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Forestry and Wood Update

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COFORD

Arena House

Arena Road

Sandyford

Dublin 18

Ireland

Tel: +353 - 1 - 2130725

Fax: +353 - 1 - 2130611

Email: info@coford.ie

Web: [www.coford.ie](http://www.coford.ie)



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This newsletter was compiled and edited by Lauren MacLennan,
Technology Transfer Co-ordinator, COFORD

Email: lauren.maclennan@coford.ie

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# New COFORD projects

A number of new COFORD-funded projects in forest planning, economics and transport have been successfully negotiated in the past weeks involving teams and personnel from Coillte, IFER Limited, PTR Limited, Teagasc and University College Dublin.

Work on tree and stand modelling, and related areas will be part of a major new COFORD-funded R&D programme in forest planning, led by Professor Maarten Nieuwenhuis of UCD – with the title *The planning and implementation of sustainable forest management*. The work programmes and costs for the first two projects in the programme have now been agreed. They will concentrate on the development of new stand-based models for broadleaved species (particularly ash) and mixed forests (STANDMODEL), and on the development of tree stem models (TREEMODEL). The new models are aimed at increasing the functionality of the COFORD-based GROWFOR system, and for national forest inventory and mensuration applications. Joining UCD in the work will be Coillte, Institute of Forest Ecosystem Research (IFER) Limited – a Czech based company which is closely involved in the national forest inventory - and PTR Limited which manages the GROWFOR system on behalf of COFORD. Further proposals in the programme are at an advanced stage of negotiation. Details on the projects and the programme are available from Professor Nieuwenhuis (maarten.nieuwenhuis@ucd.ie).

Transport of roundwood is a significant cost element in the wood products chain. Countries such as Finland and Sweden have been able to reduce costs along the chain through researching and applying logistic tools such as GIS and GPS, often as part of an integrated harvest/sales system. These developments have been followed with interest by the forestry sector in Ireland, including the Forest Industry Transport Group (FITG), and led to the submission of two research proposals to COFORD by a member of the group, the Department of Biosystems Engineering in UCD. Following negotiations over the past months, two projects on truck load sensors and GPS tracking devices - LOADSENSOR and GPSTRACK - will begin this week at UCD. Dr Ger Devlin (ger.devlin@ucd.ie) will undertake the work, in collaboration with Dr Kevin McDonnell, also of UCD, and with FITG.

A UCD/UCC consortium successfully concluded a COFORD-funded project – ECONTRIB on the socio-economic impact of forestry in Ireland in 2006 (the final report is available at <http://www.coford.ie/iopen24/pub/product_info.php?products_id=966582>). COFORD is building on the results of that project and the expertise gained, by expanding the scope of its forest economics research portfolio. This work is particularly important given the radical changes in land use that are currently taking place, and are likely in the light of trends in commodity prices, and EC and State policies. We have just recently agreed a new project – FAPRIFOR – which will be undertaken by Teagasc – that will examine the potential impact of policy shifts on the forestry sector, though incorporation of a greatly expanded forestry module in the RERC-FAPRI policy support tool. It will also provide a better understanding of the economic contribution of forestry at the farm and local level. Further information on the project is available from Mary Ryan of Teagasc (mary.ryan@teagasc.ie). In parallel with the Teagasc work, COFORD is finalising negotiations with UCD on projects which will examine and quantify not only the direct economic contribution of the forestry sector, but also its economic impact in areas such as climate change mitigation, biodiversity and recreation.

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# Forest Energy 2007

The latest series of national demonstrations of thinning systems and machinery for wood energy has attracted a large number of interested people. The objective of these events is to demonstrate cost effective production of quality wood fuels. The next demonstration will take place on ***Friday 4 May 2007: Stranorlar, Co Donegal - meeting point is the Finn Valley Centre, Stranorlar, and buses will carry visitors to the site at regular intervals between 12:00 and 1:30 pm.*** Further demonstrations will be held in Counties Mayo, Laois and Tipperary. Dates and venues will be announced on the COFORD website ([www.coford.ie](http://www.coford.ie)) and www.woodenergy.ie.

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# And Forest Energy storage trial

Wood for energy should be dried in the forest before it is either chipped or transported. Natural drying is the cheapest way, but how fast does wood dry under Irish conditions and how long does it take to get the wood down to the required moisture content? To shed light on this issue, a large scale storage trial has been constructed to look at drying as a function of climatic factors such as air speed, relative humidity and time.

