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Responsibility

# Orkney Islands hatchery engages in restorative aquaculture initiative

3 November 2021

By Responsible Seafood Advocate

## Spat released into Scottish sea will help replenish Europe's depleted shellfish stock

**Orkney Shellfish Hatchery** (<https://orkneyshellfishhatchery.co.uk/>), a multi-species aquaculture hatchery in the Orkney Islands, has released its first stock of native flat oyster spat into the ocean. The release saw more than 11,000 of the hatchery's land-grown, premium native oyster spat planted into the ocean on the west coast of Scotland. The initiative follows the sale of native oyster spat to a Scottish restoration project, which is dedicated to replenishing depleted shellfish stocks in the Scottish sea.

"Seeing the first release of our native oyster spat into the ocean is a huge milestone for our team and hatchery and is just the start of many releases we hope to do alongside restoration projects at a global scale," said Dr. Nik Sachlikidis, managing director of the aquaculture portfolio for the Cadman Capital Group, an independent private equity investment firm that supports the hatchery through investment.

There are benefits to boosting the number of healthy native oyster spat within the ocean. It improves the quality of the ocean's reefs, as oysters are widely recognized for providing shelter and sustenance to other coastal species, including commercially significant fish and shellfish. Oysters also provide natural seawater filtration and carbon sequestration through habitat formation.

Since the release, the hatchery has made additional spat sales to local oyster farming companies,



The release of more than 11,000 of the hatchery's land-grown, premium native oyster spat into the ocean is part of an effort to restore Europe's decline shellfish stock. Photo courtesy of Orkney Shellfish Hatchery.

which will grow the oysters to market size. For the hatchery, this initiative is one way to support the wider aquaculture industry: by providing native oysters that can be further developed for commercial sale, it reduces the need for wild harvesting.

The initiative aligns with the hatchery's mission "to become the market-leading producer of the highest quality native oyster spat," as well as its continued focus on helping to restore Europe's plummeting shellfish stocks.

"Since inception in 2017, we have invested heavily into the latest hatchery technologies and bio-secure systems in a bid to ensure we only produce the highest quality shellfish products," said Sachlikidis. "Not only does this ensure that our products are given the very best chance of wild survival, but it also mitigates the risk of adding further diseases to our seas."

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