect public health, and reaffirm our values as a state committed to humane and sustainable practices.

For all these reasons, I urge the committee to vote Yes on HB 2557. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hira Jaleel', written over a horizontal line.

Hira Jaleel
Visiting Assistant Professor
Center for Animal Law Studies
Lewis & Clark Law School

³ Jennifer A. Jacquet et al., *The Case Against Octopus Farming*, ISSUES IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (Mar. 23, 2021), available at <https://issues.org/the-case-against-octopus-farming/#:~:text=But%20octopuses%20are%20atypical%20invertebrates,perspective%20of%20humane%20food%20p,roduction>.