It is difficult to study this in forest surroundings, so for the trial the wood is being stored in large metal bins, each containing one truck load of timber (23-28 tonnes each). There are several treatments and nearly all bins will be covered at the top to keep out rain. Two different assortments have been put in place: normal well delimbed 3 m pulpwood and 4.3 m long crudely delimbed energy wood tree sections. Some of the bins will remain filled with the same wood for the duration of the trial (18 months), and some will be emptied and refilled with freshly felled timber. This will make it possible to assess the effect of harvesting time (April, June, September and December 2007) and storage duration (6, 9, 12, 15 and 18 months). All bins will be finally emptied in September 2008.

The trial is co-ordinated with another storage trial in the forest from which the April 2007 logs originated. Stacks of pulpwood and energy wood remain in the forest, and one half of each stack will be chipped in September 2007, the remainder in September 2008. These storage trails will generate valuable information about drying rates of Sitka spruce logs. The work is being carried out in collaboration with Bord na Móna. For more information, see [www.woodenergy.ie](http://www.woodenergy.ie)

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# Wood energy advice

Free wood energy advice (for those within Ireland) is available at [www.woodenergy.ie](http://www.woodenergy.ie), where questions can be submitted by email. Pieter D. Kofman, the well known and respected expert on wood fuel, will give you the benefit of his many years of experience in responding to your questions. As well as by email Pieter can also be contacted between 9 and 12 a.m. via Skype – the free software can be downloaded from [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com) (if you are already paying for broadband it allows free telephone calls over the Internet). Alternatively, the service can be accessed by landline +45 75 88 1519 or mobile +45 28 55 77 58, during the designated hours. Queries about boilers, stoves or approved installers are best directed to Sustainable Energy Ireland, Renewable Energy Information Office, Shinagh House, Bandon, Co Cork. Tel: 023-42193, Fax: 023-29154, email: renewables@reio.ie.

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# Significant government support for Wood Energy Supply Chain

Mary Wallace T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture and Food, has introduced a new capital grant scheme to support developing enterprises in the wood chip supply sector. The scheme will grant aid the purchase of medium-scale wood chippers and self-contained chippers by providing up to 40% of the purchase price of this equipment.

Minister Wallace said “The Irish forest sector has the capacity to supply up to 20% of our renewable energy needs by 2020. Now that Ireland and the EU have committed to the path of alternative energies, it is critical that the infrastructure to deliver on this commitment is in place. As more businesses switch to wood chip to meet their energy needs, this machinery grant scheme will help bridge the gap between the forest owner and energy consumers. This grant aid is an investment in those interested in alternative farm-forestry enterprises that I believe will pay dividends to forest owners, consumers and our environment.”

Details of the Scheme, including application forms are now available on [www.agriculture.gov.ie/forestservice.](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/forestservice.)

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# FDA/ITGA/SIF Field day

A joint ITGA/SIF/ FDA field day will take place on 15 June in Wexford. The morning session will consist of a discussion of native Irish oak provenances at Camolin Park Millennium Woodland.  This trial, which was planted in 1988, consists of 27 oak provenances from stands deemed to be from native Irish sources.  Provenance differences can be seen in both growth and stem form.  Results of assessments carried out after 8 and 15 growing seasons will be presented.  Future management options for this relatively young oak plantation will also be discussed. The leaders will be Dr David Thompson, Coillte and Derek Felton, Woodstock Seeds Ltd. The afternoon session will consist of a visit to a large commercial nursery - None So Hardy Nurseries, Ballymurn, Co Wexford - where the many stages from of nursery production from seed sowing to lifting of plants for dispatch to the field site will be shown. The leaders will be John McCarthy, Nursery Owner and John Kavanagh, Nursery Manager.

For further information, contact John Fennessy (email: john.fennessy@coford.ie)

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# GROWFOR Workshops

The next workshop on the dynamic yield modelling and forest valuation system – GROWFOR – will take place on 21 June 2007, at the Teagasc Head office in Athenry, Co Galway. These are full-day workshops incorporating a short outdoor field exercise in the morning and a classroom session in the afternoon. The cost of becoming a registered GROWFOR user is €100. Limited spaces are available - please email growfor@coford.ie if you wish to attend. For more information about GROWFOR, visit the COFORD website and click on the GROWFOR tab (<http://www.coford.ie/iopen24/pub/defaultarticle.php?cArticlePath=328>).

