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Forestry and Wood Update

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# New COFORD Chair appointed

Ms Mary Wallace T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food with responsibility for forestry, has announced the appointment of Mr Michael Lynn as COFORD Chairperson.

In announcing the appointment, Minister of State Wallace said that COFORD plays a very important role in the forestry sector through its funding and co-ordination of research and development projects, the publication of reports and the hosting of timely and relevant conferences for people involved in forestry and for public information.

Mr Lynn has been a member of the COFORD Council since July 1999 and is currently the financial director of Woodfab Timber Ltd, which is a timber processing company based in Aughrim, Co Wicklow. He has also served as Chairman of the Irish Timber Council.

The Minister of State added: “The Council of COFORD, whose members represent various elements within the forestry sector, plays a significant role in forestry research as it gives valuable insight into the current and future needs of the sector and I look forward to the continuation of this important work.” She also paid tribute to the work of the previous Chairperson, Mr David Nevins, for his outstanding contribution to COFORD and forest research and development in general.

Finally, Minister of State Wallace reiterated the importance of forestry to the Irish economy and society generally and referred to the recent approval by the EU Commission of Ireland’s Afforestation Programme 2007-2013 as indicative of the Government’s commitment to the sector.

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# Foliage from Forests - a growing opportunity

## An in-depth two day seminar and field visit programme

Around the world forest foliage is a growing market sector. It is also a growing business in Ireland, and while it is predominantly limited to the Christmas period, year-round uses are also rapidly growing. Forest foliage has been traditionally used as a filler in bouquets, but use in its own right is increasingly part of the trend for all things wild and natural. In fact, many floral artists now use forest foliage on its own to make attractive, saleable arrangements. Overall, collection and production of foliage from a range of trees and shrubs presents an exciting business opportunity, well suited to the Irish climate. To address these opportunities, COFORD is organising the first ever national seminar on foliage from forest crops. The event will showcase the wide range of foliage products that can be sourced from Ireland’s forests. Time will be available for one-to-one discussions with speakers during the demonstrations and expert clinics.

The programme for the event is:

Thursday 18 October: seminar at the Hotel Kilkenny, Kilkenny with the following presentations:

* *Trends in forest foliage development* - Roland Boers, Forest Produce Holland
* *Review of COFORD forest foliage project – can growers benefit?* - Amy Costello, GMIT and Andy Whelton, Teagasc
* Keynote address: *Supplying the chainstores - key factors for foliage producers* - Dr Simon Pearson, Winchester Growers
* *The production of lodgepole pine foliage* - Fergus McCaffery, West Coast Forestry
* *Introduction to the demonstration session* - Bill O'Brien, Foliage Ireland Group
* *Demonstration – Forest foliage in floral design* - Richard Haslam, designer florist and Roland Boers, Forest Produce Holland
* *Display of forest crafts*
* *Expert clinics*

Friday 19 October: *field visits to foliage production and processing facilities in Co Wexford.* Bus will depart from Hotel Kilkenny at 09:30 am and return by 5 pm.

Attendance at the conference (including refreshments and lunches) is subject to a registration fee of €50.00 per person for day 1 only, and €80 for both days.

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# ForestEnergy 2007 seminar

COFORD will be hosting a seminar to present the findings of the ForestEnergy 2007 programme. Entitled ***Quality-based forest fuel supply chains – the ForestEnergy 2007 programme***, the event will take place on 12 December 2007 at the Mullingar Park Hotel, Co Westmeath.

COFORD’s ForestEnergy2006 programme, held in collaboration with Teagasc, focussed on first thinning for the production of wood chip fuel. Detailed results of all aspects of the programme are available in the COFORD report [*Harvesting and Processing Forest Biomass for Energy Production in Ireland. The ForestEnergy 2006 programme*](http://www.coford.ie/iopen24/pub/product_info.php?cPath=1175&products_id=966605).

ForestEnergy2007 builds on the 2006 programme and addresses how to harvest and store wood fuel of acceptable moisture content, for sale as wood chip and firewood. The programme encompasses wood chip and firewood harvesting, processing, stacking and storage trials, as well as research on moisture content variation in standing trees over the year.

Storage trials examining the length of time required to dry wood to acceptable moisture content are in place at forest sites and at a specialised experiment site where moisture loss is being determined by using large metal bins placed on weigh cells. Drying rate is being examined in relation to measured meteorological variables at the site. This will provide a better insight into the length of drying required to reach specified end use requirements, using different assortments and covering treatments. In the trial, the wood stored in bins is being compared with the same assortments stored in the forest in large stacks. This is ongoing research with preliminary results now becoming available. The seminar will showcase the main findings of the ForestEnergy 2007 programme, as well as the latest information from Sustainable Energy Ireland on new supports for bioenergy implementation in Ireland. The programme includes a visit to the wood storage trial site as well as the following presentations:

* Overview of the ForestEnergy 2007 programme
* Harvesting and chipping systems results
* Fuel quality analysis
* Drying wood fuel
* New supports for bioenergy implementation in Ireland

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# Wood biomass workshop extended to two days

Due to popular demand, and the level of interest in this important sector, COFORD's wood biomass harvesting and supply chain workshop has been extended to two days. Opportunities will also be provided for people who have already attended the one-day version, to attend day two only.

