



A mechanistic model approach to characterize suitable regions for *Salmo salar* aquaculture in the Yellow Sea under global warming

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ABSTRACT

Global warming has a profound effect on aquaculture. Salmon aquaculture, as an emerging industry in China, is particularly vulnerable to climate change. For this reason, spatial planning with mechanistic understanding is essential for mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change. Through the use of dynamic energy budget models for Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) with fine-scale environmental data under 0 m, 20 m, 40 m, and 60 m depth, this study established a framework for identifying optimal regions for salmon aquaculture in the Yellow Sea under current and two Shared Socioeconomic Pathway scenarios (SSP1-2.6 and SSP5-8.5) in the 2050s. These results suggest that most regions in the Yellow Sea under 40 m and 60 m depth are suitable for salmon farming at both current and future scenarios, the central region of the Yellow Sea under 20 m (38°N, 123°E) is the optimal site for salmon aquaculture in China. Overall, these findings provide valuable support for aquaculture management and can help stakeholders create an effective blueprint for adaptation strategies.

1. Introduction

The production security of aquaculture is challenged by global warming, ocean acidification, sea level rise, and extreme events (Froehlich et al., 2018; Ma et al., 2021; Oyinlola et al., 2020; Stewart-Sinclair et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2023; Zurek et al., 2022). As awareness of aquaculture's vulnerability to climate change increases, thermal threats, including warming temperatures and marine heatwaves, are receiving increased focus from both scientific and news sources (Cheung et al., 2021; Froehlich et al., 2022; Frölicher et al., 2018). How to mitigate and adapt to climate change is crucial for aquaculture, which has raised global awareness of stakeholders to focus on (FAO, 2014; Galappaththi et al., 2020; Maulu et al., 2021).

Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) is one of the most productive and important marine species around the globe. The production of Atlantic salmon in 2020 was 2.7 million tonnes, which took up about 32.6 percent of marine and coastal finfish production (FAO, 2022), and the Atlantic salmon aquaculture industry has seen a rapid rise in recent years, becoming one of the most lucrative and technologically advanced industries (Chávez et al., 2019; Falconer et al., 2023). However, salmon

production is detrimentally affected by thermal threats from climate change (Wade et al., 2019). These climate-change-driven shifts in water temperature exceed the thermal tolerance limits of salmon and cause mass mortality events in Newfoundland, Tasmania, and other regions (Calado et al., 2021; Meng et al., 2022). Therefore, urgent actions are needed to cope with climate change (Soto et al., 2019).

Atlantic salmon has recently been introduced to China, and the related aquaculture industry has become a promising sector in offshore aquaculture in China. However, the industry is facing great challenges due to the low upper thermal limit of the Atlantic salmon (Aas et al., 2011; Dong, 2019). The Yellow Sea cold water mass (YSCWM) is an area of 130,000 km² with water temperature below 10 °C in summer (Weng et al., 1988; Yu et al., 2006). The high dynamic thermal environments in YSCWM provide thermal refugia, and YSCWM has been regarded as suitable zoning for the salmon industry (Dong, 2019). Results of species distribution models also confirmed the importance of the mesoscale spatio-temporal environmental heterogeneity for *S. salar* aquaculture in this region (Yu et al., 2022). In practice, an offshore platform-based fish farming facility for culturing salmon, Deep Blue 1 (35.20°N, 122.26°E), has been deployed in this area, and the first batch of farmed salmon was

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harvested in 2022. However, in such a heterogeneous thermal environment, warming water temperatures increase the uncertainty of the development of offshore salmon aquaculture in China. When mapping suitable offshore aquaculture areas, the effects of heat stress should be considered, which would be crucial to the success and sustainability of aquaculture with multiple approaches.

The dynamic energy budget (DEB) model is an effective and powerful mechanistic approach to quantifying functional traits of species to identify hot spots for potential development or aquaculture management (Kooijman, 2010; Montalto et al., 2015; Sarà et al., 2018). DEB model generates informative outputs that are crucial to the maintenance and restoration of the socioeconomic integrity of marine regions in the dynamic and changing environment (Baas et al., 2018; Graham et al., 2020; Mangano et al., 2019; Tan et al., 2021). Observation of the spatio-temporal variability in the performance of many aquaculture species can figure out the optimal cultivation areas of offshore aquaculture (Giacoletti et al., 2021; Sarà et al., 2012). In the present study, we provided a framework based on the DEB model as a decision support tool to inform site selection for Atlantic salmon aquaculture in the YSCWM. Areas with good growth performance were highlighted for priority consideration. These results are crucial for risk assessment, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and sustainable development of offshore aquaculture.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. DEB model

The DEB theory outlines the metabolic dynamics of an individual organism across its life cycle, with explicit connections to food availability and temperature (Sousa et al., 2010). An individual is described by three state variables: reserve, structure, maturation (juveniles)/reproduction (adults) (Table 1). Energy derived from feeding is initially allocated to reserves and then used for growth (i.e., body length/body mass), maintenance (somatic and maturity), development, and reproduction. According to DEB theory, a constant fraction κ of the mobilization energy (\dot{p}_c) is allocated somatic functions (somatic maintenance and growth). Maintenance has priority over growth. The rest of the energy is allocated to maturity maintenance costs and developmental/reproductive functions.

