

Ellen McGonigle



Co. Donegal.



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Dear chairperson,

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your step to instigate a review of the aquaculture licence process.

I am employee of the fish farming industry – into my 32nd year here at Marine Harvest Ireland. I have seen many changes over the years through the growth of the company. I have also been part of the “waiting” process whereby our chances of development have been curtailed at different angles through lack of progress in licencing issues.

Marine Harvest Ireland is part of a Global company with access to a wide range of pooled knowledge, research and data along with the support from the company board. Each company within our Global industry is an individual company, run by local individuals that are part of the wider community. MHI contribute greatly to the rural designated disadvantages areas that we are part off – with employment, use of services and the purchasing of goods. The company’s tax calculation for 2016 is in the region of €900k, payments from salary deductions for PAYE/PRSI/USC amounted to €2.6 million. **These figures are real – this is real money, going back to the Government.** Why jeopardise this?

As well as giving employment and engaging in local services from local businesses from the coast of Donegal to Cork, MHI also engage with the local community – running health and wellbeing programmes and supporting local clubs and organisation. We are proud to be part of these organisations and we see the real benefits on the ground in encouraging communities to come together and provide sports and education clubs / programmes for young and old in the community. This also helps ease the loneliness of some people who join in these events for mental (friendship/support) – not just for physical reasons.

We need to identify the reason for the lack of progress in the granting of licences. We have a wide expanse of coastline – we need to use it.

Is lack of progress due to lack of resources in the Department? Should this be revamped and should the Department of Agriculture take over this area – with the decline in recent farming activity, there should be surplus of staff available. These resources need to be managed correctly.

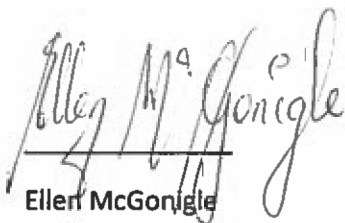
Or is it fear of the unknown? Sometimes, education of the people involved can solve a lot of difficult queries as, with all relatively new industries, there is an element of the unknown and question and superstitions involved. I am sure that management at Marine Harvest Ireland and other similar fish farming companies would be delighted to have the opportunity to get the individual involved in the licencing progress together, visit the areas /

sites involved, explain the process and let them expand their knowledge. A little knowledge can be dangerous – it is better to have clear concise information.

It is now time for the government to progress and to bring Ireland with it, in reality – not just in theory. Our reputation in the food industry is excellent. Maximise on this! We produce a great variety of products – some are the best in the world. We have coastlines upon coastlines surrounded with opportunity – make use of them. We have an industry here that is established – perhaps not as long as our European counterparts, but it is alive and working. Can we not grow it to the benefit of the local rural communities that you will find fish farming in and to the benefit to the overall country.

This is a good step - the first step in moving the aquaculture industry forward. It is the ideal opportunity to kick-start and drive this long stagnant process forward. It takes guts to make decisions and follow them through. It also takes forward thinking individuals to see a bigger picture and to use the opportunities to instigate progress. Hopefully , your team are forward thinkers.

Yours sincerely



Ellen McGonigle