The programme for day 1 remains:

* Introduction to wood biomass
* Overview of supply chain
* Wood biomass harvesting, transport and storage
* The Ten Commandments of wood biomass usage
* Quantification (conversion factors such as tonnes, m3, kWhrs, GJ, etc.)
* Irish and Danish case studies
* Biomass supply contract preparation

The programme for day 2 is:

* Overview of other biofuels, such as willow short rotation coppice and miscanthus
* Silviculture of willow short rotation coppice
* Establishment and harvesting of willow short rotation coppice
* Production of wood pellets
* Quality requirements for wood pellets
* Delivery of wood pellets
* Boiler types
* Economic appraisal of wood boiler solutions

The first of these workshops will take place at Teagasc Ballyhaise, Co Cavan, on 5 and 6 November 2007, with the Day 2 top-up on Thursday 8 November at the same venue. These workshops will be repeated on 10-11 December at Mullingar, with the second day repeated on 13 December. If you would like to attend, please email: info@coford.ie or phone 01-2130725. The cost is €250 for the two-day option, and €100 for the day-2 only option. Please note that classes are restricted to 20 participants so it is essential to book as soon as possible.

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# Forestry, Carbon and Climate Change - local and international perspectives

Sixty delegates attended the COFORD conference on ***Forestry, Carbon and Climate Change - local and international perspectives*** held at the Glenview Hotel on 19 September 2007. The presentations are now available to download from the COFORD website as pdfs. Proceedings of this event will be published in the coming months.

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# New Hardwood Matters available

The sixth issue (July 2007) of Hardwood Matters is now available. COFORD’s hardwood sales and purchase catalogue is compiled and published twice yearly to promote the sale and use of Irish hardwoods by creating a trade for hardwoods in the developing broadleaves forestry sector in Ireland. If you are not on the subscription list and wish to receive a copy of Hardwood Matters please contact COFORD at 01 2130725 or email john.fennessy@coford.ie

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# COFORD establishes a Forest Nursery Research Working Group

The major objective of nursery research is to improve the productivity of forests through the use of advanced seedling technology. As part of this continuing process of improvement, COFORD has invited representatives from the nursery sector to meet shortly to discuss the various issues on the research needs of the nursery sector over the next number of decades. If there are any issues in relation to plant production or plant quality that you wish to bring to the attention of this committee, email john.fennessy@coford.ie

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# InnovaWood news

InnovaWood present information in their news supplement for researchers and companies interested in European project participation. In addition a synthesis of news from Cordis relevant to forestry and the forest based industries sector. Opportunities for collaborative research with organisations in countries outside of Europe are increasing. e.g. New Zealand and soon, China. [Click here for more details](http://www.coford.ie/iopen24/pub/pub/cofordsupplementoctober2007.pdf) (pdf 218 kb).

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# Hen Harrier tagging sheet

A poster requesting information on Hen Harrier sightings has been produced by the PLANFORBIO Hen Harrier Project, one of the projects COFORD is funding in the new programme. The aim is to distribute these as widely as possible so they would be grateful if you could post it on a notice-board near you - [click here to download](http://www.coford.ie/iopen24/pub/pub/_ireland_harriers_tag_colour_sheet_2007.pdf).

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# PhD Student wanted for project on Forestry in a Changing Policy Environment

University College Dublin have initiated a COFORD-funded research project *Forestry in a Changing Policy Environment*. The government’s forestry policy is laid out in *Growing for the Future* published in 1996 by the Department of Food and Forestry. In it, afforestation targets of 25,000 ha per annum to the year 2000 and 20,000 ha per annum thereafter were outlined with much of this planting to be carried out on farms. The failure to reach these targets means the success of the entire strategy is in question. Consequently, more needs to be done to understand the decision-making environment of farmers specifically in the context of the decision to afforest. Furthermore, the afforestation programme is, and will continue to be, influenced by other national measures. These include continued reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), changes in rural development policy and climate change measures. The Project Co-ordinator is looking for a PhD Student for this project.

