

Date: 3.2.17

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

Dear Licence Review Committee Members,

Thank you for taking time to read my submission which I will keep brief and to the point. My name is Michael Nelis I live in [REDACTED] Rathmullan and I currently work for Marine Harvest Ireland for the last 23 years. I am employed in the area of Marine Support and I am located in scraggy bay Net station. Beside Lough Swilly sea site.

Marine Harvest Ireland has operations all down the west coast of Ireland, from Donegal to Kerry/Cork.

I am from a coastal, rural community in Rathmullan and salmon farming has supported our area for the past four decades which has been a life line to our local community and economy. Aquaculture has enabled me to stay in my local area and see families raise their children through valued employment in this sector.

Service industries surrounding Aquaculture also benefit such as hotels, shops, garages, transport, community centres as well as local sporting clubs, GAA etc.

I am delighted that you are in the process of reviewing the current aquaculture licencing system because to my mind, it is not working. When Marine Harvest Ireland applies for a licence, we have no idea when the application might be processed. Our company applied for a licence in 2011 for a site in Shot Head, Bantry bay and there is still no final decision.

I would therefore implore your committee to examine and resolve the issues which have held our industry back for over 20 years. If more resources are required, can you please recommend that these resources be found as a matter of urgency? Ultimately, if the industry is allowed to flourish, the return to the exchequer would be such that the state will achieve a significant return from any such redeployment of resources.

There is scope in this country to have a thriving aquaculture sector with the direct and indirect economic benefits which this can create. It stands to reason that an island nation on the outermost fringes of Europe has scope to grow its blue economy, specifically consent to more salmon farms albeit in an environmentally responsible manner. We hope this review will allow Ireland to have a fair opportunity to grow its aquaculture industry in line with European best practice.

This review should result in a licence which is fit for purpose and allows the company to grow and harvest fish in the manner which our colleagues in other countries do. I know that if we had more robust licences, my colleagues and I would have more work which is what we want.

Sincerely,

*Michael Nelis*

