

Date: 02-02-17

**Ref: Independent Review of Aquaculture Licencing Process**

Dear Licence Review Committee Members,

My name is Laura Hegarty . I live in Co. Donegal, I work for Marine Harvest Ireland and am based at their headquarters in Fanad, Co Donegal and have done so for the last 4 years . I am employed as a Processing Operative at the Rinmore Processing Plant.

I am delighted that you are in the process of reviewing the current aquaculture licencing system because to my mind, it is not working. I know that Marine Harvest have applied for new and renewed licences in the past 6 years but to date we have not received a licence.

This has a direct impact on me personally as my hours of work vary each week and we do not have enough fish to process five days per week. I am currently not working as we are in a layoff situation for two months due to having no fish available to process. This is the fourth layoff period in four years and as you can imagine the loss of income during these layoff periods is a significant issue for myself and all the processing staff affected by the lack of stock available for processing. If the company had more sites then more fish could be put to sea and would result in myself and my co-workers getting more access to full time work.

I am from a coastal, rural community in Donegal and salmon farming has supported our area for the past 38 years which is an invaluable resource to our local economy.

During the recession it was widely reported that exports would strongly help the Irish economy. Marine Harvest currently export up to 85% of their stock. With more licenses the value of these exports will increase.

Recently I was told that 70% of the planet is covered in water but only 2% of the world's food comes from the sea. As a country we should be utilising the ocean's wealth to produce a healthy and sustainable food source. For this to happen we need the aquaculture licencing system to be sound, efficient and effective.

Sincerely,

L. Hegarty

