

## Independent Review of Aquaculture Licensing Process.

Independent Review of Aquaculture Licensing,  
C/O Deirdre Morgan – Secretary to the Independent Review Group,  
Department of Aquaculture Food and the Marine  
National Seafood Centre,  
Clonakilty,  
Co. Cork.

Dr Colin Hannon



To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in regards to the review of aquaculture licensing process currently under way by your department and independent board.

Firstly, I'd like to add that this is a great opportunity to review the process and may identify and overcome the industry barriers to commercial aquaculture production in Ireland by clearly identifying the issues and stumbling blocks around the current licensing process.

I have worked in the aquaculture industry since 2002, (oysters, clam, abalone, sea urchins and salmon) and I've been providing commercial diving services to the salmon and mussel farm industry since 2008, currently providing service to Marine Harvest Ireland and Bradan Beo Teo. I've studied aquaculture to PhD level and I've been involved in aquaculture research and development at a European level (FP7 & NPA). I am a reviewer for two peer reviewed journals, Aquaculture International and Aquaculture Research and have been involved in both aquaculture production and research and understand the difficulties and limiting factors of the Irish licensing process.

Due to delays in awarding new licenses it causes both large and small scale aquaculture producers to come under pressure and in some cases never get beyond the concept stage. There are viable and non-viable commercial production species been produced in Ireland, however in some cases the lengthy licensing process deems them non-viable. It is extremely difficult to get a production off the ground due to, in some cases the extreme bureaucratic delay in the application process. It is difficult for an aquaculture producer to stay motivated because of this delay as it clearly makes a difference in the commercial outcome. If aquaculture producers are awarded licenses in an economically timely and transparent manner it gives them a greater opportunity to employ more skilled people and get projects to the commercially viable scale quicker, as there is not a period of not knowing if they will be successful in the application process. Having a defined timescale and process it will allow aquaculture producers to invest in both projects and people.

Predominantly aquaculture producers are a vulnerable group as they are regional, peripheral and in areas devoid of other industry. Because of this, access to skilled workers, service providers and markets is more difficult, however if there is an opportunity to reduce the time from application to the award of new licenses it will allow for more aquaculture producers to enter these peripheral areas and create employment. In some regional areas aquaculture is the biggest employer which in turn requires service providers (divers, skippers, boats, trucks, processors, buyers), local communities to provide workers, accommodation and ancillary services.

Both the Irish state agencies and the European union have invested in aquaculture in Ireland therefore some of this investment should be recouped, by allowing more licenses in a timely manner this will create a viable economic industry for regional and peripheral areas.

I believe the Irish aquaculture industry can be competitive with other producing countries but licensing in a economic timescale, transparent and inline with ecological aquaculture assessment must be a priority for growth in this important industry to continue.

Yours sincerely

Dr Colin Hannon.