The standard DEB (stdDEB) was used in the present study as described in previous studies (Pecquerie et al., 2011; Sarà et al., 2018; Strople et al., 2018). A standard DEB model comprises three life stages: embryo (without feed and reproduce), juvenile (only feed), and adult (feed and reproduce). According to the production cycle and life cycle of *Salmo salar* (Fig. 1), our focus was directed towards comprehending the growth dynamics of salmon in the context of cage culture, the phase when salmon grow from postsmolt to adult (seawater phase, blue area in Fig. 1). The DEB model was constructed for the juvenile (postsmolt) and adult (before spawning) stages of Atlantic salmon, omitting the spawning stage of the generic DEB model format (Fig. 1). The simulated period was considered to start the day the fish (length: ~23 cm, weight: ~150 g) were released into the cages.

The model parameters were collected from Føre et al. (2016), Strople et al. (2018) and AmP procedure (DEBtool package retrieved on 08/07/2022 from http://www.bio.vu.nl/thb/deb/deblab/add_my_pet/) (Table 1). The flux equations of DEB and parameters of *S. salar* were summarized in Appendix S1 and Table 1, respectively. [], {} and a dot above the symbol (i.e., \dot{p}_c) indicates per unit structural volume, per unit surface area of the structural volume, and a rate/dimension per time, respectively.

The measurable length (L_w) and body mass (W) for a fish are calculated as follows:

$$L = V^{1/3}$$

Table 1
DEB parameters for *Salmo salar*.

Symbol	Value	Units	Description	Reference
State and Forcing variable				
E		J	Reserve energy	
V		cm ³	Structural volume	
E _H		J	Cumulated energy invested in the development	
E _R		J	Reproduction buffer energy	
T		K	Absolute temperature	
f			Scaled functional response	
c(T)			Temperature correction factor	
Parameters				
[pM]	11.6	Jcm ⁻³ d ⁻¹	Volume-specific somatic maintenance rate	Strople et al. (2018)
{pT}	0	Jcm ⁻² d ⁻¹	Surface-specific somatic maintenance rate	Strople et al. (2018)
[EG]	5500	Jcm ⁻³	Volume-specific cost for structure	Strople et al. (2018)
\dot{v}	0.19	cmd ⁻¹	Energy conductance	Strople et al. (2018)
K	0.9		Fraction of reserves to growth and maintenance	Strople et al. (2018)
K _R	0.95		Fraction of the reproduction buffer fixed into eggs	add my pets *
δ	0.207		Shape coefficient	Strople et al. (2018)
l _m	120	cm	Maximum observed length	add my pets *
{pAm}	l _m [pM]/K	Jcm ⁻² d ⁻¹	Maximum surface area-specific assimilation rate	
g	\dot{v} [EG]/K{pAm}		Energy investment ratio	
[E _m]	{pAm}/ \dot{v}	Jcm ⁻³	Maximum reserve density	Strople et al. (2018)
T _A	6000	K	Arrhenius temperature	Strople et al. (2018)
T ₁	293	K	Reference temperature	Strople et al. (2018)
T _{AL}	160,416	K	Rate of decrease at the lower boundary	Strople et al. (2018)
T _{AH}	30,000	K	Rate of decrease at the higher boundary	Føre et al. (2016)
T _L	280	K	Lower boundary tolerance range	Strople et al. (2018)
T _H	289	K	Higher boundary tolerance range	Føre et al. (2016)

Note: add my pets *: data from add-my-pet (http://www.bio.vu.nl/thb/deb/deblab/add_my_pet/).

$$L_w = L/\delta$$

$$W = d_v * L^3 + (E + E_R) / e_j$$

where, L, V, and δ represent the structural length, structural volume, and shape coefficient, respectively. Where e_j is the energy content of wet reserve (J g⁻¹), d_v is the energy density of the wet structure, which equals 1 g cm⁻³ (Jusup et al., 2014; Ren et al., 2020).

