

Taste the Atlantic (TTA)

Project Outline:

The TTA initiative will be critical to creating better understanding, acceptance and public support of sustainable aquaculture along the western seaboard. The successful coexistence of aquaculture and tourism must be promoted to the public to ensure that the 'social licence' for sustainable aquaculture endures and that it is abundantly clear that aquaculture and leisure activities and tourism are not mutually exclusive. Failure to deliver positive public engagement about aquaculture and marine tourism could contribute to negative public perceptions, opposition to sustainable development and difficulties for the industry in applying through the aquaculture licencing process and the emergence of a narrative that aquaculture does not support coastal communities whereas, in fact, the opposite has been shown to be true.

BIM will work closely with the Irish aquaculture industry and Failte Ireland (FI) to develop new aquaculture related visitor experiences along the Wild Atlantic Way that can contribute to an improved understanding of the aquaculture sector and that can contribute to wider public acceptance of sustainable aquaculture as a food producing sector. It is vital that visitor experiences about aquaculture and how it contributes to communities in numerous ways (direct/indirect employment, production of premium quality seafood, increased sales/consumption of locally produced seafood) are facilitated.

Project Objectives:

BIM proposes to further develop a number of aquaculture visitor experiences during 2022. BIM has identified eight potential projects which could be implemented during 2022.

1. Doagh Famine village - aquaculture (oyster) information/interpretive materials (Co. Donegal)
2. Keem Bay Seafoods - aquaculture (salmon) interpretive centre on (Achill Island, Co. Mayo)
3. Connemara Smokehouse - aquaculture interpretive centre (Ballyconneely, Co. Galway)
4. Mungo Murphy Abalone - aquaculture information/interpretive materials. (Co. Galway)
5. Moyasta Oysters - aquaculture information/interpretive materials (Co. Clare)
6. Cromane Shellfish - aquaculture information/interpretive materials (Co. Kerry)
7. Haven Shellfish - aquaculture information/interpretive materials (Co. Cork)
8. Ummera Smoked Salmon - aquaculture information/interpretive materials (Co. Cork)

In tandem with the development of the visitor experiences, FI will look to integrate the TTA into their regional development initiatives with the express aim of increasing the impact of TTA and increasing numbers of visitors to TTA seafood producers to a target level of c.30,000. FI see this as a more strategic option to increase cooperation amongst various regional offerings and to increase visitor numbers across the board in this region.

BIM will also facilitate a series of farm visits for key regional stakeholder groups to create better understanding of sustainable aquaculture amongst influential groups like chefs, journalists, NGOs and food/tourism industry interests. It is critical to foster better understanding of the aquaculture sector in order to ensure that support for the sector is obtained through creating a positive public perception and with it an enhanced 'social licence' for aquaculture.

BIM will continue to engage a 'TTA aquaculture ambassador' to undertake a series of communications initiatives (media, social media, and 'live' outreach events) during 2022. The purpose of this will be to use a person of suitable public profile, who can be recognised as a sectoral influencer or leader in the Irish marine or food sector to facilitate an open and facts-based dialog on TTA and the aquaculture producers on the trail. These initiatives will include representatives of the aquaculture industry and

other relevant stakeholders in order to allow the industry to be given a direct voice to discuss important national, European and global opportunities and challenges for the aquaculture industry. A wide range of topical issues can be covered over a limited series, and this will create an opportunity for fair and objective discussion around aquaculture and tourism and the impact on communities around Ireland.

BIM will undertake a series of communications initiatives to raise the profile of the TTA trail during 2022. This will include further design, origination, production and widespread distribution of various materials including photographs and images, videography, animations, social media content and a range of tailored information materials like booklets, signs, posters and flyers. The potential of high impact mobile phone applications and similar options will be assessed and may be rolled out if deemed necessary.

Expected Benefits:

- Development of complementary diversification opportunities for aquaculture producers that allows maintenance of overall focus on their core business (seafood production). This can be measured through participation by industry in new tourism/visitor initiatives.
- Creation of opportunities for increasing revenue amongst aquaculture producers. This can be measured through revenue reporting by participants.
- To create a better understanding and acceptance among communities of sustainable aquaculture/seafood operators in their area.
- Reduction in over-reliance on the export market for unprocessed/semi processed product. Measurable through sales and demand reporting by industry and food service operators.
- To create better public awareness and acceptance of aquaculture as a sustainable economic and social force-for-good in coastal communities. Measurable through surveys/press coverage.
- To provide direct support to food service operators on the raw material and production techniques involved to help drive sales and awareness of Irish seafood. Measurable through quantified agency supports provided.

Projected Cost: €250,000