



9th January 2025

licence@mara.gov.ie

RE: MUL250004

A Chara,

The Marine Divisions of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) welcome the opportunity to provide comments on Celtic Seaweed Bath Products Ltd t/a VOYA. application for a Maritime Usage Licence to undertake traditional hand harvesting of *Fucus Sarratus* seaweed in Co. Sligo.

It is essential that the sea-fishing and aquaculture sectors are fully recognised and given a high priority as a long-standing, pre-existing, and traditional activity in the marine environment as the proposed harvesting of seaweed resources is being evaluated.

Fishers and aquaculture site holders are primary food producers dependent upon certain marine areas which are particularly important for food production. This primary production is critical to supplying the downstream indigenous seafood processing and export industries and in sustaining the livelihoods of coastal communities. The importance of these primary and secondary food production activities is reflected in the Government's Food Vision 2030 policy.

To inform the DAFM comments, the observations of the Marine Institute (MI), Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) and Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) on the application were requested.

BIM advised that they promote sustainable management of environmental resources and the use of best practices. Due to overlaps, the proposed hand harvesting seaweed activity would need to be compatible with existing active licenced aquaculture and inshore fisheries activities within the sought application area.

The MI note that it is likely that the proposed harvest rates are sustainable based on historic harvesting, however without any in-situ area specific estimates of *Fucus Sarratus* productivity this cannot be definitively stated. DAFM would highlight the MI statement that the age of the scientific assessment is of concern.

The SFPA note that lobster and crab pot fishing take place in deeper water adjacent to the proposed harvesting sites, however there are no foreseen implications for SFPA conducting its official controls from this proposed activity.

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DAFM recognises that the applicant's aim is to promote co-existence and minimise potential disruption to commercial fishing activities in the area.

The evaluation of potential impacts of seaweed harvesting on commercial sea fishing activities needs to be given consideration within the context of the requirements set out under the Maritime Area Planning Act and the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF).

The Marine Engineering Division (MED) of DAFM have made observations on this application and recommend that further quantification is required for both the harvest sites and the harvest amounts.

The principles in the NMPF of avoiding, minimising, or mitigating impacts on access to existing activities (including specific policies on Fisheries and Aquaculture) should be followed and any proposed activity should incorporate the principle of maximising coexistence with established activities in marine areas.

DAFM would seek confirmation that where there are any indirect impacts on traditional fishing grounds identified, consultation with local stakeholders will be undertaken prior to and throughout the harvesting works and a Fisheries Liaison Officer (FLO) will be appointed to consult with all the relevant sea going and foreshore users in advance of any marine survey operations.

Please also find attached documents from the MI, MED and the SFPA which provide further comments for consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Marine Divisions
An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine