

Dear chairperson,

Thank you for taking time to read my submission to your aquaculture licence review process.

At the outset, let me introduce myself. My name is Jacqueline Friel from Fanad, Co Donegal. I am a member of the Fanad Active Group for the last 3 years. We have 11 members and have to raise a large amount of money annually to cover our running costs for the year.

However, this process has been made a great deal easier in recent times due to the support of Marine Harvest Ireland (MHI). Employing 290 people in our area, Marine Harvest Ireland supports numerous community, sporting and voluntary organisations and we are lucky enough to be one of those which has had funding allocated to it for the last 2 years.

However, we are conscious that we can only source highly-valued sponsorship from businesses like Marine Harvest when they are in a position to build a sustainable business in our community. Other local companies, which had supported us, no longer exist due to the economic downturn so we are extremely grateful to MHI for their generous endorsement.

I don't profess to having any scientific expertise in the area of aquaculture but I am aware of the ongoing review and of massive difficulties in the current licencing regime. I would pose the question as to why it takes so long to get a licence in Ireland when compared to our near neighbours in Scotland and Norway which have thriving aquaculture industries.

If it is a case of not having enough personnel in place to rule on licence applications, surely resources could be redeployed within the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (DAFM) given the dwindling numbers in Irish agriculture. It makes no sense whatsoever that we are restricting a golden opportunity for economic growth because we cannot process applications quickly enough. It's time for some expansive thinking to resolve this issue for once and for all.

I couldn't imagine a farmer with fields of grass being unable to source cattle to graze them, somebody somewhere would surely step up to the plate and present a solution. Can DAFM suggest solutions for the current non-functioning system?

The time for action is now, I appeal to you to do something to help develop and grow Irish aquaculture.

Sincerely,

Ms Jacqueline Friel
Secretary
Fanad Active Group