2.2. Forcing variable

The standard DEB model factors in two forcing variables: food density through the functional response (f; Holling 1959) and temperature through the Arrhenius theory (Kooijman, 2010). The food density is directly proportional to f following a Holling Type II response. (Kooijman, 2010)

$$f = \frac{X}{X + X_K}$$

where, X and X_K denote the food density in the environment and half saturation constant, respectively. If f = 0, the organism absorbs no energy from its surroundings. If f = 1, the steady state of energy reserve density reaches maximum. Due to the DEB model applied for

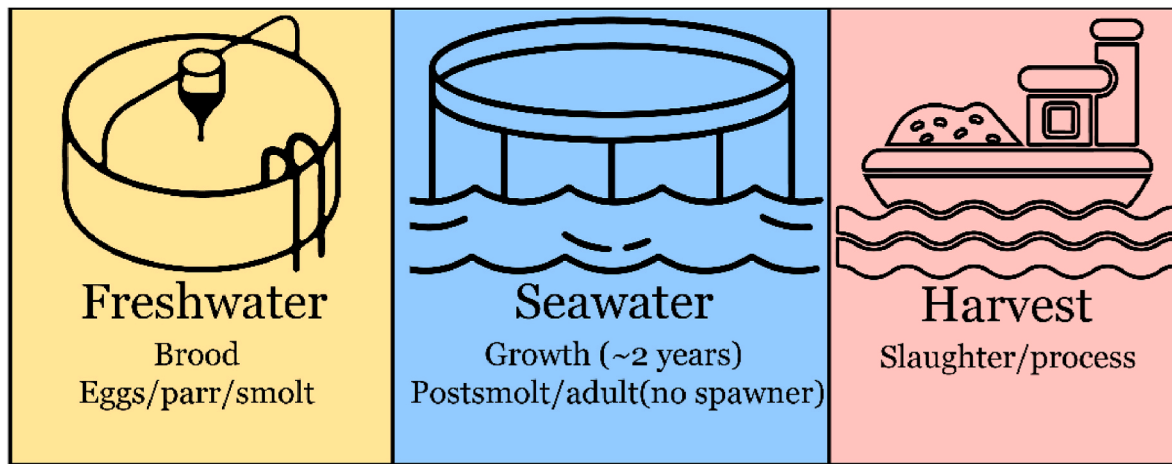


Fig. 1. Schematic representation of the production cycle of *Salmo salar*. The period covered by the blue color was regarded as the offshore aquaculture stage in China.

aquaculture salmon, rather than wild populations, food is plentiful by default, and f was set to 1.

The Arrhenius relationship (1889) (Kooijman, 2010) (Appendix S1) depicts the effect of temperature on metabolism as the flux of energy inside an organism varies according to its own metabolism and thus depends on physiological rates (Sarà et al., 2014). Daily seawater temperature at 0 m, 20 m, 40 m, and 60 m depth was used for evaluating the depth impacts on the growth performance of salmon, and in doing so we downloaded temperature daily time series from 2019 to 2020 from Copernicus Marine Service (<https://marine.copernicus.eu/>), with the standard regular grid at $1/12^\circ$. These simulated temperatures were validated by the observed temperature under 0 m, 20 m, and 40 m depths in Deep Blue No. 1 (Fig. S1). After validation, the water temperature dataset from 2019 to 2020 was used to simulate the growth performance of salmon under the current scenario. To assess the possible impact of global warming, the temperature at 0 m, 20 m, 40 m, and 60 m depth under two Shared Socioeconomic Pathway scenarios from 2051 to 2052 (SSP 1–2.6 and SSP 5–8.5) was downloaded from the CMIP6 website (<https://esgf-node.llnl.gov/projects/cmip6/>). SSP1–2.6 outlines a sustainability pathway characterized by minimal challenges for both adaptation and mitigation. In contrast, SSP5–8.5 outlines a fossil-fueled development pathway, posing significant challenges for mitigation while posing lower challenges for adaptation (Popp et al., 2017). For lacking daily water temperature data with depths under future scenarios, monthly data simulated from Alfred-Wegener-Institut für Polar-und Meeresforschung (AWI) was used in the present study. Daily water temperature was replaced by duplicate monthly water temperature based on the number of days per month.

2.3. Model validation

The DEB model was validated by two independent datasets collected from the literature on China farming aquaculture (Xu et al., 2019; Chou, 2014). The WebPlot Digitize software (<https://automeris.io/WebPlot-Digitizer>) was used to extract the wet weight of Atlantic salmon at different months of farming from the images for model validation. The DEB model was run for the number of days observed in the original dataset. The reduced major axis (RMA) regression method was used to evaluate the agreement between observed and simulated weight (Filgueira et al., 2016; Sigourney et al., 2008), which takes into account sampling error for both the dependent and independent variables. RMA was performed by the “lmodel2” package in R (R Development Core Team, 2021).

2.4. Site selection based on growth performance

The growth rate was regarded as an indicator for selecting the suitable areas of *S. salar*. The growth rate (μ) of *S. salar* was calculated following the equation:

$$\mu = \ln((W_1 - W_0)/(t_1 - t_0))$$

where, “W” represents weight and “t” represents time. “0” and “1” refer to the start and end of a culture period of *S. salar*, respectively. The initial weight (W_0) is the mean of observed data (~ 150 g) of *S. salar* before cage culture in the Deep Blue 1 platform. According to the salmon industry handbook (Mowi, 2022), the commercial size of salmon was 4500 g with two-year growth cycle. Therefore, the interval time of cage culture ($t_1 - t_0$) was set to 730 (day). For identifying the suitable areas for salmon aquaculture, the grid cells in the Yellow Sea were graded to “A”, “B”, “C”, “D”, “E” and “F” according to the growth rate (μ) of salmon. The final weight (W_1) thresholds of “A”, “B”, “C”, “D”, “E” and “F” in grid cells were “>6000 g”, “5000 g–6000 g”, “4500 g–5000 g”, “4000 g–4500 g”, “3000 g–4000 g” and “<3000 g”, respectively. The grid cells where the growth rate was faster than the commercial size (4500 g; 2 years) were regarded as suitable areas (“A”, “B” and “C”) otherwise the grid cells were regarded as unsuitable areas (“D”, “E” and “F”).