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# BioEnergy 2007 : Fueling Ireland’s Future

COFORD, Teageasc, SEI REIO and WIT are joining forces to host ***BioEnergy 2007 on 30 August 2007, at Oak Park, Carlow***. This one-day event will offer practical demonstrations of the solid biofuel supply chain and will be of particular interest to farmers and growers, agri-community, policy makers, energy users (hoteliers, nursing homes, local authorities), commercial sector and trade (installers, engineers, heat suppliers, boiler suppliers), and the general public. The objective of the event is to demonstrate the importance, cost-effectiveness and utility of land-derived bioenergy. The event will focus on the production, processing and use of renewable biofuels, particularly solid biomass such as firewood, chip and pellets, and efficient and environmentally sound ways to combust biofuels for heat generation. If you wish to find out about trade exhibition opportunities or to express interest in participating in this event, please contact the programme co-ordinator, Paul Dykes (pauld@reio.ie).

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# FP7 calls closing

Many of the existing call for proposals will close over the next few days, with new calls for proposals being announced later in the year. A joint workshop has been organised to follow the 4th Conference of the Forest-based Sector Technology Platform to be held at Ligna Platform (see <http://www.forestplatform.org> ). The Joint Workshop will focus on the exchange of experiences in preparation and submission of proposals of 7th Framework Programme. The EFI, EFPRO and INNOVAWOOD are the organisers. The workshop will be on 16 May 2007 from 2 pm to 4 pm at the Convention Center of the Hannover Exhibition Grounds.

Keeping up-to-date with forestry activities in Europe can be time consuming. One of the useful services available is Cordis update. The InnovaWood Secretariat have been selected a number of items of interest to the forestry sector. [Click here to read more](http://www.coford.ie/iopen24/pub/pub/newsletter/Volume7/COFORD-News-supplement-300407.pdf).

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# Carbon Corner

## Forests as methane sources – don’t always believe the scientists

Early in 2006 Carbon Corner dealt with a paper published in *Nature* (Keppler, F. et al. 2006. Methane emissions from terrestrial plants under aerobic conditions. 439:187-191). The paper stated: *If our measurements are typical for short-lived biomass and scaled on a global basis, we estimate a methane source strength of 62–236 Tg yr-1 for living plants and 1–7 Tg yr-1 for plant litter(1 Tg =1012 g). We suggest that this newly identified source may have important implications for the global methane budget and may call for a reconsideration of the role of natural methane sources in past climate change*.

Much of the media coverage surrounding the publication of the paper was to the effect that mitigating climate change through afforestation and other land uses was a waste of time, given the impact that methane release would have. Typical of the reportage was an article on the BBC web site: *Scientists in Germany have discovered that ordinary plants produce significant amounts of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas which helps trap the sun's energy in the atmosphere*. *Other reports suggested that the whole basis of converting agricultural land to permanent forest cover to mitigate rises in greenhouse gases was open to question*.

One of the good things about science is that the profession is sceptical by nature, and more than ready to have a go at any new theory advanced. Scientists in the Netherlands willingly took up funding from the Dutch government, to see if they could repeat the results of their neighbours. Their results were published in the *New Phytologist* on 27 April, with an accompanying press release which is presented here in full. As well as conveying the results of the research the work shows that scepticism is needed wherever new scientific results are presented – don’t always believe the scientists. Further information on the *New Phytologist* paper is available at <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/toc/nph/0/0>.

**Plants do not emit methane**

**Scientists disprove a recent study that suggests
plants emit the potent greenhouse gas methane**

A recent study suggested that terrestrial plants may be a global source of the potent greenhouse gas methane, making plants substantial contributors to the annual global methane budget. This controversial finding and the commotion resulting from this first paper triggered a consortium of Dutch scientists to re-examine these findings in an independent study. Now this consortium including scientists from Plant Research International, IsoLife and Plant Dynamics in Wageningen, Utrecht University, and the Radboud University in Nijmegen concludes that methane emissions from plants are negligible and do not contribute to global climate change.

