

 Forestry and Wood Update

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# Research Programme

# Project update

*Each issue of the newsletter carries a short article on new and ongoing COFORD-funded projects. Feedback on the articles is welcome and should be addressed to the project leaders (contact details at the end of the article).*

## WESTFOREST:

A GIS-based multi-objective decision support system for the optimal management of forests on sensitive sites

The overall objective of the WESTFOREST project is to develop a decision-support system to strategically manage and redesign Western Peatland Forests in a manner that optimises their environmental, social and economic contributions.

Forest management has been a hotbed of decision support system (DSS) development since the early 1980s. Early systems focused on well defined problems such as silvicultural prescriptions or harvest scheduling. With the rapid advancement of computing hardware and software systems there are opportunities to develop broader, multifunctional systems. This project seeks to do just that, and is driven by the need of forest management organisations for a multifunctional DSS to address the complex issues that exist on afforested peatland sites. The diversity of issues may be categorised into three broad groups, economic (volume forecasting, establishment planning, harvesting planning, profitability, etc.) environmental (habitat identification, carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation, water quality and fisheries protection), and social (amenity value of forest area, landscape planning, proximity to urban areas).

The resultant DSS should provide the necessary tools to aid forest managers in a multi-objective approach to forest management. Work to date has focused on two main components, firstly the development of a matrix of management practices and secondly a review of DSS methods, to identify the best approach to effectively model these issues.

*This article was compiled by Brian Clifford, Maarten Nieuwenhuis and Charles Harper, PLANSFM- Planning and implementation of sustainable forest management, Agriculture and Food Science Centre, University College Dublin. For more information, email charles.harper@ucd.ie.*

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# Monitoring forest cover in Ireland - Validation of new remote sensing forest map data

## A short study to validate new remote sensing forest map data

The motivation for the project, which started in April, is based on inconsistencies that exist between national forest cover statistics and those reported from the CORINE Land Cover Project 2000, particularly relating to the levels of afforestation on peatland (Black et al. 2008). The minimum mapping unit (MMU) of 25 ha utilised in the CORINE methodology caused inaccurate estimations of Irish forest cover. Accurate and efficient assessments of the extent of forest cover in Ireland are required for reporting purposes to national UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) and Kyoto Protocol Reporting on LULUCF (Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry) Activities. This project is part of the European Space Agency (ESA) Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) Service Element Forest Monitoring (GSE-FM). A Swedish remote sensing company, Metria, will provide land cover and land-use change maps.

Two study areas (Figure 1) were chosen for the large amount of peat land, high forest cover, and hilly areas (more challenging for classification). Area 1, in the west of the country (Co Mayo and parts of Galway and Sligo) comprises largely coniferous forests planted on peatlands and wet mineral soils. Area 2 (Co Wicklow) is located on the eastern seaboard, south of Dublin. It is the second most densely forested county in Ireland and the forests are managed on an intensive basis by local forest owners and Coillte.



Figure 1. Outline of the two study areas in Ireland for the validation of remote sensing forest cover maps from the European Space Agency.

The work will be carried out with collaboration from the Forest Service. Satellite imagery will generate forest cover maps with an improved MMU of 0.5 ha. Validation of these products will be carried out using a range of existing national forest datasets. Metria will carry out a reanalysis of Earth Observation data for 1990, 2000 and 2005 that were used in the CORINE programme and produce a forest mask with a MMU of 0.5 ha for the two study areas. These analyses will be validated by UCD. New, validated remote sensing forest cover maps should be ready by the end of the year.

*Reference: Black, K, O’Brien, P., Redmond, J. Barrett, F. and Twomey, M. (2008) The extent of recent peatland afforestation in Ireland. Irish Forestry 65:(1-2), 71-81.*

The project leader is Prof. Maarten Nieuwenhuis (UCD Forestry) with technical input from Dr Daniel McInerney (UCD-UII).

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# Information and support services

# Bioenergy 2010 – Warming to wood energy

## 17 June 2010, Carlton Hotel Tralee

This conference, exhibition and field excursion will be co-hosted by COFORD, Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and Teagasc. Registration opens at 8.15 am, allowing an opportunity to visit the exhibition before the conference begins. There will be further opportunities to view the exhibition and interact with vendors during the extended tea and lunch breaks. The conference programme is:

*Session 1: Wood Energy in Ireland - Chair: Dr Eugene Hendrick*

* Keynote Address: Meeting the 2020 challenge - Richard Browne, DCENR
* Quality wood fuels – Ireland’s seal of approval - John O’Brien
* Wood fuels for you, calculating the cost - Pieter Kofman, Woodenergy.ie