3. Result

3.1. Model performance

Simulation outputs in the form of wet weight values were compared with the experimental results from the literature. There observed and simulated wet weights of *S. salar* were in great accord (Fig. 2). In the early period during cage farming, the simulated wet weight was similar to the observed postsmolt. During the interim period, the simulated fish grew less than the real fish. During the adult stage, the simulated fish grew similar or higher to the real fish. The slope of RMA regression comparing observed and simulated data points (Fig. 2b) was statistically similar to 1 ($p < 0.001$), indicating the simulation of the growth rate for the whole aquaculture period was comparable with the observed data.

3.2. Suitable areas under the current scenario

The growth rate was used to quantitatively assess the potential of *S. salar* aquaculture in each grid cell in the YSCWM. The growth rates of salmon were highly dynamic in different depths. There are few suitable areas for salmon farming under 0 m depth, while the other depths had an opposite trend. There are a lot of suitable areas over the commercial size

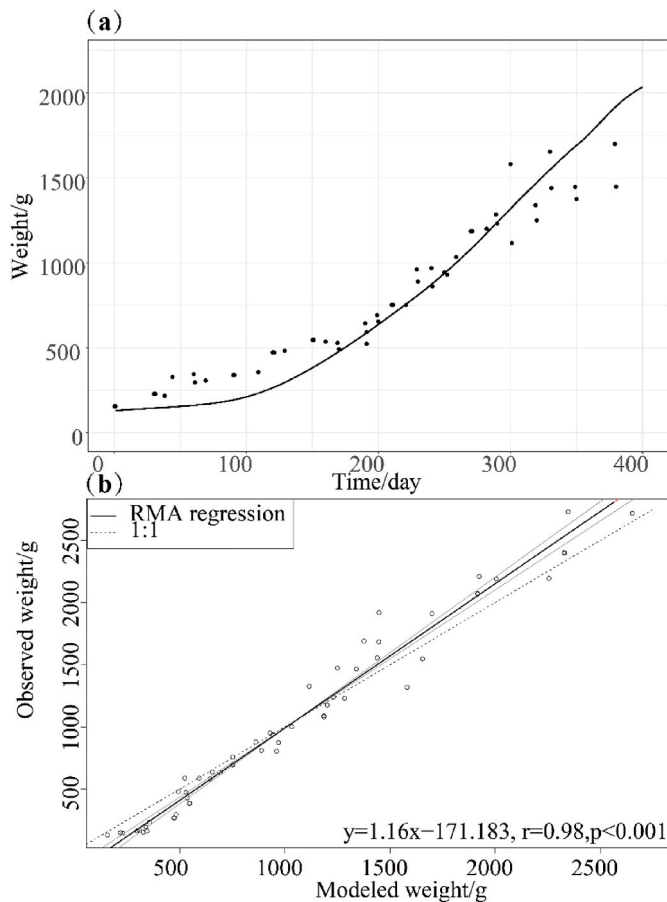


Fig. 2. (a) Simulated (black line) and observed (points) growth data represented by wet weight and time from the observed and reference dataset; (b) RMA regression for wet weight comparing observed versus modeled data points.

for salmon farming under 20 m depth, and most areas under 40 m and 60 m were suitable for salmon farming (Fig. 3).

Partial regions in the eastern center of Yellow Sea (37.5°N, 125°E) under 0 m depth could be applied for salmon farming. Suitable areas for salmon existed spatial heterogeneity under the 20 m depth. Areas located in the eastern center of the Yellow Sea (36–38°N, 124–126°E) and partial regions of the northern Yellow Sea (38°N, 122.5°E) were the most suitable areas for Atlantic salmon farming. Areas located in the northeastern of the Yellow Sea (38–39°N, 124–125°E) and most of the nearshore regions were potentially unsuitable areas for Atlantic salmon farming due to the low growth rates, which were consistent with the situation under 40 m depth.

