

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 Joe Rose from [REDACTED] Co Donegal. I have been an aquaculture producer since 1989. Inver is an ideal area for this industry as the natural resources provide the environment required. Fish farming is very important industry that provides employment in our rural area where unemployment and emigration figures are high. As an employer, the uncertain licensing process has made it difficult to retain employees as they can never be certain of having a stable income. It has also made forward planning difficult as we have had to be conservative with stock levels as we are not guaranteed to have a licence in the future. Modernisation of the farm has also been a challenge as it is not viable to purchase expensive equipment without being certain of retaining our licence.

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 mindset, 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.

One final question, might I ask why I as a taxpayer, am funding the costs associated with Inland Fisheries Ireland to lobby, brief and speak out against aquaculture at every opportunity? It's a farce which is beyond belief and it's time it stopped, we either have a pro-aquaculture policy or we don't?

Sincerely,

Joe Rose