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# IFA Aquaculture

## Autumn 2016

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# Minister to IFA “Licencing review before end 2016”

## - IFA Aquaculture’s long campaign makes progress -

The new chairmen of the ISGA and ISA Damien O’Keeffe and Michael Mulloy, have both made licensing a key action item for the Associations and lost no time approached the newly formed government to sit down collectively with the Minister for the Marine, Michael Creed TD to make progress on this crucial issue.

Having won a commitment in a key Government policy document in 2015 to a licence review, the IFA team now want deadlines and clear political leadership to ensure this process does not become a “paper exercise”, given the importance of security of tenure and a “fit for purpose licensing regime to the entire sector.

There is a clear commitment in the national policy document – “Foodwise 2025” – to both expanding the industry and also reviewing licensing. The industry is currently worth €149 million at primary production level and supports 2.3 jobs in the wider community for every on-farm employee. Currently the industry employs 1841 people around the coast and in freshwater facilities inland.

Responding to IFA, Minister Creed gave an unequivocal commitment to having an independent review carried out, beginning in the next few months. IFA responded by assuring the Minister of the industry’s co-operation and full input into the process.

The industry representatives clearly made the case for closer attention to be paid to the business aspects of farming, without losing



*Pictured at the meeting in Agriculture House are Minister Creed and his officials along with IFA’s Jan Feenstra, Damien O’Keeffe, Michael Mulloy, Kian Louet and Richie Flynn*

sight of the necessary regulatory controls – the current licencing system is too rigid to allow farmers to adapt to changing markets and physical environments and does not take into account the huge technological progress made across all sectors in the last 20 years.

### Foodwise 2025 Commitment:

*The Government and Department of Marine will “Commission an independent review of the existing aquaculture licensing system involving all key stakeholders, to identify the current shortcomings and bottlenecks (legislative, resource and logistical), to report by early 2016 and implement necessary changes to the aquaculture licensing system as a matter of priority”*

In carrying out a review of licences, the IFA team made clear that there should be no slowdown in processing long outstanding licence applications around the country and applicants who had waited for four to eight years had to get renewals in order to make investments, access grant aid and have security of tenure.

Minister Creed said that the review would be carried out by an independent chairperson and that full consultation with all stakeholders would be carried out. The IFA pointed out that if new legislation was required in the wake of any review that this would add considerable time to the overall exercise and urged that all possible haste be made in completing the task of identifying the major problems in the system

## ISA counter-attacks TTX threat

The ISA has led a battle against a potentially disastrous and deeply flawed regulatory instrument with potentially disastrous consequences for the Irish mussel industry.

News of a new threat to mussel exports arose in April as both the European Commission and the mussel industry was faced with a surprise ultimatum from the Dutch food safety authorities informing them of a food safety "emergency" requiring immediate action.

Unfortunately, what was proposed would have severely damaging impacts upon the Dutch industry and imported raw material from Ireland and the UK.

A toxin known only previously in the Japanese delicacy Puffer fish (or "Fugu") had been, it was claimed, discovered in mussels in an area off the Dutch coast and this new "TTX" compound required regulation for consumer health reasons.

No outbreak of poisoning has to date been recorded relating to bivalves and no formal research had been carried out on the prevalence of the toxin in EU waters.

**No risk assessment had been carried out** on the potential impact to consumers nor on the impact to intra community (within the EU) trade, if stringent measures to regulate this toxin were brought in unilaterally by the Netherlands.

The Dutch authorities met with its own industry and sent a formal request to the European Commission – who admitted being taken completely by surprise – to have a regulatory limit of 20 micrograms per gram for TTX introduced immediately.

Under EU regulations, any country can regulate for toxins or other risks at national level but to extend this regulation to imports requires EU agreement.

The ISA immediately went to work raising questions at the highest level in DG SANCO about the legality and scientific reliability of this measure.

ISA also activated its membership of the European Mollusc Producers Association (EMPA) to put the full weight of other country industries such as Italy, Spain and France behind the campaign to remove this unnecessary threat to the internal trade of mussels in Europe.

Testing for TTX is complex and expensive, requiring access to more LCMS machines as well as "reference material" for the toxin which is not available in Europe.

It is known that TTX is formed in puffer fish as a byproduct of a bacterial disease and that it is also present in other types of fish and shellfish so picking on mussels alone is highly unfair and illogical.

ISA worked closely with the Dutch Producers' Organisation and also raised support for the campaign through its contacts in Brussels with the European Fish Processors Association.