The consortium brings together a unique combination of expertise and facilities enabling the design and execution of a novel experiment. Plants were grown in a facility containing atmospheric carbon dioxide almost exclusively with a heavy form of carbon (13C). This makes the carbon released from the plants relatively easy to detect. Thus, if plants are able to emit methane, it will contain the heavy carbon isotope and can be detected against the background of lighter carbon molecules in the air.

Six plant species were grown in a 13C-carbon dioxide atmosphere, saturating the plants with heavy carbon. 13C-Methane emission was measured under controlled, but natural conditions with a photo-acoustic laser technique. This technique is so sensitive that the scientists are able to measure the gasses in the breath of small insects like ants. Even with this state-of-the-art technique, the measured emission rates were so close to the detection limit that they did not statistically differ from zero. To our knowledge this is the first independent test which has been published since the controversy last year.

Conscious of the fact that a small amount of plant material might only result in small amounts of methane, the researchers sampled the ‘heavy’ methane in the air in which a large amount of plants were growing. Again, the measured methane emissions were negligible. Thus these plant specialists conclude that there is no reason to reassess the mitigation potential of plants. The researchers stress that questions still remain and that the gap in the global methane budget needs to be properly addressed.

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# BIHIP Meeting

The spring 2007 meeting of the British and Irish Hardwood Improvement Programme (BIHIP) Management Committee and a number of the BIHIP species groups took place on 23 and 24 April. The Management Committee Meeting reported progress by all the species groups during 2006 and covered various issues such as level of funds that BIHIP received for the twelve month period up to end of March 2007 (£74,300). This is the largest sum which BIHIP has had for allocation to date, and is a result of sourcing by John Davis, BIHIP Treasurer and fund raiser. It was decided by the Finance Committee to allocate funds among the various species groups as follows:

| **BIHIP Group** | **Funding Requested (£ Sterling)** | **Allocation for 2007 (£ Sterling)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ash | 1,850 | 1,800 |
| Cherry | 16,300 | 14,000 |
| Oak | 35,300 | 7,000 |
| Spanish chestnut | 20,441 | 15,000 |
| Walnut | 4,330 | 2,000 |
| Sycamore | - | - |
| Birch | - | - |
| Total | 78,221 | 39,800 |

£39,800 was allocated to the species groups, with a further £8,300 allocated to updating the BIHIP website. £3,000 was allocated to a preliminary review on the establishment of a Beech Group within BIHIP, while £5,000 was allocated towards support services for BIHIP. The Sycamore and the Birch groups did not make a funding request but are expected to following their spring meetings.

At the Ash Group meeting a number of important decisions were made. It was agreed that no further plus trees would be selected in ash this year; however, scion material will be collected from all plus trees that have not been grafted to date. All selected material will then be secured at two clone bank sites, one in the UK and the other in Ireland. The establishment of an ash seed orchard in Scotland was considered and funding from Scottish forestry funding sources will be sought to undertake this task and a suitable site will also be located.

The Oak Group decided to focus attention on the development of a new business plan for the group. Oak was one of the earliest groups established under BIHIP, and to date a number of seedling seed orchards have been successfully established, including at the former Coillte nursery in Rathluirc, Co Cork. Last year it was decided that the group needed a new direction and to this end a draft business plan had been prepared, and formed the basis for the work of the meeting. Excellent progress was made, with all members of the group contributing to the formulation of the plan. It is expected that the new business plan will completed shortly and will be ready for the autumn meeting of the group.

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# EUFORGEN Stand-forming Broadleaves Network meeting

The Second Meeting of the EUFORGEN Stand-forming Broadleaves Network will take place in Novi Sad, Serbia, 27-29 June 2007. Many issues around the conservation of stand forming broadleaves were discussed at the last meeting in Viterbo in Italy in October 2005. A number of new Technical Guidelines for the species were issued at the meeting. The next meeting is being organized in collaboration with the Institute of Lowland Forestry and Environment, Novi Sad. Items for discussion are expected to include progress of the network since the Viterbo meeting and a mid-term review of developments during Phase III which extends for a five year period from 1 January 2005 to the end of December 2009. The EUFORGEN programme is serviced by COFORD in co-operation with the Forest Service.

