

# University of Stirling's Institute of Aquaculture Secures \$2.7M Grant to Advance Fish Welfare in Southeast Asia

August 12, 2025



**The University of Stirling's globally renowned Institute of Aquaculture has been awarded a significant grant of \$2.7 million (approximately £2 million) from Open Philanthropy to lead a three-year project dedicated to improving the welfare of farmed fish in Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam. This new funding expands upon a successful previous initiative, extending its geographical reach and establishing a regional network for aquatic animal welfare.**

This groundbreaking project aims to address critical welfare issues affecting millions of aquatic animals in a region where farmed fish and shellfish are a vital source of protein and a cornerstone of the economy. The initiative will build on prior research that identified key intervention points in the value chain, from harvest to slaughter, where welfare practices could be most effectively improved.

Professor Dave Little, Deputy Head of the Institute of Aquaculture and lead for the project, highlighted the urgent need for action. "Across Asia, there are serious welfare issues, and awareness of the importance of improving this situation is low. We believe this project can drive meaningful change," said Professor Little. "Understanding the perceptions of consumers and other stakeholders is crucial to improving practices. This significant research funding will help us build on our work to date, focusing on aquatic animal welfare as an ethical and economically important food choice."

Michelle Lavery, Program Associate for Farm Animal Welfare at Open Philanthropy, expressed strong support for the project. "We've supported the University of Stirling's work for three years and are excited about the next phase," she stated. "The team's focus on building local research communities and partnering with industry and policymakers is vital for ensuring that improvements are sustainable, which is important for fish welfare now and into the future."

The new grant will fund comprehensive research studies across the three target countries, exploring biological, social, and economic factors influencing fish welfare. The project will also facilitate workshops, outreach activities, and the expansion of mentorship programs to enhance institutional capacity and build a robust network of academics and practitioners. A key component is the provision of six fully funded Masters studentships for individuals from Vietnam, Thailand, or Indonesia to study at Stirling's Institute of Aquaculture, fostering local expertise to continue this critical work.

This announcement comes as the University prepares to open its state-of-the-art National Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Hub (NATIH), a £17 million facility funded by the UK Government. Fully integrated with the Institute of Aquaculture, NATIH is designed to address major challenges facing the industry, including fish welfare and environmental impacts, positioning the UK as a global leader in modern aquaculture. The ongoing projects reinforce the Institute's commitment to delivering innovative, sustainable, and ethical solutions for the rapidly growing global aquaculture industry.