**Despite warnings from the EU, Dutch authorities unilaterally imposed the 20 microgramme limit in June without a risk assessment. Due to ISA pressure and the Commission's requirement for a risk assessment, the measures were limited to testing at harvest. Limits were exceeded in early June but have been below the 20 microgramme per kilo limit ever since in all Dutch waters.**

ISA has kept the SFPA and Marine Institute briefed on the situation and understandably has been lobbying hard to ensure that the voice of the Irish industry is heard clearly in relation to this challenge.

## Classification Once Again

*The Annual Shellfish Waters Classification review will shortly get underway. As in previous years, ISA represents the industry in this vital process to ensure members are well informed and have their opinions and facts aired during the analysis of the 3 years' of data on every single bay in the country. ISA will be contacting members who may potentially have problems when the draft classification is produced. A final meeting is set for the last week in June to go through each of the bays.*

*IFA Aquaculture Executive, Richie Flynn, who assists producers each year during the classification review, said: "Our advice remains the same for all producers – whether you have had consistent classification for many years or not. Follow these rules which are now far more relevant due to the inclusion of THREE year's data in the classification analysis.*

*With the adoption of more flexible rules following successful lobbying by ISA and the European Mollusc Producers Association, there is now far more flexibility for out of character samples. However this does not mean farmers should be complacent about either pollution or bad results.*

*Your local fishery officer must inform you when an out of character result occurs and arrange for a follow up test. Maintain a good relationship with your local SFO. Out of character results should always be recorded, noting anything unusual which may have led to the result. If a result is not classed as out of character it will stay "on your record" for three years.*

## IFA supports new Aqua-business Course

IFA Aquaculture with BIM's Aquaculture and Training Divisions and the assistance of Treanbeg Marine Consulting have been working with Carlow Institute of technology for the past year developing a Higher Diploma course on "Aqua-business" for fish farm employees and students from other disciplines. The course will cover **Aqua-business Economics, Law and Regulation for Aqua-business, Strategic and Innovation Management, Financial Management and Planning, Marketing Management, Work Placement.** This innovative course is designed to give students (full and part time) a grounding in the practicalities of running a fish farming or small processing company or getting involved in management in seafood and aquaculture. This course will be of interest to those looking to enter management roles in Aqua-business, Aqua-economics, financial or regulatory roles in R & D or in a seafood processing company or wishing to start up an Aqua-business. Fees are eligible for a 50% grant under the Gateway project fund for aquaculture businesses. It is the next logical step up from the science courses many would be familiar with and gives that extra edge to Irish students and aquaculture companies. The course will be opened in January 2017 and will be formally launched this autumn. Keep an eye on [www.ifa.ie/aquaculture](http://www.ifa.ie/aquaculture) for further news.



## President Joe Healy marks Govt card on Aquaculture

President of the IFA, Joe Healy from Co. Galway, pinpointed a vital issue for sea-farmers during his first AGM address in the Irish Farm Centre, a week after his successful election.

Addressing the Executive Council and the media, Joe Healy said, *"The aquaculture sector supports 2,000 jobs and delivers €150m in output.*

***IFA believes that this important sector belongs firmly in the Department of Agriculture. This is particularly important to ensure delivery on the commitment in Foodwise 2025 for an urgent licence review"***.

## EU Aquaculture Representation

The first meeting of the General Assembly of the newly formed **Aquaculture Advisory Council** will take place in Early October. IFA Aquaculture is a member of the assembly and will also take part in both the finfish and shellfish working groups. These bodies are where the bulk of the work will take place.

IFA through its membership of two European bodies – one for finfish (FEAP) and one for shellfish (EMPA) is one of the few single national organisations to have an overarching presence in all marine and freshwater aquaculture within its national territory. This means a more efficient service for members and best use of their funding as well as an active network in Brussels at all times through the IFA's permanent Brussels office.

IFA Aquaculture has maintained a reputation in the EU as a professional representative body and has held a number of key positions on EU bodies.

## Industry "No" to dumping of dredge spoil at sea

*"We are fully supportive of development but there are alternatives to dumping risky spoil at sea" – IFA*

IFA members in south Donegal met to discuss the proposed dredging of Killybegs harbour, after which IFA Aquaculture wrote to consultants to say that the organisation and its members are fully supportive of all coastal infrastructural projects which can demonstrably improve the local economy and the Irish seafood sector in general;

However, the organisation also pointed out that it is **"fundamentally opposed in all circumstances to the dumping at sea in any location of spoil from any dredging operations"**;

**None of the three sites proposed by the consultants were acceptable to the aquaculture industry or IFA Aquaculture** given the tried and tested alternatives which would benefit both the economy and the natural environment, the near shore and highly accessible nature of the Smooth Point site and in particular the very real and substantial threat to our stocks and the very basis of our business posed by any dumping at sea of spoil from this site.

