



HEMP FEDERATION IRELAND

July 2nd, 2020

Dear Minister Ryan,

Warmest congratulations on your Ministerial appointment. Hemp Federation Ireland very much wishes you and your colleagues every success in realising Green Party climate policy objectives during your term in Office. I am writing to you on behalf of Hemp Federation Ireland (HFI) regarding the proposed fibre-based development of our agricultural industry as set out in the Programme for Government.

HFI is a non profit, national organisation established by Ireland's hemp industry pioneers. Our membership spans the industry value chain and includes farmers, processors, retailers, distributors, food business operators, seed suppliers, seed processors, construction specialists, agricultural scientists, organics pioneers, permaculture experts, health science professionals, academics, educators and researchers. Our aim is to share our knowledge in the interests of informed policymaking and to encourage a fully integrated, sustainable economic development plan of our industry, which *meaningfully* incorporates its exceptional co-benefit potentials, (including for human health).

Ireland supports one of the oldest complete hemp industry supply chains in the European Union and HFI's internal advisory capacity draws on some of the foremost expertise available in the EU. Despite this, our views have been entirely excluded from all regulatory and policy decision making regarding the future development of our industry. Nevertheless, the fact remains that there is no scenario where removing the food value of this crop from our farmers and handing it over to corporate interests could possibly benefit Irish agriculture or the environment. It also makes absolutely no economic sense whatsoever to do this.

In recent years our rapidly expanding global industrial markets have become the focus of intense interest from various non-agricultural sectors, including the global pharmaceutical industry. Since 2018, in constituting Ireland's medicinal cannabis market, an all but exhaustive array of regulatory and legislative interventions, proceeding from the Department of Health,

have generated a policy framework which now positions our farm crop as a pharmaceutical commodity. This places the key environmental potential of our industry on the brink of annihilation. If the Programme for Government plan for a fibre-based development of this sector is allowed to proceed, it will, in our view, constitute a profound act of environmental sabotage.

While the growth of the modern hemp industry is grounded in scientific and technological advancements, during the past twenty years, no Irish government body, including Teagasc, has conducted any research on the crop. Therefore, the exclusion of our expertise from all consultation processes, not only runs counter to the principles of EU democracy, it has created an exceptional governance paradigm where corporate interests have, over an extended period of time, been free to deliver their plans for our agricultural industry into an information void; the consistently chaotic and destructive regulation of our markets, as well as the proposed fibre-based development of the Irish industry, are a direct result of this practice.

At present, the European market for our agricultural products is about to open up and it will be the largest in the world. As Minister with responsibility for Climate Action, Hemp Federation Ireland respectfully requests an urgent meeting with you to discuss the foregoing before the economic and environmental benefits of a climate-wise development of the Irish hemp industry are lost forever to the Irish state and its people.

Finally, Hemp Federation Ireland has been working towards the establishment of the Irish Hemp Industry Forum. This initiative will provide a reliable platform for accurate knowledge-sharing in the interests of informed policymaking. Draft Terms of Reference have been agreed with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and there is wide recognition that this Forum is urgently necessary. Hemp Federation Ireland would like to invite you, as Minister for Climate Action, Communications Networks and Transport, to support the immediate establishment of this Forum and nominate Departmental representatives to contribute to its work on your behalf.

I am grateful for your time and attention and look forward to your earliest reply.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Allen

Executive Director

Hemp Federation Ireland

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