

Submission from Natasha Harty, Jamesbrook, Midleton, Co. Cork to the Environmental Protection Agency Oral Hearing of the Draft Licences for Indaver Ireland, Ringaskiddy

February 2005

My name is Natasha Harty. I live with my family on the East side of Cork Harbour, directly downwind of the prevailing winds from the Ringaskiddy incinerator site.

- Since the 1930s my family has been in the food business. My father was an innovative farmer, and expanded the conventional cows, pigs and barley to include labour intensive horticulture enterprises. Tomato and mushroom and apple growing provided jobs in the Shanagarry area right through the very lean years of the 1940s and 50s.

More recently we are involved in the guesthouse, restaurant and cooking end of food production, and we continue to employ up to 100 people for much of the year.

Whether growing or cooking, up to now we have had complete confidence that the food we are producing is on a par with the best from anywhere in the world.

- The advent of these incinerator proposals undermines, at its very core, the basis of our whole livelihood, superb, clean, wholesome produce from our own locality.

I would like to refer again to the accident at the Ringaskiddy company, Hicksons some years ago. The fire there burned an asphalt roof and the result was a fine pall of black smoke. This was very shocking for us in East Cork, because it showed us very clearly where the smoke from Ringaskiddy goes. The smoke first rose up, did a gently loop round the harbour, and as the light wind picked up followed the fertile valleys across Saleen and Cloyne, and on towards Killeagh, where it crept across the fields where the dairy cows were grazing.

At the Merrell Dow An Bord Pleanala Oral Hearing, Dr. Dowding of Trinity College explained that when an emission is coming from a point such as a chimney stack, because of the humps and hollows and valleys in the area, the windstream will tend to follow certain pathways. He said the areas within the windstream will take the brunt of whatever emissions might be carried by it. He explained that this was why John Hanrahan's farm was so much more severely affected by the emissions from the Merck Sharp and Dohm incinerator than his neighbours. John Hanrahan's farm was in the windstream.

The Hicksons smoke, wending its way through East Cork, was a frightening reminder of Dr. Dowding's words. Which of my neighbours will be the next John Hanrahan or Askeaton farmer, or will it be me?

Another topic I would like to refer to is the information sources about incineration. I suggest that there are two principal sources of information about incineration.

1. There are the, for want of a better word, establishment sources. These people tell us that we must wake up and realise that incineration is necessary and that the risk to human health is insignificant and that modern technology and controls and monitoring are all state of the art, and that we can have confidence in them. This is what the EPA, the Department of Environment, the business organisations, and the incinerator company is telling us.
2. There is however, a second body of information. There are the stories and experiences of the people who live close to incinerators. There are the doctors and scientists who break ranks with their colleagues and do independent research and studies on those local populations. These people tell of ill and damaged health. Quite often the local population have to investigate and document the damage to their communities themselves, as government and local officials appear to be incapable of doing it for them.

There are the wildlife groups, such as the World Wildlife Fund, who study the wild animals, captives in the vicinity of incinerator fall out. They tell of quite a different story. They tell of polar bears in the arctic regions, where the cold tends to precipitate the toxins from the atmosphere, whose reproduction rate has dropped dangerously due to their pollution load. Similarly, in the Florida Everglades, the alligators, again animals at the top of the food chain, show signs of environmental damage to their body systems.

My final point is that the institutions of this State is failing it's people in several ways.

- Firstly, our food industry. If these incinerators go ahead the EPA will be licenced to pollute. This pollution will be airborne and will certainly land on our fields, crops and pastures. The government will have failed our food industry in protecting our food from such industrial pollution.
- The farmers of Ireland are being failed. Who is protecting our present clean food status, the cleanest from industrial pollutants in the world, the one vital and important thing we can offer the polluted industrial nations, clean, safe food? Are we eejits all together to blow that one, all so that this Belgian company can make a profit!
- Our people's health. There is an absence of any attempt whatsoever to establish base line health of the affected population. The hopelessness of a Cancer Register that will not show up cancer hot spots. The refusal of every interested government body to take responsibility for human health. Does anybody care about what happens to our health?
- Our children. How soon will it be until Irish mothers will be told, like the continental Europeans, that they must restrict breastfeeding their babies, because the dioxins tend to accumulate in mother's milk.
- The people of Ireland. If the policy of incineration goes ahead, our food will become polluted, as sure as day follows night. No-one will be able to escape the slow creeping rise of deadly toxins in our food. Every single one of us will be affected. Some more than others, and in a myriad of different ways.

Impaired immunities, respiratory problems, hormone disruption will all be on the increase.

- The people of Cork. The people of Cork will be most affected by these two Ringaskiddy incinerators. Quite apart from the immediate health effects, the traffic, and the blot on our beautiful harbour, compromising it forever, for cleaner activities and water-based uses.
- Our Recycling and Waste Reduction Efforts. These incinerators will burn recyclable and recoverable materials, thus undermining the huge efforts on the part of many citizens and companies to deal with their way in a truly sustainable way.
- Our international commitments on global warming and sustainable development.

Finally, a message to the EPA from Cork, City of Culture 2005,

"Environmental Protection Agency, Where's me Environmental Protection?"