

## **Submission from Údarás na Gaeltachta on the Aquaculture Licensing Review**

Údarás na Gaeltachta welcomes the establishment of the Aquaculture Licensing Review Group and of the opportunity to make a submission regarding the review.

### **An Overview of Údarás na Gaeltachta**

Údarás na Gaeltachta's Headquarters are located in Na Forbacha, Co. Galway and the agency maintains a network of sub-offices in Gaoth Dobhair, Co. Donegal, in Béal an Mhuirthéad, Co. Mayo, in An Daingean, Co. Kerry and in Baile Mhic Íre, Co. Cork. Since the 1950's, successive governments have recognised the requirement for a dedicated economic development agency for the Gaeltacht to sustain the local employment base thus helping to maintain the viability of the community and of the language it spoke.

Our statutory objectives include the development of indigenous enterprises and the attraction of investment, including FDI, and the implementation of a language and cultural development programme. Údarás na Gaeltachta has spent more than 30 years successfully implementing an integrated development programme which addresses the economic, cultural, linguistic and social requirements of the Gaeltacht community. An tÚdarás has always recognised the importance of the marine resource to the creation of employment opportunities and has always supported aquaculture and seafood development. Údarás na Gaeltachta currently supports coastal communities through a range of incentives which are primarily directed at sectors such as seafood processing and aquaculture as well as seaweed processing.

### **Developments in the Irish Coastal Area**

The Gaeltacht coastline extends over some 2,500km from Donegal in the north to Ring in Co. Waterford. In spatial terms it constitutes some 25% of the overall Irish coastline and includes the 6 offshore Gaeltacht Islands. The coastal zone has a population of some 71,367 people which reside within a 10km radius from the coast. Within this zone, over 6,500 full-time jobs are sustained by Údarás client companies.

The geographically dispersed nature of these coastal districts, along with the significant deficits in the physical and telecommunications infrastructure create a very challenging environment for the creation of new development opportunities and employment. On the other hand, these districts have demonstrated real competitive advantage as attractive locations for developing and maintaining successful enterprises. The advantages include:

- The valuable coastal resource – Aquaculture, seaweed, food, energy and tourism
- The availability of a highly skilled workforce with an extensive range of available skills relevant to the requirements of a mixed enterprise base
- Access to the research capability of third-level education institutes which include the Letterkenny Institute of Technology, The National University of Ireland, Galway, The Galway/Mayo Institute of Technology in Castlebar and Galway, The Institute of Technology Tralee, the Coastal & Marine Research Centre at University College Cork, and the Institute of Technology in Waterford

- A strong co-operative network with development and investment agencies which include BIM, Foras na Mara, SmartBay, IFI, EI, IDA, The Western Development Commission, FÁS, and the local authorities (the Gaeltacht is served by 7 County Councils which discharge a statutory mandate for development in the Gaeltacht). Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies have benefitted from a longstanding, effective and productive co-operative relationship with BIM and has representatives on a number of committees, including those of the current schemes operating under the EFF.

### **Economic Impact of Gaeltacht Companies in Marine and Seafood Sector**

The annual business survey undertaken by Forfás demonstrates the significant influence of the Údarás na Gaeltachta strategy not only on the Gaeltacht economy but also on the national economy. According to the ABSEI the research which was undertaken to determine the economic impact of Údarás na Gaeltachta's activities revealed an economic return of over €1.6 billion through the trading activity of Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies. The overall economic impact of such client companies amounts to €908m. There are 7,000 people employed in Údarás na Gaeltachta subsidiaries (70% of which are located in the coastal zone) which creates an investment of some €800m in terms of economic output for the Irish economy.

In terms of the Marine Enterprise Sector, the following data demonstrates the value of this sector to the coastal community.

- The sector sustains 886 direct jobs with another 200 employed directly or on a part-time or seasonal basis. This amounts to an overall impact of some 2,830 additional jobs.
- Our client companies direct expenditure in the economy is projected at more than €80m annually.
- On average, this sector draws most of its material and funding services locally.
- The estimated payroll is in the region of €34m.
- There is close to €100m in sales and roughly €70m of a contribution to exports.

<b>Marine Enterprise Gaeltacht</b>	<b>Direct Employment</b>	<b>Employment Multiplier (Number)</b>	<b>Multiplier Effect – Additional Employment</b>	<b>Employment Effect on the Economy</b>
Natural Resources/Marine-base	406	1.8	731	1137
Food	446	2.6	1160	1606
Services	34	1.56	53	87
<b>Total</b>	<b>886</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2830</b>

### **Aquaculture Licence Review**

Government policy for the sustainable development of aquaculture, as outlined in *Food Wise 2025* and the *National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development* have consolidated the strength of regional coastal areas with an integrated country-wide approach. The licencing regime presents very specific challenges for the development of the coastal districts and long delays are being experienced in terms of the renewal of licences which has a significant impact on the sustainable development of the sector. Applicants for the grant schemes under the EMFF are required to hold a current and valid licence, the delays in the licencing regime mean that current licence holder

who have applied for renewals (some of them since 2012) may be ineligible for grant aid under these schemes which can impact on the business plans of the companies.

*In order to support the achievement of the actions and priorities set out in Food Wise 2025 and the National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development there is a need to optimise the licensing capacity in order to increase production in existing enterprise and to encourage new entrants to the sector. It is important that any increase in production capacity is carried out in line with best environmental practice.*

It is imperative that the licence system is simplified and that clear timelines are set out for the granting of both new licences and renewals.

It is essential that the necessary resources are made available to the Aquaculture Licenses Appeals Board so as to assist them in the implementation of their work programme.

It is essential that productive employment is created and maintained in marginal coastal communities in order to ensure their survival. The continued development of the aquaculture sector can provide employment opportunities and contribute greatly to both the local and the national economy. It is important that the licensing regime is one which supports the development of the aquaculture industry while also ensuring the highest level of environmental practices are adhered to.

### **Conclusion**

We are available at any time to meet with you or to discuss the above further and look forward to continuing to play our part in the continued development of a sustainable aquaculture sector for the benefit of coastal communities and the Irish economy.