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# COST Action Working Group

## Evaluation of European Beech Genetic Resources for Sustainable Forestry

European beech with its functional flexibility and large genetic plasticity is the subject of this COST Action which has as its objective the study of the possible impacts of climate change on European forests. The next meeting is scheduled to take place in Berlin on 30 May and 1 June. The preliminary programme will examine the issues around the ecophysiology of European beech populations and their sensitivity to changes in climate. The goals of the meeting are to broaden the scientific outreach of the programme, and to review the results which the programme has achieved to date. It will summarise the state-of-the-art of ecophysiological and genetic science on European beech. Topics for this meeting are divided into three sections: ecophysiology, genetics and modelling.

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# Conference on Future Lead Markets of the Forest-based Sector

This FTP conference will take place in Hannover, Germany, 15-16 May 2007. The event will be held event under the German presidency of the European Union. The conference is held in combination with LIGNA+ Hannover. To reach the goals of the Lisbon strategy for development of the European Union, the Member States jointly launched an initiative to create and stimulate lead markets. Lead markets are markets for research and innovation-intensive products and services with a high potential for growth, thus promising a leading role for the European economy at the global level. For more info. See <http://www.forestplatform.org/>

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# Conference on Hardwood Processing

FPInnovations - Forintek Division, CTBA (France) and IVALSA (Italy) are organising the First International Scientific Conference on Hardwood Processing (ISCHP) to be held in Québec City, Canada, on September 24-25-26, 2007 in collaboration with CRB (Laval University).

The main objective of this conference is to bring together the scientific and research communities involved in hardwood processing and products to share knowledge and ideas. International experts, scientists and hardwood industry representatives are invited to discuss recent progress and innovative work in this valuable area. The conference will cover subjects on temperate as well as on tropical hardwood processing.

This first edition of the ISCHP will cover product development, process optimisation, finishing practices, supply chain management, market review, and sustainable business practices. For additional information, visit the website www.ischp.ca or email info@ischp.ca .

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# Review of the Heritage Council Forest Policy

In 1999, the Heritage Council published a document entitled *Policy Paper on Forestry and the National Heritage*. Since then, considerable developments have occurred within the forest sector. Consequently, the Heritage Council is commissioning a review of its current policy to reflect these changes and to provide a vision for the future development of forestry in Ireland, with a particular emphasis on the national heritage and biodiversity.

Woodlands of Ireland is acting as facilitator and co-ordinator of the process. Tenders are now invited for a wide ranging review, with particular emphasis on social, environmental and economic requirements. It is expected that the review will be completed within six months of commencement.

Further details can be obtained under the ‘Events’ page at www.woodlandsofireland.com

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# Research Scholarships for EFI Associate and Affiliate Members

EFI welcomes applications from young researchers or PhD students who are employed by, attached to or registered with EFI member institutions.

The scholarships will be awarded on a competitive basis. The topic of the research work should fit in EFI priority areas in research: (i) forest ecology and management (ii) forest products markets and socio-economics (iii) policy analysis and (iv) forest resources and information. More information on the research priorities is available at www.efi.int/research/.

The selection criteria are the relevance of the research topic for Europe, multicountry applicability (i.e. the research addresses several countries or can be applied in several countries of Europe), the applicant’s previous academic success and the quality of the research plan. The candidates should be PhD students or young scientists with maximum of four years' research experience. Each scholarship will be for three to five months, and the successful candidate will be resident in Joensuu (Finland) at EFI Headquarters for that time. The amount of scholarship is €500 per month tax free. EFI will also cover the travel expenses in economy class as well as accommodation. More information: www.efi.int/organisation/open-posts/scholar07.html

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# Forest Products Marketing Distance Learning

There is a new page on Forest Products Marketing Distance Learning on the UNECE Timber Committee and FAO European Forestry Commission website. Creation of this site is part of an initiative of the UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Products Markets and Marketing. It can be accessed via “Markets” and then “Forest products marketing distance learning” at <http://www.unece.org/trade/timber/mis/forest-products-marketing-links.htm> or from the website at <http://www.unece.org/trade/timber/mis/tos/specialists.htm>. The website provides useful links on Distance Learning Courses in Forest Products Marketing. The links are organized by the 4 Ps of marketing, Product, Price, Place and Promotion. In addition we listed links for forest products marketing and forestry undergraduate, graduate, general courses. Finally we included general forest products marketing and forestry information links.

