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Re: Hydraulic Fracturing (Fracking)

Dear Representative,

As a scientist and a citizen, I would hereby like to voice my concern about the fact that the Irish Government have granted license options to 3 companies to explore for methane gas in both the Northwest (the Lough Allen Basin) and the Southwest (the Clare Basin), using the process of Hydraulic Fracturing (better known as “Fracking”).

These licenses should never have been granted, for reasons that broadly fall into three categories: environmental, economic and democratic.

In Hydraulic Fracturing, deep wells are drilled and expanded horizontally for up to one-and-a-half miles at a depth of about 6000 feet. Explosions set off in these wells crack the shale rock, releasing the methane gas trapped inside the rock. Millions of gallons of water and sand, containing hundreds of toxic chemicals are pumped into each well (and there will be 8 – 16 wells per drilling pad) to fracture the rock further and drive the gas out.

Sixty percent of this water remains underground, with the potential to contaminate our water table. The 40% of toxic water that is recovered will also contain radioactive elements like radon and radium, which naturally occur in these rocks. This contaminated water is then stored in open ponds on-site, evaporated or dumped somewhere.

These wells, which need a concrete drilling and storage pad of about 2 acres, will be built every 2 miles, with their ancillary access roads crisscrossing the country.

Apart from toxic waste, radiation, the contaminated water and air (from the evaporation process, which will release the chemicals into the air), and the visual impact on their environment, local people will also have to deal with the noise, pollution and congested roads caused by huge tanker trucks driving up and down 24 hours a day to supply water and chemicals and remove the gas.

On a national scale, as this fracking will take place near the source of the Shannon, it will lead to contamination of this river and its tributaries. And as Dublin plans to take its drinking water from the Shannon, it will be supplied with contaminated water, which will

lead to an explosion in health issues (cancers, respiratory, cardiovascular and neurological illnesses, birth defects).

From an economic standpoint, hydraulic fracturing is counterproductive for Ireland as well. Producers estimate that wells will be productive for up to 20 years. During that time it will provide some temporary local jobs, mainly in haulage, quarrying and concrete supply, but it will lead to the total collapse of farming and tourism, the mainstays of the Irish economy. Irish farmers won't be able to sell their contaminated milk and beef anywhere, and no tourists will come to look at the large industrial site that the country will become.

Moreover, these companies will be granted the exploration licenses totally free of charge, and will own the gas, which they can then sell to the Irish people at market prices. The only benefit to the Irish economy will be in taxes and through the "trickle-down" effect of money paid to local suppliers – a pittance considering the value of the gas.

This process will mainly enrich a few speculators. As pointed out in a recent French article: *Marché du gaz : le schiste risque de faire des bulles*, by Marie-Noëlle Bertrand (found at [http://www.humanite.fr/06\\_07\\_2011-march%C3%A9-du-gaz-le-schiste-risque-de-faire-des-bulles-475861](http://www.humanite.fr/06_07_2011-march%C3%A9-du-gaz-le-schiste-risque-de-faire-des-bulles-475861) and translated as: *The Market for Natural Gas: Shale Gas Risks Making a Bubble*, by Henry Crapo) experts in gas exploitation say that the exploitation of shale gas will not be as economical as officially estimated. "[American] producers intentionally, and thus illegally, over-estimated the productivity of wells and the magnitude of reserves". This is likely to happen in Ireland as well.

Attention is also drawn "to a blind speculation on shale gas that could lead to a financial bubble such as that for internet stocks, or that which sank Enron". Or indeed, as that which collapsed the Irish housing market. "In other words, the industry has no value other than the money brought into it by investors".

Finally, there are democratic issues attached to the granting of these licenses. For one thing, they have been granted without any consultation with local councilors or TDs, or with the people who will be affected by the drilling.

Moreover, I have been told the companies will not need planning permission from the local authorities for erecting the drilling pads, which leaves no route for local people to object and thus stop the process, other than legal or direct action.

Fracking already caused many problems in the USA, as documented in the film "Gasland" ([www.gaslandthefilm.com](http://www.gaslandthefilm.com)). It has been banned in France, and a moratorium was placed on it in South Africa, Wales, Nordrheinwestphalen (Germany), New York State and New Jersey (USA).

I would urge you, as a TD and representative of the people of your constituency, to also call for a total ban on hydraulic fracturing in Ireland, and all over the world.

Yours sincerely,

Ron Beemster