

AI Waste Capture System awarded UK Seafood Innovation Funding

The team at Aqua Innovation are delighted to have received R&D funding from the latest round of SIF to support final design, build, deployment and testing of the WCS for both square and circular cages. The first commercial trial is to be in the water Spring 2020.

The contamination of the seabed directly below open net aquaculture cages is a major environmental concern currently for the Aquaculture Industry. Fish faeces, uneaten feed and residual chemicals from medicinal treatments leave large areas of virtual desert, devoid of any natural habitat. At the moment moving further offshore is viewed as the only way forward in order to increase production but this does not address the fundamental problem of contamination through the dispersal of the waste material. Instead, it merely compounds the risks to personnel and equipment through working in a challenging environment, where weather conditions curtail regular monitoring and prevent access to cages for routine inspection and maintenance.

The focus of our project is to design, build and install a method of capturing, recovering and treating the waste material from under open net cages, thereby preventing seabed contamination. We believe at Aqua Innovation that if we solve the basic problem of seabed contamination by capturing and recovering the waste material, not only can the industry remain inshore at currently licensed sites, but the biomass on these sites can be increased in line with market demand. These designs will feature additional advantages, not only increased biomass, but the potential to simplify the installation of predator nets, aeration systems and potentially some return on the treated waste. Therefore, what seems like a step change in established working methods will very quickly become standard practice.

