

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.  
09/02/2017



Ref: Independent Review of Aquaculture Licencing Process

Dear License Review Committee Members,

I am writing to you to express my views on the review of Aquaculture Licencing Progress. My name is Felix Sproll, I am originally from county Mayo now working in county Donegal. After graduating from NUIG May 2015 with a Marine Science degree I quickly got a job in the aquaculture industry with Marine Harvest Ireland and have been working there as the cleanerfish coordinator for the last 1.5years. This includes managing the cleanerfish for all the Irish Marine Harvest sites along the west coast of Ireland.

Irish salmon are known all over the Europe if not in the world for its high quality due to the image that Ireland has pristine clean clear Atlantic waters. This means that there would be a huge potential for the Irish aquaculture industry if it could supply this demand. But expansion would be needed to increase the supply and for this extra licenses are needed. Extra sites would also be beneficial as this could lead to better 'crop rotation' and regular fallowing of sites. As the current licencing process is not fit for the purpose, I would ask you to reform the aquaculture licencing process to allow the industry to grow to its full potential while also staying environmentally responsible. Also due to the growing global demand for fish the risk of overfishing is growing and as wild fish stocks cannot cover the demand, I think that the aquaculture industry has a vital role to play in preserving the wild fish stock of not only of salmon but also of other heavily fished species. I would like to see a licencing process that encourages new innovative methods for new and existing species which could fully unlock the potential of the Irish marine environment for the aquaculture industry.

The full potential of the aquaculture industry can be seen in the Norwegian aquaculture industry which is a highly profitable industry while also employing 6,000 people directly and over 20,000 indirectly (fishiers.no website). This could be comparable to Ireland as Norway has a similar population to Ireland although it have more coastline the industry is more technically advanced which means less manual labour and less jobs. Extra licences would mean a massive job boost to the aquaculture but also to other industries such as boat building, transport hospitality and fishing. We use wild caught wrasse as cleanerfish during the summer, for this we closely work together with local fishermen. This is a valuable income to the fishermen which would otherwise only have a limited number of other uneconomical species to fish at this time of the year. We have many other fishermen looking to get into wrasse fishing but we do not need more until we get extra farms.

The jobs would be a combination of skilled and unskilled work. It would also provide jobs for the marine science students leaving NUIG and GMIT as currently there are very few jobs available in this sector. Out of the 22 people that graduated from my class in 2015 only one other person apart from me had a job in marine science after 6 months. This needs to be greatly increased for a country that is entirely surrounded by water. Our company also provides summer jobs to undergraduate students which as an important part to gain practical experience in a very theoretical university course that lacks any practical aspects.

Furthermore, many of the jobs, if not all, that extra licences would bring to the industry are in rural areas along the west coast from Donegal to Cork. These would be a great benefit and would allow more people to stay in their areas which also allow other industries to grow and provide services to tourism, farming etc. The aquaculture industry is a source of employment in areas which would otherwise not be sustainable for other large scale industries. To improve the best practice and provide more consistent employment extra licences would also be valuable.

I hope this review will change the current licensing process and allow Ireland to have a fair opportunity to grow its aquaculture industry in line with European best practice but also allow the company to grow and harvest fish in the manner which our colleagues in other countries like Scotland or Norway do. I know that if we had more robust licences that didn't take as long to process, my colleagues and I would have more work which is what we want. Thank you for taking the time to read my submission and I look forward to hearing from you in the future.

Your sincerely,

Felix Sproll

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Felix Sproll". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. The first name "Felix" is on the left and "Sproll" is on the right, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of "Sproll".