3.3. Suitable areas under the future scenarios

Suitable areas for Atlantic salmon farming under 0 m and 20 m depth would shrink and most areas under 40 m and 60 m depth were suitable for salmon farming under the SSP5-8.5 scenario in the Yellow Sea, which is consistent with the situation under the SSP1-2.6 scenario (Figs. 4, 5 and S2). The suitable areas (levels: “A”, “B”, and “C”) for salmon farming under 20 m depth present a double-center structure in the eastern central region and northwest of the Yellow Sea. Areas located in the eastern center of the Yellow Sea (38°N, 125°E) and the northwest of the Yellow Sea (38°N, 123°E) will be the most suitable areas for Atlantic salmon farming in the context of global warming. The suitable areas under 20 m depth also show a trend of a northward shift in the Yellow Sea. Meanwhile, the number and distribution of suitable areas under 40 m and 60 m depth remain steady under global warming.

4. Discussion

Salmon aquaculture is a promising industry in China but facing great challenges from high water temperatures and high uncertainties from climate change, especially from the warming water and increasing extreme temperature events (Oliver et al., 2021). While it is imperative to address the impact of climate change, the reply of mitigation and adaptation of the aquaculture industry to ocean warming is relatively slow (Calado et al., 2021; Holbrook et al., 2020). The ongoing variations of heat stress in the context of climate change should be taken into consideration in the development of offshore aquaculture in China and around the globe. In the present study, a DEB model for Atlantic salmon was developed for spatial planning of salmon offshore aquaculture in the Yellow Sea. The growth performance of salmon in the Yellow Sea was also estimated under future scenarios (SSP1-2.6 and SSP5-8.5). These results provide effective information for policymaking and offshore aquaculture management.

4.1. Importance of mesoscale environmental variations in aquaculture management

Aquaculture zoning or site selection for specific species helps cope with climate change, especially for the emerging offshore aquaculture industry. Previous studies have confirmed that DEB models can provide useful information for stakeholders and policymakers in aquaculture, such as European seabass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*), Pacific oyster (*Crassostrea gigas*), and green-lipped mussel (*Perna viridis*) (Cheng et al., 2018; Giacoletti et al., 2021; Krupandan et al., 2022). Different from the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) based and correlative methods, the DEB modeling integrating with fine-scale environmental temperature provides a base map of biological carrying capacity for enhancing strategic decisions (Ottinger et al., 2016). This kind of mechanistic model will play a more and more important role in the future by providing invaluable support to stakeholders and decision-makers in addressing localized spatial challenges and conflicts.

Along with DEB model is now well-deployed, the importance of mesoscale environmental variations/heterogeneity on the model output was emphasized in the present study. The mapping of suitable areas for salmon farming in the Yellow Sea shows huge differences among different water depths (Fig. 5). While, aquaculture evaluation in most research, especially for those researches based on mechanistic models, was calculated based on sea surface temperature at present (Giacoletti et al., 2021; Strople et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2023). The environmental heterogeneity in evaluating species response to climate change has been paid more and more attention by researchers (Li et al., 2021; Zellweger et al., 2020). Hence, the potential of offshore aquaculture may be underestimated without consideration of mesoscale environmental heterogeneity. The mitigation and adaptation of the aquaculture industry at the mesoscale and microscale to ocean warming should take environmental heterogeneity into consideration (Yu et al., 2022).

4.2. Growth potential of salmon in the Yellow Sea

Growth of Atlantic salmon exhibited high spatial heterogeneity in the Yellow Sea. Previous studies confirmed growth of the Atlantic salmon is sensitive and heavily dependent on seawater temperatures (Mowi, 2022). YSCWM, with high seasonal dynamics in water temperature, can affect salmon's growth rate. YSCWM has three low-temperature centers, the north Yellow Sea center (38.42°N, 122.50°E), the southeast Yellow Sea center (36.50°N, 124.08°E), and the southwest Yellow Sea center (35.58°N, 122.83°E) (Yu et al., 2006). The most suitable areas for salmon aquaculture were corresponding with the surroundings of these low-temperature centers. A few suitable regions for salmon aquaculture in the southwest Yellow Sea can be attributed to the depth (Dong, 2019). Relatively shallow sea areas were more susceptible to the effects of thermal factors which led to the