*Session 2: Bioenergy Fuelling the Future - Chair: Professor Gerry Boyle, Teagasc*

* Supplying the market, the Coillte study - Ciaran Black, Coillte
* Wood energy in Kerry, realising the potential - Tom Houlihan, Teagasc, and Ciaran Nugent, Forest Service
* Bioenergy clean carbon energy combustion for Ireland - John Finnan, Teagasc

*Session 3: Wood Fuels for the Non Residential Sector - Chair: Paul Dykes, SEAI REIO*

* Biomass boilers making economic cents, sizing the boiler to meet your needs - Jim Dudley, Technical Energy Solutions
* Irish hotels warming to wood energy - ReHeat case study
* Banking on biomass district heating, the Tralee Town Council case study - Willie Moynihan, Kerry County Council

After lunch there will be site visits and demonstrations with coach transfer to the Tralee Town Council case study: The Tobar Noafa Development – this multi-use development is fuelled by locally grown wood chip district heating; as well as a demonstration highlighting thinning on a local forest site and a live demonstration on the production and transport of wood chips and firewood processing.

For more information, contact Paul Dykes (SEAI REIO): T: 023 8863393 E: pauld@reio.ie.

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# BIHIP news

## British and Irish Hardwood Improvement (BIHIP)

Programme committee to meet in Northern Ireland, 26-27 May 2010

The spring 2010 meeting of the BIHIP Management Committee will take place on 26 May 2010 in Northern Ireland at the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute Research Station at Loughgall, Co Armagh, hosted by the Station Director, Dr Jim McAdam.

On Thursday 27 May, an Oak Group meeting is scheduled. There will also be a visit Gosford Forest, one of the original locations where some of the sycamore scions were collected for the BIHIP programme in Northern Ireland. The field visit will present information on the background to the collection of vegetative material and current status regarding the BIHIP work on sycamore. In addition, participants will visit:

* the BIHIP multi-variety cherry trial which is part of an all-Irish clonal trial;
* the original silvo-pastoral network site – ash and sycamore planted in 1998;
* a small trial of potential trees for energy cropping including Eucalyptus, poplar and Paulownia, all planted in 2009;
* a silvo-arable trial with poplar, planted in 1996;
* a trial comparing root-pruned, bare root and rootrainer grown oak, planted in 2001 and now managed for agroforestry;
* a tree seed production area.

As it is the first time that BIHIP will have visited the station, this will be an opportunity to view some of the station's other work on short rotation coppice for biomass production and wood energy. A large number of BIHIP representatives from Britain and Ireland are expected to attending the meeting and a report on proceedings will be published in a future issue of the COFORD newsletter.

For further information contact John Fennessy at 01 6072944 or email: john.fennessy@agriculture.gov.ie

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# WoodWisdom-Net news

## Update of WoodWisdom-Net activities

The latest WoodWisdom e-newsletter (April 2010) is now available at [http://www.woodwisdom.net](http://www.woodwisdom.net/mm_files/do_804/woodwisdom-net-enews-April10.pdf). The contents include:

* Second WoodWisdom-Net Research Programme Seminar held in Stockholm.
* FireInTimber project presents the first European guideline on fire safety in timber buildings.
* Second call attracts 38 proposals.
* Third call for proposals to be launched in autumn 2010.
* NETWATCH – Central ERA-NET information website launched.
* Enterprise Europe Network assists you with dissemination of results and partner search.
* WoodWisdom.net RSS feeds now available.

Alistair Pfeifer (email: alistair.pfeifer@agriculture.gov.ie) is the WoodWisdom-Net representative for Ireland. For all the latest news and information about forthcoming events, visit [www.woodwisdom.net](http://www.woodwisdom.net).

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# Woodenergy poetry competition

## Win a prize from www.woodenergy.ie for the best poem about wood energy

Firewood is one of the most important replacements of fossil fuels in the home. Many modern stoves and boilers on the market can convert firewood with high efficiency into heat (and sometimes even hot water) for your home. There is much lore about firewood, including which is the best tree species for firewood, but more importantly is the fact that the wood must be properly seasoned before use, as expressed in the following poem by Eugene Hendrick and Pieter Kofman:

***A firewood foreword***
*Most trees make good fuel
Though size for size (says Dr Joule) Hardwood gives more flame,
Or so we scientists like to claim
Now, burn all wood when dry and clean
Not when wet, fresh cut or green,
Though ash will burn when freshly felled
Most true when winter sees the axe being held.
Still it makes good sense
To dry all wood, then burn, but recompense
The forest's carbon bank
So plant more trees, rank upon rank
The forest's growth and wood and fuel
Best fit for keeping planet earth more safe and cool.*

Woodenergy.ie is running a competition to find who can write the best poem on the use of wood for energy. This competition will run until 31 May 2010, when a jury will evaluate the contributions. The prize is a copy of the COFORD publication “If trees could talk” by Michael Carey. The winner will be announced at the Bioenergy 2010 event on 17 June in Tralee, Co Kerry. Please send your contribution via the *Advisory Service* query form on [www.woodenergy.ie](http://www.woodenergy.ie).

