

CONNEMARA



smokehouse

3rd February, 2017.

Dear Chairperson,

At the outset, I would like to wish you well and thank you for taking time to read my submission to your review committee which I will keep brief and to the point.

By way of introduction, my name is Graham Roberts and I am owner of the Connemara Smokehouse located in Ballyconneely in Co Galway. We currently employ 10 people and our company has an annual turnover of €1,175,880.

However, I am faced with a very real problem in terms of our product offering. A significant percentage of our customers who wish to buy Irish salmon cannot do so. This is because I cannot source enough of the product from our Irish suppliers due to the restrictions of the current licence process. Our point of differentiation as a business is based on our ability to offer a product produced in Ireland, with Irish provenance. We are currently unable to do this and are forced to rely on imports.

It surprises me that an island nation such as ours would have to import salmon from other countries and continents with a loss to the Irish economy, and the ability of my business, and that of the Aquaculture sector to provide local jobs for local people. There is obviously a major obstacle to farming and growing our own Irish salmon. Are we unable to issue licences, if so, why?

It seems to me that we are missing an open goal in terms of the opportunity to produce a niche product in our own country for which the market is prepared to pay a premium. Why is this the case? Why is it so difficult to obtain a licence in Ireland? Is it a resources issue? Is it a mind-set? Why are we paying lip-service to supporting a sector which we would appear to be working against?

I would therefore implore your committee to examine and resolve whatever logjam has developed in the Irish aquaculture regulatory system. You'll be acutely aware of the raft of ambitious targets which Government has set for itself in terms of the Blue Economy, it would appear that we are a long way from delivering on these.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham Roberts', written in a cursive style.

Graham Roberts

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