



Marie-Aude Danguy, Triskell Seafood

## Grow: Triskell Seafood

**Making It Happen:** She sells seashells – and takes customs in her stride

### **How a LEO Prepare Your Business for Customs workshop helped Triskell Seafood get ready for Brexit**

1st January is a red letter day for businesses all over Ireland. It's the date Brexit becomes a reality and the UK leaves the EU.

Staff at Sligo based Triskell Seafood are all set to manage the changes it will bring to customs procedures, thanks to participation in a Prepare Your Business for Customs, a dedicated customs workshop offered by Local Enterprise Offices.

Triskell Seafood was set up by French woman Marie-Aude Danguy, a native of Brittany who came to Ireland in the 1990s as part of the Erasmus student exchange programme and loved it so much she never left.

She had marketing and language skills which she put to work helping local oyster growers to access new markets in France, initially working from home.

Today her business is based in a business park in Collooney and has expanded its services significantly.

“We started off trading oysters and then saw a gap in the market to provide the equipment that growers required, such as oyster bags, oil skins, trestles and seed,” explains Brona Galvin, Triskell Seafood’s Office Manager.

Exporting oysters and importing kit meant it needed to get to grips with new customs arrangements likely to be introduced on foot of Brexit.

“Our customers are expeditors [traders] in France, the Netherlands and the UK, who supply their local market. We are the middlemen between the expeditors and the growers, so a huge amount of what we do is about logistics and marketing,” she says.

“But we also supply oyster seed, equipment and clothing, as well as presentation packaging like wooden boxes, to growers here in Ireland and abroad.”

Brona, who has a finance background, knew it was vital to put the right systems and processes in place to ensure the business could continue to trade in and through the UK, and remain fully compliant.

That meant talking to logistics partners in Ireland, on the Continent, and in the UK, to make sure they were Brexit ready too. A particular concern for her was the onward transfer of goods via the UK landbridge, and what implications it might have in terms of cost, paperwork and possible delays.

“When Local Enterprise Office Sligo advertised a Prepare Your Business for Customs course, we had to do it,” she says.

“We wanted to gain a broad knowledge of what we needed to do and how to do it. I wanted to know how to structure our Brexit plans, and how to liaise with haulage partners on it, whether to do clearances in house or through customs agents, and, if the latter, how to deal with customs agents.”

Getting it wrong is simply not an option. “If you don’t fill in the forms correctly online, you could hold up a whole truck, with everyone else’s goods on board. Oysters being exported, and oyster seed imported, are live and have a short window in which they can survive out of water,” she explains.

## Questions answered

The Prepare Your Business for Customs workshop answered all her questions - and more.

“It was very helpful and fascinating to hear from the other participants as well. Some of them were manufacturers who make goods, send them across the border to Northern Ireland for amending, and then bring them back. They were really worried about what customs would mean for them. It made me think thank goodness we’re selling oysters!”

Some of Triskell Seafood’s growers live in Northern Ireland, so she needed to find out about the implications for them however.

“Other concerns I had were in relation to commodity codes. If you are importing an oyster knife, for example, and the handle is plastic but the blade is steel, how do you decide which is the more significant component?”

The company applied for its EORI number, and registered for UK VAT.

“The workshop provided great reassurance in that it showed us we had a lot of the information required in our systems already. That helped us get ready to talk to customs agents.”

Completing the workshop enabled the company to make all the preparations it required. “In the end it wasn’t as daunting as I had feared it would be. I had been worried there would be different commodity codes in different countries but they’re the same. If I hadn’t done the Prepare your Business for Customs workshop, it would have been a lot more scary.”

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**Triskell Seafood**

Over the years Triskell Seafood has benefited from a wide range of Local Enterprise Office supports, she says, including financial ones such as Business Expansion and Technical Assistance grants, and productivity and innovation supports, such as its Lean for Micro programme and social media marketing training. It has also benefited from mentoring.

“The LEOs have been very good to Triskell Seafood and our sister company Triskell Pro,” says Brona. “We get great support from them and we avail of all the grants and support they offer, to help us grow our business.”

She recommends any business that still needs to assess the impact of Brexit to sign up now for a customs workshop.

“It it’s about knowing you’ve done what you need to do, to prepare. In our case, we’ll be back shipping oysters from 2nd January and we’ve stocked up our imports as much as possible to give a comfort zone from 1st January,” she says.

“We also know all the customs related questions to ask of our clients. We have the knowledge we need and we wouldn’t have it if it weren’t for the LEOs. I’m much more confident now.”

If you want to ensure you are Brexit Ready contact your Local Enterprise Office or go to [LocalEnterprise.ie/Brexit](https://LocalEnterprise.ie/Brexit)