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# National and international news

# Small-scale timber harvesting and extraction demonstration

## 30 June 2010 - Roscrea, Co Tipperary

This event, organised by Teagasc and the Forest Service, will take place on Wednesday 30 June 2010. It is aimed at landowners who have small woodlands which are at, or near, first thinning stage. This event will provide information on the thinning and management of these forest crops. Topics to be discussed include:

* Growing trees for quality timber
* Timing of first thinning
* Preparation for thinning
* Chainsaw use, safety and maintenance
* Best method for getting the job done
* Small-scale harvesting and extraction methods
* Cheap and safe methods that may be on the farm already
* The benefits of a co-operative approach
* Produce end use (fencing posts, timber logs, firewood, chips, etc.)

Those who wish to attend the event should gather at the meeting point at the Cistercian College Recreational Hall, Mount Saint Josephs Abbey, Mount Heaton, Roscrea, Co Tipperary.

See [www.teagasc.ie/forestry/events\_diary/events/small\_scale\_demonstration\_roscrea\_10.asp](http://www.teagasc.ie/forestry/events_diary/events/small_scale_demonstration_roscrea_10.asp) for more information.

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# Farm forest management walks

## 7-10 May 2010 - nationwide

A series of nationwide Farm Forest Management Walks will take place from 7 to 20 May, nationwide. Teagasc, in association with the Forest Service, invite you to a series of nationwide walks where experts will demonstrate up to date, best practice in managing your forest. Find out more at:

 [www.teagasc.ie/forestry/events\_diary/events/forest\_management\_walks\_May\_2010.asp](http://www.teagasc.ie/forestry/events_diary/events/forest_management_walks_May_2010.asp)>

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# Farmers and landowners reminded of the risks of forest fires

## Steps to minimise the risk of forest fires

Commenting on the recent spate of forest fires, Mr Seán Connick TD, Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food with responsibility for forestry, has expressed concern at the potential risk to lives and livelihoods arising from such fires. He said, as he visited fire damaged forests in the vicinity of the Blackstairs Mountains, "Hundreds of hectares of woodland nationally have been lost and it has taken a lot of time and effort to bring the fires under control. Such fires pose a serious risk to lives and wildlife and result in the loss of significant areas of forestry. There are a number of steps, previously publicised by my Department, which could be taken to minimise the risk of forest fires and I take this opportunity to remind the general public of those steps".

1) DO NOT LIGHT FIRES IN OR NEAR WOODLAND. Take care with other potential sources of ignition.

2) CHECK FIRE BREAKS. It is the owners' responsibility to ensure that Fire Breaks surrounding plantations are inspected annually prior to the fire season and maintained in an effective, vegetation free condition. Ideally Fire Breaks should be at least 6 m wide.

3) INSURE YOUR CROP. All forest crops should be insured against losses by fire, which is one of the risks for which cover is available commercially. Forest owners are reminded that, with effect from 1 June 2009, the Reconstitution Scheme, administered by the Department, does not cover any fire or wind damage occurring after that date.

4) PLAN AHEAD. Fire Plans should be developed for all plantations, including a map showing access and assembly points for fire fighting personnel and equipment and potential sources of water. The plan should also include contact details for the emergency services, relevant forest management organisations, neighbouring landowners and forest owners in order to summon help should the need arise. Have fire-fighting tools such as beaters and knapsack sprayers to hand and ready to use.

5) DISCUSS WITH NEIGHBOURS. Cooperation between neighbouring landowners is vital to successful fire prevention. Explain your concerns regarding fire risk to neighbouring landowners. Owners of adjoining and neighbouring plantations should develop joint fire plans and share responsibility for guarding against fire.

6) BE VIGILANT. Forest Owners should be particularly vigilant following prolonged dry spells. A period of 24 hours is sufficient to dry out dead moorland vegetation following rain, where windy conditions exist. Where dry conditions persist, experience suggests that forest owners should be particularly vigilant at weekends, and at evening times, when land burning is most likely to take place. If fire is detected, do not delay, summon help immediately and activate fire plan. Do not rely on others to call the Fire Service, and remember that a rapid response by the emergency services is essential if damage to property is to be minimised.

