

To:

Mr. Luis Planas Puchades
Mrs. Diana Morant
Mrs. María Jesús Montero Cuadrado

In copy:

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón

October 8, 2024

Dear Mr. Luis Planas, Mrs. Diana Morant, and Mrs. María Jesús Montero Cuadrado:

We, the groups, scientists and organisations signing this letter, are writing to express our deepest concern regarding the significant amount of public funds that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Ministry of Finance and Public Service, and the Ministry of Science and Innovation has invested and continues to invest in the development of octopus farming in Spain.

Recently, Compassion in World Farming conducted a [global investigation into government funding](#) of industrial octopus farming around the world. The results show that Spain has spent the most public funds on the development of intensive octopus farming, investing at least **€9.7 million** of taxpayers' money in this cruel and unsustainable practice. Moreover, Spain is close to becoming the first country to open the world's first commercial octopus farm in the Canary Islands—another worrying initiative that the Government still has time to prevent from becoming a reality.

In recent years, there has been growing opposition to the development of octopus farming from scientists, animal protection NGOs, environmental organisations, and society at large. Additionally, several Members of the European Parliament have expressed their opposition to octopus farming, bringing the issue to the European Parliament and the European Commission. The United States has pioneered legislative action on this issue; in March 2024, Washington became the first state to legally ban octopus farming. California followed suit, including in its law a ban on the import of farmed octopus. Furthermore, the OCTOPUS Act 2024, if successful, will prohibit commercial octopus farming and the import of farmed octopus throughout the United States.

There is strong scientific evidence to support concerns that introducing these animals into intensive production systems would not only be cruel but would also cause environmental damage. Compassion in World Farming published a report in 2021 called [“Octopus Factory Farming: A Recipe for Disaster”](#), which outlines the scientific evidence and is summarised below.

It has been scientifically proven that octopuses are solitary animals by nature (1); therefore, they will not adapt to the high-density conditions typical of intensive production systems. Octopuses are highly intelligent animals that will not be able to express their natural behaviours when confined in sterile tanks and controlled environments (2,3). Most importantly, there is currently no scientifically validated method for the humane slaughter of octopuses (4). The planned method for slaughtering these animals is to place them in tanks containing ice water (5). This is despite it being scientifically demonstrated that this method,

used for other aquatic animals like fish, without prior stunning, is inhumane (6), as it causes considerable pain, fear, suffering, and a highly prolonged death (7).

In light of the suffering involved in the farming and slaughter of octopuses, the Spanish Government's use of public funds to support the development of octopus farming is incompatible with Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. This requires the Member States, in formulating and implementing fisheries and agriculture policies, to 'pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals'. Octopus farming and the planned slaughter method pay no regard to the animals' welfare.

Octopus farming is also unsustainable. Octopuses are carnivorous animals so farming them requires feeding them with animal protein (8). Thus, octopus farming would necessitate capturing large quantities of fish or other marine organisms to feed the farmed octopuses, further aggravating ocean overfishing (9,10). Moreover, other environmental risks and impacts associated with octopus farms have been described, such as those that the proposed farm in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria may have including marine pollution, biodiversity loss, and public health risks (11).

A poll commissioned this year by Compassion in World Farming and Eurogroup for Animals showed that almost 8 out of 10 people polled in nine EU countries think that when public money is used to fund aquatic animals farming, the money should only support farms that are sustainable. In Spain, an overwhelming 83% of people agree (12). In light of such strong international public, scientific, and political opposition to industrial octopus farming, we urge you to reconsider your government's support for this practice. We call on you to commit to allocating no further funds for the development of octopus farming in Spain due to animal cruelty, environmental risks, and the negative impact it may have on Spain's international reputation. Your government should instead move investment away from factory farming, ban octopus farms, and move towards sustainable food systems that benefit animals, people and our planet.

We look forward to receiving your response and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this issue in more detail and to address any questions you may have.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elena', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Dra. Elena Lara

Senior Research and Policy Advisor, Compassion in World Farming

Signatories

Acción Océanos

Animal Interfaith Alliance

Animal Legal Defense Fund

Animal Rights Initiative

Animals Aotearoa

AnimaNaturalis

Animavida, asociación protectora de animales y medio ambiente

Animal Save Movement

Antropología de la Vida Animal - Grupo de Estudios de Etnozoología

Aquatic Life Institute

Better Food Foundation

BLOOM

Capital V

Catholic Concern for Animals

Compassion in World Farming

Conservation Collective

Deep Rising Movie

DEPANA

Ekō

Empatía

Essere Animali

Ethical Seafood Research

Eurogroup for Animals

FAADA (Fundación para el Asesoramiento y Acción en Defensa de los Animales)

Finnish Animal Rights Law Society

Fish Welfare Initiative

Fórum Nacional de Proteção e Defesa Animal

Generation Vegan (GenV)

Green Futures

Green REV Institute

Humane Action Pennsylvania

In Defense of Animals

Indian Vegetarians and Vegans

KYMA sea conservation & research

L214

La Fondation Droit Animal, Éthique et Sciences (LFDA)

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Voters For Animal Rights
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Sir David Madden. Vice-Chair of Compassion in World Farming. Honorary Antonian at St Antony's College, University of Oxford

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