The research objectives are to:

* Compare the relative returns from forestry and a number of different agricultural systems in the light of the introduction of the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) and analyse the impact at the level of the individual farmer and the wider economy;
* Examine the implications of the forestry-related measures to be introduced under the Rural Development Regulation (RDR) in Ireland for both the sector itself and the wider economy, including, inter alia, the impact of revised payment rates for afforestation and the introduction of more specific ‘forest-environment’ payments;
* Explore the factors influencing a farmer’s decision to plant using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods;
* Determine the impact of these reforms and farmers attitudes on land availability for forestry;
* Identify strategies to encourage afforestation by farmers in the context of the changing policy environment.

Requirements for this position are an Honours Degree in Forestry, Environmental Studies, Resource Management or Agricultural Economics, or an equivalent qualification; good writing skills and ability to synthesise information from diverse sources; knowledge of relevant qualitative and quantitative research methodologies; good interpersonal and communication skills; and a full, clean driver’s licence.

The project runs from October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2011. The starting date of the PhD research position is not later than November 1, 2007. The PhD scholarship that will be available has a value of circa €22,000, out of which tuition fees have to be paid, leaving a tax-free scholarship value of circa €17,000 per year.

If you are interested in this PhD position, you can apply by sending a CV (including the names and addresses of two people willing to provide references) and a letter explaining why you feel qualified for the PhD position and scholarship to the Project Coordinator, Dr Áine Ní Dhubháin, Agriculture and Food Science Centre, University College Dublin, Belfield, Dublin 4. For inquiries contact Dr Ní Dhubháin at 01 716 7755 or email: aine.nidhubhain@ucd.ie. The closing date for applications is 19 October 2007.

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# Carbon corner

## Climate change and deforestation – international and local perspectives

With the annual UN conference on climate change in Bali just two months away, expectations are high that the negotiation framework for the post 2012 climate change regime will be agreed at the meeting. Already the EU has stated that it will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 20% (on the 1990 base year) by 2020, with a goal to have deeper cuts, up to 30%, by the same date. Achieving the higher emission reduction target will depend on the extent that other countries undertake to cut their own emissions.

A whole suite of measures are being put in place by the EU as part of the pathway to the 20% target. These include vastly increased use of renewables, including woody biomass. But the EU has stated that measures to reduce emissions from deforestation should also be part of the post 2012 emission reduction regime. This makes sense given that around 20% of global carbon dioxide emissions arise as result of deforestation, mainly in developing countries.

Not that there is room for complacency about deforestation in developed counties. Retention and expansion of forests as carbon reservoirs are goals that all signatories of the Climate Change Convention aspire to, as clearly enunciated in Article 4 (1) (a): *Each of these Parties* [developed countries] *shall adopt national policies and take corresponding measures on … protecting and enhancing its greenhouse gas sinks and reservoirs.* In fact, many developed countries, including Ireland, are still in the process of replacing forest cover and putting back carbon which has been lost to the atmosphere following woodland clearance over many centuries.

In a paper presented to the recent COFORD conference on climate change, it was estimated that losses of carbon dioxide from forest clearance in Ireland are thirty-five greater than current annual emissions. Currently, forests in Ireland are taking up around 4 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per year, about 6% of annual emissions. Clearly there is scope to do more by expanding forest cover, and a target of 10% of annual emissions is eminently achievable, if current afforestation targets are achieved. Such a policy will have many co-benefits, including raw material for renewable energy generation.

In the broader land use area, a mid term, stretching target that should be explored is that land use in Ireland would become a net remover of greenhouse gases (taking renewable energy generation into account). A big challenge yes, but one that is worth exploring from an economic and technical feasibility viewpoint.

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# Renewable Energy Development Group to be re-convened

Minister Eamon Ryan has announced that he is re-convening the Renewable Energy Development Group. This Group was originally established in May 2004 but has not met since early 2006. Speaking at the annual conference of the Irish Wind Energy Association taking place in Co Cavan, Minister Ryan said:"Re-convening this group, under the aegis of my Department will provide a cross-Government, pan-agency and industry response to renewable energy in Ireland. This new re-constituted Group will be central to reaching the target of 33% of electricity from renewable sources by 2020. This is an ambitious target and we need all sides pulling together, especially if Ireland is to be the centre of the 'green energy boom' I believe it can be. The Group will include representatives from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Sustainable Energy Ireland, CER, ESB, the ESRI, universities and industry representatives. I will be asking the Group to provide an action-based report within 6 months of its first meeting."

Speaking at the conference in Cavan, Minister Ryan also announced that state aid approval for the Renewable Energy Feed In Tariff Scheme (REFIT) has been received from the European Commission. "I welcome the eventual approval of state aid for this important Scheme. Delays in this area have been unacceptable. On the one hand, the European Union is setting impressive targets for renewable energy and on the other hand holding back national Governments working to achieve these targets. We cannot continue with these types of delays and I will be working with the Commission and my European colleagues to ensure that any future support can get much quicker clearance".

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