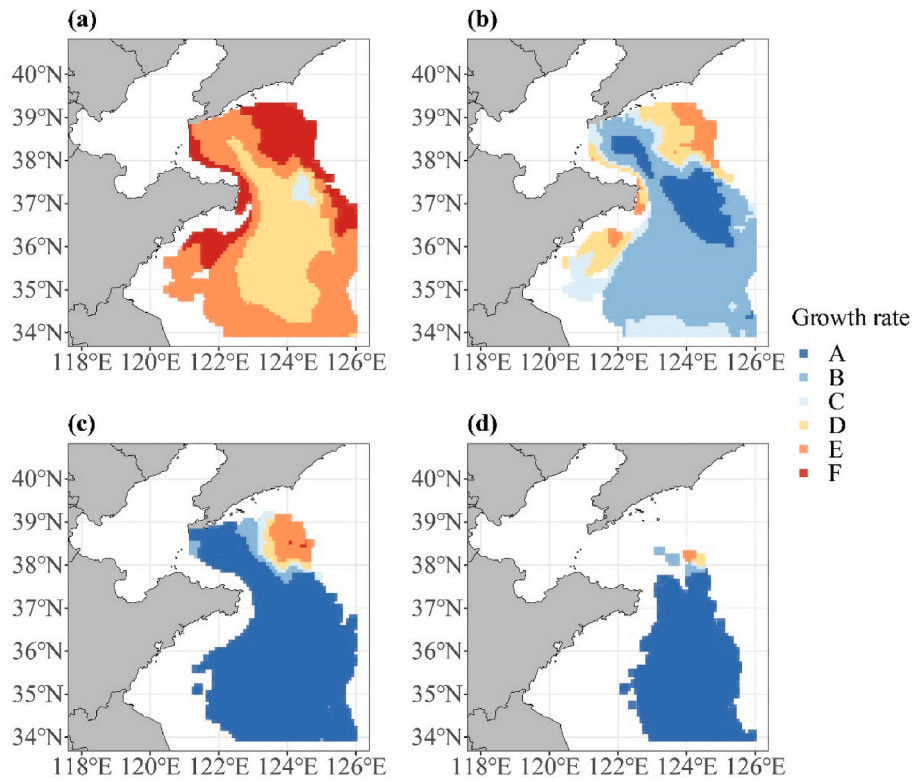


Fig. 3. The growth rate of *Salmo salar* under 0 m (a), 20 m (b), 40 m (c), and 60 m (d) in the Yellow Sea at the current scenario from 2019 to 2020. The growth rate thresholds (based on final weight) of A, B, C, D, E, and F were “>6000 g”, “5000 g–6000 g”, “4500 g–5000 g”, “4000 g–4500 g”, “3000 g–4000 g”, and “<3000 g”, respectively.

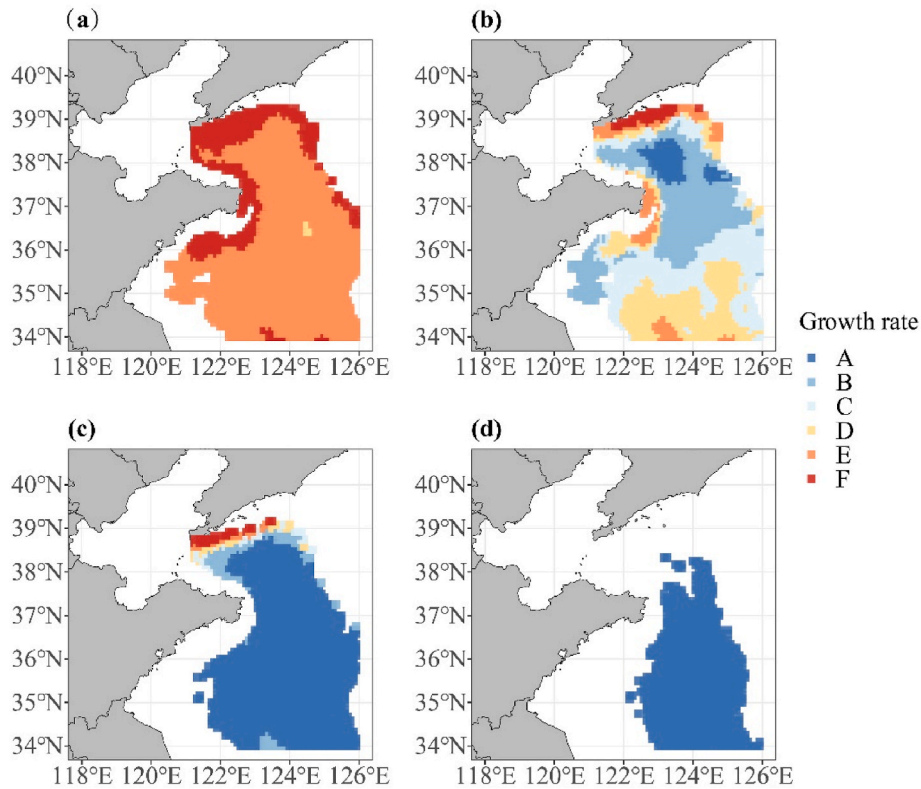


Fig. 4. The growth rate of *Salmo salar* under 0 m (a), 20 m (b), 40 m (c), and 60 m (d) in the Yellow Sea at the Shared Socioeconomic Pathway scenario (SSP5-8.5) from 2051 to 2052. The growth rate thresholds (based on final weight) of A, B, C, D, E, and F were “>6000 g”, “5000 g–6000 g”, “4500 g–5000 g”, “4000 g–4500 g”, “3000 g–4000 g”, and “<3000 g”, respectively.