7) REPORT LOSSES. If a plantation is destroyed or damaged by fire, the incident should be reported to the nearest Garda Station and to the Forest Service. Your local forestry inspector, forest manager, consultant or Teagasc advisor can advise on reinstatement measures.

Minister of State Connick thanked all of those who had helped to control the forest fires over the last few days, which had occurred throughout the country, including Wexford, Kerry, Clare and Connemara. He again reminded all landowners that it is an offence under the Wildlife Act to burn growing vegetation between 1 March and 31 August in any year, on any land not then cultivated and pointed out that Single Payment Scheme applicants who burn vegetation within this period could have their payments reduced.

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# Evaluation of beech genetic resources for sustainable forestry - COST Action E52 meeting

## 4-6 May 2010 – Burgos, Spain

Due to climate change, a shift in the distribution range of beech is expected which would endanger considerable parts of the present beech natural forest range. Consequently, the conservation of beech genetic resources and safeguarding the supply of high quality reproductive material requires special attention. While beech is not a native species in Ireland, it is an important component of our broadleaf woodland and beech provenance trials in Ireland are part of the European beech provenance network.

In March 2006 a four-year COST Action E52 "*Evaluation of Beech Genetic Resources for Sustainable Forestry*" was inaugurated. The main objective of COST Action E52 is to study the adaptive and structural traits in a European series of provenance trials and to predict the future distribution range of beech forest ecosystems under the assumption of certain climate change scenarios. This resulted in a COST Action based on a multi-task approach through:

* A study of ecophysiology of European beech populations and their sensitivity to changes in climate (COST Action Working Group 1),
* A study of forest genetics and tree improvement to analyze the total variation of European beech (COST Action Working Group 2), and
* Elaboration of recommendations for the use of suitable reproductive material of European beech under sustainable forest management (COST Action Working Group 3).

European beech (*Fagus sylvatica* L.) is a major stand-forming forest tree species with a wide distribution throughout Europe, ranging from the oceanic Western Europe to the more continental south-central Europe. Beech forests cover roughly 14 million ha of forest land. The species is important for both economic and ecological reasons, since it produces valuable hardwood and its forests constitute stable ecosystems especially beneficial for ground water protection and regeneration of depleted soils. The role of genetic diversity in the long-term response of forest ecosystems in the face of a changing climate is not yet well understood. Provenance trials provide a rich source of information that can be utilized to evaluate adaptive potential of forest trees.

For this reason, a large network of beech provenance trials was established using over 200 seed sources collected from across the species natural range. In the mid 1990s a series of almost fifty field trials was established in 21 European countries, including Ireland, under different environments within the beech distribution range. At each field trial a subset of 30-100 provenances is being tested. The collection of the seed samples, raising and distribution of plants, as well as maintaining the field trials was funded by the European Commission, the German Federal Government and numerous national forest organizations. The COST Action E52 provided the means to evaluate all these beech provenance trials of the network for the first time since their establishment.

The final meeting of the COST E52 Action - “Evaluation of Beech Genetic Resources for Sustainable Forestry” will take place in Burgos in Northern Spain from Tuesday 4 May to Thursday 6 May. The programme is:

**Session 1**: Ecology of European beech and introduction to the international European beech provenance trial networks.

**Session 2:** Adaptation of beech to present and possible future climatic conditions - what do we know and what information is still lacking?

**Session 3:** Possible future use of beech genetic resources - meeting the challenges of the next generations.

 One of the main outcomes of this programme is to provide guidelines for the use of beech forest reproductive material in light of continuing climate change at a European level.

A field excursion after the meeting will include a visit to one of the European provenance trial sites in northern Spain, where participants will discuss various factors including the effects of climate change on beech forests in the region and throughout Europe.

For further information visit the COST website at [www.cost.eu](http://www.cost.eu)

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# International passive house conference and study tour

## 27-30 May 2010, Dresden, Germany

 The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) in association with the German Irish Chamber of Industry and Commerce and the Export Initiative Energy Efficiency of the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology, are hosting an official Irish party to the forthcoming 14th International Passive House Conference in Dresden on the 28-29 May 2010.

This study tour combines a two-day conference offering specialist symposia delivered by experts leading the passive house movement across Europe. A comprehensive technology exhibition with leading suppliers will showcase the very latest technology innovation and intelligent solutions for energy efficient old and new buildings. There will also be a series of excursions to see existing and passive house projects under construction.

The passive house standard is recognised worldwide as one of the most advanced in terms of energy performance of buildings. The passive house is the ultimate low energy building offering one of the most desirable technological and economical solutions for comfortable living and working. It can be applied to new and existing buildings in the commercial, industrial, public and residential sectors.