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# Timber engineering courses

The Centre for Timber Engineering at Napier University is a national facility established by the forestry and timber industries to encourage more widespread use of timber in construction. The training, knowledge transfer and research and development work it carries out aims to provide architects and engineers with the knowledge base to advance their own creative thinking - and confidence - in the use of timber.

The Centre for Timber Engineering and the School of the Built Environment have collaboratively developed undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes including the two Masters programmes: Timber Engineering and Timber Industry Management.. The courses will be made available online for distance learning in the near future, and the Centre offers continuing professional development (CDP) seminars and workshops, all aimed at widening access within the construction industry to information on timber and its uses. The Centre undertakes long-term strategic research on future industry needs as well as applied research (e.g. Knowledge Transfer Partnerships) on practical projects with commercial companies and organisations. For further information go to http://cte.napier.ac.uk

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# IRCSET FP7 – Science in Society Workshop

The Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering & Technology Workshop regarding the First Call for Proposals under the Science in Society action of the European Union 7th Framework Programme to be held at Enterprise Ireland, Glasnevin, Dublin 9 on Wednesday, 2 May, 2007, 11.00 am – 3.00 pm. The guest speaker will be Kevin Walsh, Administrator, DG Research, European Commission, who will outline the objectives of the Call for Proposals from the EU perspective and how potential Irish participants might best address these when submitting their proposals. Other speakers, including a speaker from the FP7 National Co-ordination Office, will provide information on the national and other supports available to applicants.

The purpose of the workshop is to highlight the opportunity for Irish participants to secure EU funding to support research and other activities relating to Science in Society, under Framework Programme 7. There is no charge for attendance. Registration is essential through our website at www.ircset.ie using a brief online form. Places will be allocated ‘on a first-come, first served’ basis and all are welcome. This event is being held with the kind co-operation of the FP7 National Co-ordination Office and Enterprise Ireland.

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# International Biodiversity Day – 22 May 2007

The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity is co-ordinating the International Biodiversity Day on 22 May 2007. This year's theme is ***biodiversity and climate change***. The Secretariat of the Convention has developed a series of communication tools (including a poster, fact sheets and a booklet) and these are available (in all UN languages) on the Convention’s website at: www.biodiv.org/ibd. Lectures, seminars, film presentations, cultural events, exhibitions and school outreach activities are some suggestions that can be implemented to help draw attention to one of the most critical issues facing our planet today.

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# UN adopts new International Agreement to protect world’s forests

On 28 April 2007, after 15 years of discussions and negotiations on a global approach to protect the world’s forests, countries meeting at United Nations Headquarters in New York adopted a landmark agreement on international forest policy and co-operation following two weeks of intense negotiations.

Delegates to the UN Forum on Forests called the agreement a milestone, noting it was the first time States have agreed to an international instrument for sustainable forest management. The new agreement, although not legally binding, sets a standard in forest management that is expected to have a major impact on international co-operation and national action to reduce deforestation, prevent forest degradation, promote sustainable livelihoods and reduce poverty for all forest-dependent peoples.

More than 1.6 billion people, according to World Bank estimates, depend on forests for their livelihoods. The forest product industry is a source of economic growth and employment, with global forest products traded internationally in the order of $270 billion. At the same time, the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that 13 million hectares of the world's forests are lost due to deforestation every year, which, in turn accounts for up to 20 percent of the global greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming. The world's forests and forest soils store more than one trillion tons of carbon – twice the amount found in the atmosphere.

Pekka Patosaari, Director of the UN Forum on Forests Secretariat, said the agreement was a major step toward the creation of a new “people-centred” forest policy. For years countries debated whether to negotiate a formal treaty or a non-legally binding instrument on forest management. But many developing countries with significant forest cover objected to any action that would compromise their sovereignty or control over their natural resources.

The resulting agreement, however, is considered a reflection of a strong international commitment to promote on the ground implementation of sustainable forest management through a new, more holistic approach that brings all stakeholders together. In addition, the agreement is expected to reinforce practical measures at the country-level to integrate forests more closely with other government policies.

Another area of disagreement that has long plagued forest negotiations concerned a financing mechanism to mobilize funding for sustainable forest management. The agreement calls on countries to adopt, by 2009, a voluntary global financing mechanism for forest management.

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