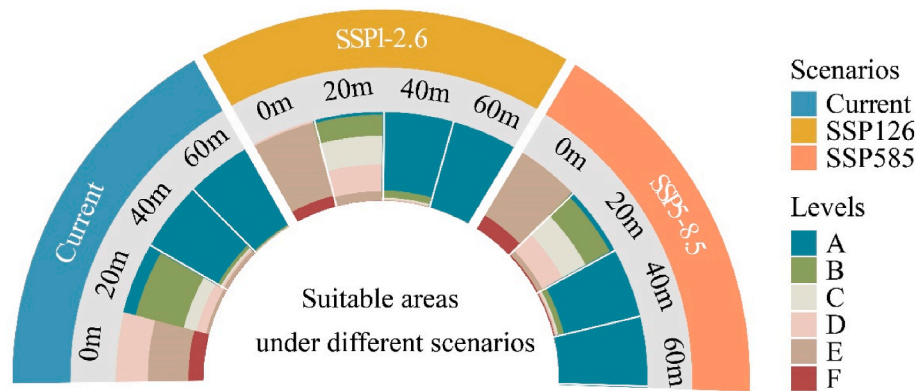


Fig. 5. The proportion of grid cells with different growth rates of *Salmo salar* in the Yellow Sea. Light blue, yellow, and tangerine colors represented the current, SSP1-2.6, and SSP5-8.5 scenarios, respectively. 0 m, 20 m, 40 m, and 60 m in the grey cubes represented water layers with depths in the Yellow Sea. The bottom bar represents the proportion of the respective growth rates. The thresholds (based on final weight) of blue (A), green (B), grey (C), light red (D), brown (E), and dark red (F) were “>6000 g”, “5000 g–6000 g”, “4500 g–5000 g”, “4000 g–4500 g”, “3000 g–4000 g”, and “<3000 g”, respectively.

southwest Yellow Sea center existing for a relatively short time. However, submerging the net cage into deep cold water is a feasible approach to culture the salmonids in this region.

Global warming will lead to a northward shift of suitable areas for salmon farming in the Yellow Sea. Although the sector still offers a promising future, the distribution of these suitable areas will shift northward, displaying a double-center pattern in the eastern central region and the northwestern region of the Yellow Sea (Fig. 4). Moreover, the number of most suitable areas is expected to increase with warming water temperatures. There is a great seasonal variation in the water temperature in the Yellow Sea, with temperatures in the northern YSCWM lower than 4 °C, even dropping to 1 °C in winter. On the other hand, after the vertical mixing of water in autumn, there is a large area with temperatures higher than 18 °C in the southern YSCWM (Li et al., 2016). The thermal range for the growth of Atlantic salmon is between 4 and 6 °C to 19–22.5 °C (Calado et al., 2021), and temperatures beyond 18 °C can negatively influence salmon production (Gamperl et al., 2020). As such, salmon cultured in the northern YSCWM are exposed to low-temperature stress, while salmon cultured in the southern YSCWM are exposed to a short period of high-temperature stress in autumn. The increasing temperature within the thermal tolerance boundaries of cultured species may shorten cultivation time, increase growth rate, and boost production (Elliott and Elliott, 2010; Klinger et al., 2017; Mangano et al., 2019; Meng et al., 2022). Therefore, warming water temperatures in winter in the northern YSCWM may help salmon escape from the cold stress and enhance the growth performance while warming temperatures in autumn in the southern YSCWM could make it too warm to grow optimally. In conclusion, long-term ocean warming in the Yellow Sea has both positive and negative effects on the salmon industry, yet still offers great potential for salmon aquaculture in the context of global warming.

Although salmon offshore aquaculture in the Yellow Sea is feasible under current and SSP scenarios, the destructiveness of extreme events cannot be ignored (Smith et al., 2021, 2022). The suitable areas for salmon farming based on the DEB model only considered the ongoing effect of global warming but ignored the short-term impacts of extreme temperature events (weeks/days). The Yellow Sea experienced unprecedented marine heatwaves (MHWs) from 2016 to 2018 (Gao et al., 2020). With increasing MHWs (IPCC, 2022), climate change will likely dramatically increase the risk and uncertainty of offshore aquaculture in the Yellow Sea. In addition, the distribution of MHWs in the Yellow Sea shows high geographical variations, with trends of MHWs in the east-central of the Yellow Sea decreasing in frequency and days from 1982 to 2018, indicating consequently fewer risks of heatwaves (Yao et al., 2020). To avoid uncertainty from climate change, areas located in

the east-central Yellow Sea should be given priority for site selection (Meng et al., 2022). Thermal sensitivity analysis of specific species prior to spatial planning will also be useful for the management of offshore aquaculture (Ma et al., 2021).