 Today, the passive house concept is capturing the imagination of the Irish public with a few visionary entrepreneurs taking the lead in making it happen. SEAI's Renewable Energy Information Office (SEAI REIO) is at the forefront of a movement that has brought about a fundamental rethink in the way we design, construct and operate buildings.

 As part of the study tour, the German-Irish Chamber of Commerce is organising and hosting an exclusive networking event on Thursday 27 May for the Irish delegation with Dr Wolfgang Feist founder of the Passivhaus Institut delivering the opening address. In addition, the Chamber will also be facilitating and encouraging communication between delegates and the German companies, the ultimate aim being to ensure that the Irish delegates utilise their time at the event as efficiently as possible to make valuable contacts.

More than 1,200 delegates are expected to attend the conference that will focus on the following themes:

* Regional economic added value of passive houses;
* Energy efficiency inside passive houses – in particular electrical appliances suitable for passive houses;
* R&D developments and activities in the areas of building services and envelope;
* Non-residential passive house buildings;
* Refurbishment solutions for protected buildings;
* Energy efficient construction in public buildings and space;
* Comfort and health in passive houses;
* Funding and financial supports for passive house projects.

The conference and study tour will be of particular interest to architects, the building industry, housing professionals, specialist advisors, policy makers, designers, and consultants interested in environmentally responsible design and construction of buildings, local authority planners, housing and building departments, housing associations, contractors and building product suppliers/ manufacturers interested in achieving the highest levels of energy performance and/or exploiting the major new commercial and strategic business opportunities.

The cost is €415 and includes conference, exhibition, conference dinner, coach transfers as stated, excursions and networking/social events. The costs do not include accommodation and flights.

Register online at www.seai.ie/bookshop. Note that there is a limit of just 40 places so early booking is highly recommended to avoid disappointment. For further information, contact Paul Dykes (SEAI REIO): T: 023 8863393 E: pauld@reio.ie.

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# Speaking Science: One day workshop on communications training

## 24 June and 21 September 2010, Dublin

*Speaking Science* is an intensive one day communications training workshop for scientists and it aims to help you to tell your stories. If you need to explain what you are doing or if you need talk to the press, this is the course for you. This course is aimed at staff scientists based in academia, public bodies or industry and 4th level students, MSc and PhD candidates who need to develop a wide range of career development skills. The ability to communicate clearly is one of the most important of these skills.

The course is presented by Seán Duke, Joint Editor, Science Spin magazine. Seán has fifteen years experience as a science writer and editor. He is also the creator and presenter of Ireland’s only weekly radio science slot on 103.2 Dublin City FM. Seán began the Speaking Science initiative in 2008 in response to the need for scientists to acquire better communication skills. Until now Speaking Science has only been available as an in-house course. The course is being held on Thursday 24 June and Tuesday 21 September 2010, from 9.00 am to 5.30 pm, at the Terenure Enterprise Centre, Terenure, Dublin 6. Book early as there is limited availability on each date. The cost is €195 per course. To book a place email Alan Doherty at alan@sciencespin.com, choosing either the June or September date.

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# Forest monitoring: Linking science and policy

## Addressing the need for policy-makers to place sufficient resources into forest monitoring activities to enable decision making based on sound forest information

Committing finances to something as long-term as forest monitoring can be unsettling for politicians. Their careers hinge on regular elections – at short-term intervals.

Putting money into monitoring "makes good sense… But we need to show them that it makes sense," said Konstantin von Teuffel, of the Forest Research Institute in Baden-Wurttemberg, Germany. "If, for example, politicians are to decide on subsidy programs, or decide on legislation or policies on climate change, they need to know what state the forests are in. And they need to know based on sound scientific measurements taken over a reasonably lengthy period of time, not assumptions."

Dr von Teuffel will coordinate a session linking long-term scientific forest monitoring to political decision-making at the 2010 IUFRO World Congress in Seoul. He plans to build on information gathered in Buenos Aires at the World Forestry Congress last fall, where politicians and decision-makers involved in forest issues were asked about their expectations in regard to monitoring activities. "That input will be presented to the scientists in Seoul and we will discuss how best to respond to the policy makers' needs," he said. "We must show that monitoring is connected to real world decisions." He sees his session helping to increase awareness of the importance of long-term monitoring – the challenges, opportunities and priorities. It will bring together people from all continents and, he anticipates, result in a catalogue of guidelines that will allow researchers to group and prioritize forest-monitoring needs and also outline some best practices.

For more information, see www.iufro.org/media/iwc2010-news-stories/apr10-monitoring-scipol/.

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