

Dear chairperson,

At the outset, I would like to wish you well and thank you for taking time to read my submission to your review committee which I will keep brief and to the point.

By way of introduction, my name is David Browne and I am General manager of Yawl Bay Seafood Ltd located in Youghal in Co Cork . We currently employ 4 people and our company has an annual turnover of 500k, However from 1987 until 1999 when Irish Salmon was in good supply we had a peak of 50 staff and turnover of £2.5 million, at this time Irish Smoked Salmon was the premium product in our sector and during this period the Irish salmon farmers could supply whatever volumes we could require.

Unfortunately this changed for a few different reasons, One of which was the need for the farmers to export 60% of the volume to qualify for grants which led to the ridiculous practice of processors buying Irish salmon which had been exported to France or Organic Irish salmon which would have incurred a loss (Personally I would rather see the Farmers that sell directly to the Irish processors rewarded as opposed to the exporters. This is a situation that can be rectified in time but only if given the necessary attention). With this practice in full flow it became almost impossible to source genuine Irish Salmon and with the only option was to buy Scottish or Norwegian salmon the product in general lost its integrity and its good standing within the market place, It is however starting to remerge as the market leader however more supply is needed!

Currently, I am faced with a very real problem in terms of our product offering. A significant percentage of our customers who wish to buy Irish salmon cannot do so. This is because I cannot source enough of the product from our Irish suppliers due to the restrictions of the current licence process. Our point of differentiation as a business is based on our ability to offer a product produced in Ireland, with Irish provenance. We are currently unable to do this and are forced to rely on imports at certain times of the year.

It surprised me that an island nation such as ours would have to import salmon from other countries and continents with the loss to the Irish economy and the ability of my business and that of the Aquaculture sector to provide local jobs for local people. There is obviously a major obstacle to farming and growing our own Irish salmon. Are we unable to issue licences, if so, why?

It seems to me that we are missing an open goal in terms of the opportunity to produce a niche product in our own country for which the market is prepared to pay a premium. Why is this the case, why is it so difficult to obtain a licence in Ireland? Is it a resources issue; is it a mind-set, why are we paying lip-service to supporting a sector which we would appear to be working against?

I would therefore implore your committee to examine and resolve whatever logjam has developed in the Irish aquaculture regulatory system. You'll be acutely aware of the raft of ambitious targets which Government has set for itself in terms of the Blue Economy, it would appear that we are a long way from delivering on these.

Sincerely,

David Browne

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