

ROARING WATER SEA VEGETABLE CO.
Director: Paul Cobb.
SUBMISSION

OUR COMMUNITY

Low employment in this area, though great quality of life, hence necessary to start ones own business.

My story- Having worked on Irish fishing boats as a young man when the fishing industry was still nascent in the 1970's we came to live here full time in 2002, worked on the Long Island ferry before moving on to building houses. Studied Aquaculture 2008-9 at Castletownbere. Worked on the Roaring Water Seaweed Co-ops growing facility with the BIM and subsequently managed the site since 2010 under the auspices of Stephen Casey who took the license when the Co-op was disbanded. 8 years of farming kelp, sugar kelp and wakame. In 2018 put in my second application for my own site in Dunmanus bay as I am working one year to the next not knowing if the licensee will need the Roaring Water site for mussels and ineligible for grants and investment as it is not in my name

SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION

First seaweed farm in the country sponsored by BIM. 10 years of production has achieved a tried and tested method to grow brown seaweeds, reds need more research. Seaweed farming a multi million \$ industry worldwide,(6 billion \$ 2012) here we have excellent environment to grow what is becoming a global commodity that could be on the same scale as mussel farming providing local employment, exports and supply bio refineries like Bio Atlantis, to synthesize derivatives. From being an European leader in the field Ireland has fallen behind other Atlantic nations that are investing heavily in this new industry.

RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Seaplants sequester a large proportion of carbon out of the atmosphere and play a vital role in balancing levels of nitrogen and filtering out heavy metals and toxins. The seaweed is only as clean as the sea, were seaweed to be banned then so should fish? There is a threat of naturally occurring heavy metals currently being thoroughly researched in Ireland but historical evidence would suggest there are no health risks (and a lot of benefits). Crucially, the threat of Arsenic and other heavy metals has occurred in samples of wild kelps which are older than the short lifespan of farmed kelps. To date no farmed seaweed has failed a test to my knowledge. This is a powerful argument to promote farmed seaweed not wild. I have to do micro and chemical tests every year unlike fishermen and to date have passed every test.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Mechanical wild harvesting is cheaper but there is a long term environmental cost. The analogy of cutting a rain forest for timber is comparable although kelp has only a 7 year lifespan. The sea is a different medium and changes occur much faster with invasive species moving in, as in the case of the Grand banks. When the cod was gone there was a sea urchin explosion and the kelp forest was decimated to be replaced by other species. Bio diversity is all important in these fertile coastal waters. Damage by fishing is still going on to this day such as beam

trawling sprats in the bay for animal feed. All these industries have been sponsored by the state including Bio Atlantis so where is the political will to create a seaweed industry? Seaweed farming is the most benign form of aquaculture with a growing market.

I export it to the UK and Japan as well as making value added artisan food products for sale locally and abroad. Price of production would come tumbling down in an economy of scale as well as all the benefits of clean water, attracting fish in the canopy and possibly synchronizing the area with shellfish and farmed fish.

Problems of licensing; At present the license process is as lengthy and difficult as starting a fishfarm with all its risks to wild stocks. Ideally we would have a healthy wild catch, but due to mis management the sea is in crisis. Aquaculture should be seen as not just a new way to make money but a regenerative process to deal with a crisis brought about by overfishing. There is a comparison with forestry again, by replacing indigenous stocks, creating habitats, maintaining water quality we can make a difference. But this needs expert monitoring to reproduce what has always happened spontaneously.

WHAT WE ARE ASKING FOR

Cut the red tape in seaweed aquaculture license applications and hand harvesting applications.

Create a seaweed marketing board where producers can sell their crop. As for example, in Galicia where government investment in shiny new facilities, technical staff and flash freeze drying has led to Algomar taking over the lucrative UK market, why not Ireland?

Encourage smallscale operations on a community level to hone the skills for a sustainable and regenerative industry, so far we have not experienced any diseases which is more likely in large scale intensive aquaculture, but this is no cause for complacency. The amazing laboratory in Gearies has got us this far but theres very little feedback for new farmers to get experience, I had to learn by trial and error techniques of drying and curing seaweed, and fortunately with guidance from Japanese mentors it was validated. We use traditional methods of first drying seaweeds on lines outdoors before secondary drying or freezing. We need a technical manual with best times for harvesting different species (wild) and guidelines on levels of humidity, freezing, salinating, blanching and other methods. Our aim is to establish good practice for a problem free future.