## **Support US OCTOPUS Act to** keep octopuses wild

Commercial octopus farming is incapable of meeting welfare requirements, unsustainable, and unnecessary for sustenance (1, 2). Although no commercial octopus farms currently exist, a Spanish seafood company plans to build one in the Canary Islands for Octopus vulgaris (3). In March, the US state of Washington banned octopus farming. Similar legislation has been introduced in California and Hawai'i. Now, the federal government is proposing action. The US Congress should pass the OCTOPUS Act, a federal law that would prohibit commercial octopus aquaculture in the United States and the import of commercially farmed octopus or octopus prod-

O. vulgaris, the species featured in the award-winning documentary My Octopus Teacher, lives in the intertidal zone and is capable of problem-solving and play (5). Octopuses have a large and distributed nervous system, use tools, sense light with their whole body, and taste the world as they touch it (6). O. vulgaris is capable of bipedal walking (7).

This species is not suited for a life in a controlled, sterile, and monotonous environment with set diets and regimented feeding schedules. O. vulgaris individuals reared in a basic environment that likely mimics that of commercial production became withdrawn, exhibiting behaviors similar to when they are in situations of hostility and conflict (8). High-welfare commercial farming of octopuses has been deemed "currently impossible" (2).

Octopuses are carnivorous and require animals such as crabs, squids, and hake in their diet. Ecologists have advised against farming carnivores since the 1970s (9), given that the practice puts more pressure on wild fish for feed (10). O. vulgaris are picky eaters who prefer live prey and show strong preferences in captivity about food "presentation" (11). There is no scientific evidence that farmed octopuses will eat readily available food, such as discards or bycatch from fisheries or processors.

The main drivers for an octopus market are increasing exotic meat demand and rising disposable income (12) rather than a need to address food insecurity. Satisfying luxury markets does not justify the substantial threats octopus farms would pose to animal welfare and marine ecosystems.

The US Congress should support the OCTOPUS Act of 2024 (4) and prevent the inevitable negative consequences of octopus farming by passing the law. Octopuses and the oceans will be healthier if O. vulgaris stays wild.

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## COMPETING INTERESTS

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