"Determination of Aquaculture/ Foreshore Licensing application –T09/519

Galway Gourmet Oysters Ltd has applied for authorisation to cultivate Pacific Oysters using trestles and hanging baskets on the inter-tidal foreshore on a 21 hectare site (*T12/519A*) in Aughinish Bay, Co. Galway.

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine has determined that it is not in the public interest to grant the licences sought. In making his determination the Minister considered those matters which by virtue of the Fisheries (Amendment) Act 1997, and other relevant legislation, he was required to have regard. Such matters include any submissions and observations received in accordance with the statutory provisions. The Minister also had regard to the findings of the Departments advisors and the Appropriate Assessment Conclusion Statement. The following are the reasons and considerations for the Minister's determination to refuse the licences sought: -

- Due to the presence of the invasive, non native seaweed Sargassum muticum in the proposed site and the risk of its dispersal both within the Bay and possible beyond by use of the site for aquaculture.
- The site is located within the Galway Bay SAC. An Article 6 Appropriate Assessment has been carried out in relation to aquaculture activities in this SAC. Taking account of the recommendations of the Appropriate Assessment the proposed aquaculture activity at this site is not consistent with the Conservation Objectives for the SAC due to the potential risks on the integrity of the Natura 2000 caused by the extensive overlap of the Zostera sp. and maerl habitats.
- The potential risks from licensing the proposed aquaculture activities at this site, on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site cannot be discounted.