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Secretary to the Independent Review Group
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
National Seafood Centre
Clonakilty
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Connemara Seafoods are Seafood processors. Based in Westport Co Mayo the company is family owned and exports 100% of our products to leading global retailers, food services distributors, and secondary food processors across Europe, Asia and the USA. With a turnover in excess of €15m the company employs over 50 full time people with additional 40 people at peak production times.

Connemara Seafoods sources its raw material (mussels, crabs, clams, oysters etc.) all along the Irish coast line. It is estimated that the 'spawning / multiplier element of supply jobs is c.280 full time in those coastal communities where the employment of people and protecting the social fabric of local communities is so important. Those down-stream jobs are located mainly in counties such as Cork, Kerry, Clare, Galway, Mayo, Donegal and so on. Aquaculture meets all the elements of government policy under the "Action for Jobs" program.

Connemara Seafoods are constantly trying to expand the business in terms of new product development and market growth. This year alone the company will promote it's products and its new products at trade events in Boston, Brussels, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Qingdao, Tokyo and Vigo. Connemara Seafoods work closely with our suppliers, and state agencies including Bord Bia, BIM and Enterprise Ireland.

The delay in license renewals over the past 15 years has had a serious and detrimental effect on the whole Irish Aquaculture industry in terms of missed opportunities. Global population is growing at a faster rate than ever before with a current population of 7.2 billion that is projected to increase by 1 billion over the next 12 years and reach 9.6 billion by 2050 (source United Nations). This world population needs food and all of the other maritime countries of the world have recognised this population / market growth and have prepared and increased their aquaculture outputs.

Nevertheless, it is still not too late to start and I am delighted that an independent review is now in place to address the issues as outlined above.

I would like to make the following recommendations:

- Definite timelines from applying to granting of Aquaculture licences
- A 'use it or lose it' approach on all licence sites.
- A minimum of a 20-year licence on existing site with proven track record to enable proper business plans to be made and executed.
- A reduction in the cost of the extremely complex Environmental Impact Statements
- In the case of a first-time applicant I suggest that a period of 10 years is appropriate subject to the commencement of the project to the extent that actual commercial levels of husbandry of the species applied for are taking place within 3 years of the granting of the license.
- I think that it is also so vital that there is a closer working relationship with all stake holders including marine policy makers at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, this could be incorporated under a similar model as currently practised through the MSSC (Molluscan Shellfish Safety Committee).

I would also like to extend an invitation to the Independent Aquaculture Licence Review Group to visit our processing plant and adjacent mussel farm owned by Blackshell farm to get a complete understanding of current practices and to witness the opportunities.

Pat Mulloy

Director

Connemara Seafoods