



Rooney Fish: A family-run shellfish factory and aquaculture operation

Rooney Fish is a family-run business, founded in 1975, which specialises in processing the best quality shellfish the Irish Sea can supply. Rosemary and John Rooney founded the business back then and were joined by their son Andrew over 20 years ago. This year the family and their staff celebrate 40 years in the seafood industry. Their motto states what Rooney Fish is all about: “Capturing the flavour of nature’s fresh harvest from the Irish Sea”.

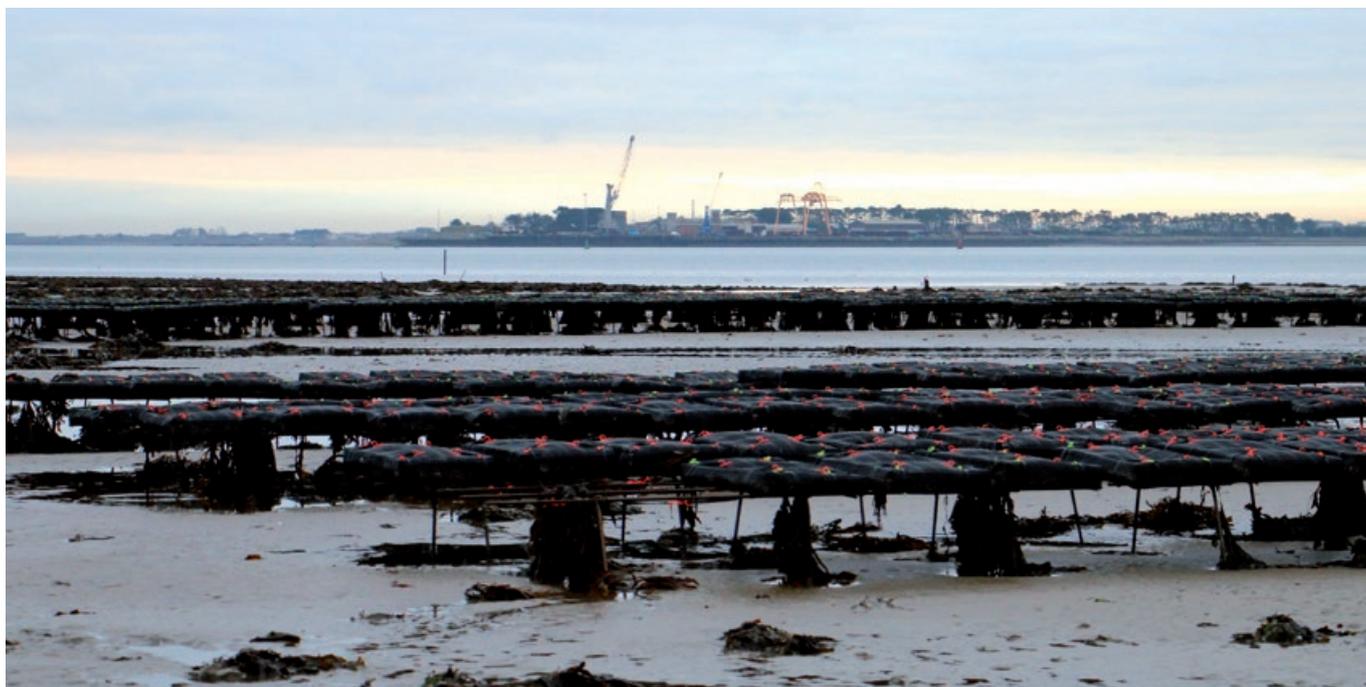


The factory is a state-of-the-art facility, adjacent to Kilkeel harbour. Their enviable position ensures the catch is processed within hours of being landed, ensuring top quality, fresh seafood for onward distribution around the world to loyal customers in Spain, France and Italy as well as further afield in China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan.

In the early days of his career in the family business, Andrew Rooney invested a lot of time travelling the world to ensure that the company’s customers got the message that the next generation of Rooney’s were part of the company’s identity. When doing business, this personal touch is important and the hard work and sacrifices are now producing dividends with an increase of over 35% in the last two years in their Asian business.



Father and son, John and Andrew Rooney of Rooney Fish in Kilkeel



In the fishing industry you can never rest on your laurels though! Rosemary, John and Andrew have recently diversified from relying on processing whole langoustine or Dublin Bay Prawns (which have the scientific name, *Nephrops norvegicus*) which were at one time the mainstay of the Rooney Fish business, into other shellfish species. This diversification has been driven by necessity: limited quota and restrictions on effort imposed on the catching sector have meant less *Nephrops* being landed and this has prompted Rooney Fish to process other shellfish species including scallops, crab, lobster and whelks.

Rooney Fish's most recent and exciting venture is a new oyster farm established in Carlingford Lough (pictured above). Again driven by a need to ensure raw material for processing and continuity of seafood supply to customers, Rooney Fish have embraced this new opportunity. Oysters are being grown in the traditional method of bags attached to trestles on the lower shoreline of Carlingford Lough.

Always committed to their staff and providing them with the best training, Rooney Fish became the first company in Northern Ireland to enroll staff under the Fish Processing Apprenticeship scheme through Southern Regional College (SRC) in partnership with Seafish. Fifteen Rooney Fish staff registered in

September 2014 and are currently working towards an FDQ Level 2 Certificate for Proficiency in Fish and Shellfish Industry Skills.

Forward thinking and never afraid to invest in new ideas and better infrastructure, Rooney Fish look set to be providing customers with top quality seafood for 40 years to come!



SRC and Rooney Fish staff and apprentices outside the Rooney Fish factory

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