4.3. Perspectives and recommendations

- (1) In the present study, we provide base maps for decision support in site selection for Atlantic salmon aquaculture based on their potential growth using the DEB model. However, the decision should take into account several social, economic, and ecological impacts, such as labor, transportation costs, current, and risks from farmed fish escaping (Aguilar-Manjarrez et al., 2017; Chávez et al., 2019; Gomez-Uchida et al., 2018; Krupandan et al., 2022). Moreover, fish escaping, including genetic risks and the spread of diseases and parasites, pose one of the most significant challenges for ensuring environmental sustainability in aquaculture (Atalah and Sanchez-Jerez, 2020), and should be considered in offshore aquaculture. Furthermore, it is also noteworthy that extreme events, such as marine heatwaves and storm activity, can be devastating for aquaculture. Offshore aquaculture may be susceptible to severe weather, with disease outbreaks and poorer growth performances correlated with heatwaves (Calado et al., 2021) and large-scale fish escaping correlated with storm events (Jensen et al., 2010). Therefore, the physical capabilities of the farmed fish species and other potential factors must be fully understood in the site selection. Notably, consistency of other management should be taken into consideration for avoiding conflicts, such as privatization of waterways, fisheries livelihoods, and ecological preservation management (Carneiro, 2011; Primavera, 2006). Integrating multiple functional layers into spatial planning will be of great benefit in this regard.
- (2) Breeding programs have been identified as a crucial and effective biotechnological solution to enable salmon to adapt to climate change (Calado et al., 2021). The northern Yellow Sea has experienced cold stress in winter, while the southern region has been affected by short-term heat stress in autumn. As such, both the cold- and heat-tolerance strain selection of the species depending on the farm’s location should be taken into account. Furthermore, genomic approaches and precision breeding should be employed to adequately address rapidly changing conditions (Liu et al., 2022).
- (3) Environmental monitoring is essential for salmon aquaculture, as it is heavily dependent on the environment, such as temperature, dissolved oxygen, and currents (Vikeså et al., 2017). Aquaculture

has experienced significant changes in the context of climate change except for temperature (Dong et al., 2023): 1) Oxygen loss: The global ocean is experiencing a substantial decline in oxygen levels at a rate loss of 961 ± 429 Tmol per decade since 1960 (Schmidtke et al., 2017). Reductions ranging from 1% to 7% are anticipated in the global ocean's oxygen inventory in the next century (Keeling et al., 2010), and coming with the emergence of hypoxia and anoxia zoning; 2) Ocean acidification (pH): Compared to the pH level of 8.2 during the Industrial Revolution, the global surface ocean pH has decreased by approximately 0.1, now standing at around 8.1. By the year 2100, there is a potential for further decline in the range of 0.1–0.4 in pH units (García-Soto et al., 2021); 3) Eutrophication: Eutrophication is projected to continually increase in the 21st century due to changes in precipitation (Sinha et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2021). In addition, the co-occurrence and interaction of multiple biological factors have been regarded as a significant threat to the sustainable development of aquaculture (Reid et al., 2019). Biological factors of YSCWM under climate change bring uncertainty to offshore aquaculture operations, so real-time environmental monitoring of farms is essential for stakeholders to effectively manage the risks posed by climate change. To further reduce these risks, monitoring and warning systems that can predict marine heatwaves in advance should be developed (De et al., 2022; Spillman et al., 2015).

- (4) Atlantic salmon is a non-native species in the Yellow Sea, and the model stationarity should be tested in the future (Monaco et al., 2019). The offshore cage, Deep Blue 1 (35.20°N, 122.26°E), has been deployed for salmon production recently, and we have not enough experimental data. In the future, we will test the model stationarity of Atlantic salmon in this region using both environmental data and growth data generated from Deep Blue 1 for better spatial management.
- (5) Fish welfare in submerged cages should be considered, and related technical issues need to be addressed. There is a lack of comprehensive research focus on the impacts of submerged culture on fish. Especially for salmon, with open swim bladders, submerged cages aquaculture for salmon becomes a more complex process because they require air access for swim bladder refilling and buoyancy maintaining (Korsøen et al., 2012). The oxygen needs of farmed fish may have been resolved by air domes or other artificial oxygen supply methods (Oppedal et al., 2020). However, ensuring salmon live in their preferred conditions is key for optimal growth in sea-cages (Oppedal et al., 2011), farming submerged fish under ideal environmental conditions remains a challenge for fish welfare and production (Sievers et al., 2022).

5. Conclusion

Offshore salmon aquaculture in the Yellow Sea is facing great uncertainty from climate change. In the present study, we provided a biological base map of the salmon industry in the Yellow Sea with the consideration of the risks of global warming. Our results indicated that due to the spatial heterogeneity of temperature, offshore salmon farming is feasible in some regions of the Yellow Sea, implying it has great potential for the development of salmon aquaculture. Based on models of temperature-mediated growth (DEB model), the center of the Yellow Sea (38°N, 123°E) is deemed to be the optimal region for the offshore salmon industry. It is important to note that this preliminary base map is only a starting point for site selection (based on a single factor: temperature) and further consideration of multiple factors is necessary for the spatial management of offshore aquaculture.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Yu-Yang Zhang: Conceptualization, Data curation, Methodology, Software, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Jie Wang:** Software, Writing – review & editing. **Xin Sun:** Data curation, Methodology. **Yue Su:** Data curation, Methodology. **Gianluca Sarà:** Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing. **Yun-Wei Dong:** Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

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