

Northern Ireland seafood firm gears up for Christmas 2020

While the rest of the world settles into the new year, Kilkeel-based seafood company Rooney Fish is getting ahead of the Christmas 2020 rush and already taking orders from customers including Michelin-star restaurants, five-star hotels and supermarket chains for this year's festive season.

Established in 1975, the second-generation family business specialises in catching, preparing, farming and processing the finest seafood sustainably sourced from the Irish Sea. Its products include langoustines, crabs, whelks, scampi whole tails, scallops, lobsters and Millbay Oysters which are exclusively available from Rooney Fish.

Andrew Rooney, Managing Director of Rooney Fish, said:

We pride ourselves on the quality of our seafood, which is what sets us apart and has helped us build a global reputation. We have customers across Europe calling to book Christmas orders in the first week of January – never mind Valentine's Day or Easter.

There is growing demand for our products so we're looking to take our Millbay Oysters to Japan and Singapore. We now need a licence for another oyster farm which will help us employ more staff.

Selling overseas has always been an integral part of our business as it is crucial to boosting profit, and the support we've received from the UK Government has been incredible. I would encourage other businesses in Northern Ireland to consider exporting and find out how the Department for International Trade can help.

With 67 employees based in its 6,000sq metre high-tech processing plant in Kilkeel, exports to 15 countries across Asia, Europe, the Middle East and South America account for 99% of the company's turnover. Orders for next Christmas started rolling in last week from customers in Spain, France and Italy. By February, Rooney Fish expects to receive Christmas orders from South Korea.

Last October, the UK Government's Department for International Trade provided financial support for Rooney Fish to attend the China Fisheries and Seafood Expo in Shanghai. During the show, the business exhibited its products and met a buyer in Taiwan who ordered 50 tonnes of crab on the same day. Rooney Fish now sells 800 tonnes of crab to China each year and is looking to export its Millbay Oysters to Japan and Singapore in 2020.

International Trade Secretary, Liz Truss said:

It's great to see Rooney Fish off to a flying start in 2020 and taking advantage of the global demand for food and drink from Northern Ireland.

Thousands across the world will be looking forward to getting a taste of our high-quality seafood, and the UK Government will continue to champion businesses that export their goods to countries around the globe.

Working closely with hundreds of local fishermen, Rooney Fish operates its own boats which can process fish at sea and is located near all major ports in Ireland to ensure optimum freshness. In 2014, the business opened its first oyster farm in Carlingford Lough, but now plans to get another farm and employ additional staff to meet increased demand.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Julian Smith added:

I welcome news of this local seafood company's continued growth in overseas markets and I wish them every success in their expansion across Asia.

Travelling around Northern Ireland and meeting local businesses I have been struck by the high quality of fresh produce on offer which is undoubtedly world class and is enjoyed across the globe.

In 2018, Rooney Fish became the first Northern Ireland winner of the Supreme Champion title in the Blas na hEireann, the Irish National Food Awards, for its Millbay Oysters which have also been awarded 3 Gold Stars from the Great Taste Awards.