"Dredging of harbours in the south west of the country in recent years have all included the strict requirement to dispose of any gravel or silt spoil on land where it can do no harm to marine eco-systems, wild fisheries or aquaculture activities. Dingle, Bantry and Castletownbere have all had this requirement in recent dredging works and the small amounts of spoil involved in the first two of these are indicative of the inherent dangers and toxicity of such material, even at relatively low volumes.

## Oyster Workshop 25-26 Oct 2016, Sligo

*IFA and BIM hold sectoral shellfish workshops every year, alternating between the main sectors and this year the focus is on Gigas and Native Oysters.*

*This year the workshop, which will focus on technical issues of interest to all oyster producers, takes place in the Radisson Blu hotel, On the way to Rosses Point in Sligo.*

*Speakers and an agenda are being lined up with a special event to celebrate the Irish oyster planned for the 25<sup>th</sup> – More details will follow to producers individually. Also watch [www.ifa.ie](http://www.ifa.ie) and [www.bim.ie](http://www.bim.ie) for more details.*

## Structural Design protocol for finfish farms online

After a protected period of consultation, the protocol for design of marine finfish farms is now online on the Department's website. ISGA was involved from an early stage in the consultation and inputted the views of members on the proposals from the Engineering Division and BIM.

The protocol allows for applications for new or reviewed sites to be submitted in **preliminary form** at the outset. Only upon receiving a licence will the licensee then agree **detailed specifications** with the Dept engineers and the involvement of a "competent person" to certify the suitability of the gear in use.

The preliminary design will indicate position and orientation of the main structural components of the finfish farm, identify principal dimensions of nets, pens and moorings and generally illustrate the structure of the proposed farm. These preliminary design drawings will be submitted as part of the licence application and will also be referenced in the licence (if issued).

Following the issue of a licence and before farm deployment the licence holder will specify all elements of the structure proposed for deployment at the site.

The protocol also outlines procedures for design-associated record keeping and for review of the design during the operational life of a marine finfish farm.

**Clew Bay industry visit by new IFA President**

Joe Healy went to the producers of shellfish and finfish in Clew Bay, Co Mayo to see for himself their operations and listen to the concerns and plans for the future. Joe found a sector full of optimism tempered by frustration with the government over licences. Pictured are local producers and staff from MHI Clare Island, Blackshell Farm, Connemara Seafoods and BIM and Marine Institute



**ISA Members**

Northwest Shellfish	Rainer Krause
Triskell Seafood	Hugh Sheehy
Kush Seafarms	Castlemaine Harbour Co-Op Society (50 members)
Bantry Harbour Mussels	Sliogeisc Baile Mhic Coda Teo
Blackshell Farm	Skibereen Shellfish
Fergal Langley	Donegal Oysters
Carrowholly Shellfish	Celtic Kerber Ltd.,
Tadhg O'Maoilean	Rodeen Fish Farm
Hook Head Shellfish	Irish Premium Oysters
Southward Ltd.,	Carlingford Oyster Company
G & B Barge Ltd.,	Coney Island Shellfish
Cormorant Mussels	Fitzpatrick Oysters
Snave Harbour Mussels	Oysters for Suir
Martin Coll	Emerald Oysters
Kevin Lydon	Sliogeisc Baigh Traigheanna Teo
Blackpearl Shellfish	Green Oysters / Dungarvan Shellfish
Michael Scannell	Ferguson Shellfish
Sherkin Oysters	Loughros Beg Specials
Ardgroom Shellfish	Sliogeisc Chonamara Teo
Colin Whooley	Treanbeg Shellfish
Meitheal Tra Na Rinne	Seal Harbour Enterprises
Sliogeisc na Ross.	Seabreeze Ltd.
Ostreian Teoranta	Sliogeisc Baigh Gaothbarra
Crocknagee Oysters	Muskerry Seafoods
Kelly Oysters	Dooncastle Oysters
Mulroy Bay Mussels	Natura Shellfish
Paddy Boyle	Deise Premium Aquaculture
Raccoo Shellfish	Movasta Shellfish

FOR MORE INFORMATION

**IFA Aquaculture**

Home of  
**The Irish Salmon Growers' Association,**  
**The Irish Shellfish Association**  
 Irish Representative:  
**Federation of European Aquaculture Producers;**  
**European Mollusc Producers' Association;**  
**International Salmon Farmers' Association.**

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