

Wood Energy

Diminishing supplies of fossil fuel, allied to increasing prices and the need to drastically reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, are driving a world-wide move to renewable energy sources. At national and EU levels these trends are manifested in the Energy Plan for Europe, whereby renewables are anticipated to account for 20% of energy requirements by 2020. Related policies in Ireland, the Energy White Paper and the Biomass Action Plan set ambitious targets for biomass use in heat, power generation and CHP (combined heat and power). Based on the policy targets, the demand for solid biomass could grow to over 4 million tonnes by 2020.

Forestry has a clear role to play in meeting part of future demand for solid biomass. Over 200,000 ha of new forests have been established since 1985, many of which have already entered the thinning stage, and some of which are already being harvested for wood energy.

Developing a wood fuel energy supply from Irish forests needs a concerted long term programme of research, development and demonstration, focussed on matching wood fuel supply and quality to end user demands. For example, heating and power generation have different fuel requirements, which translate back to how forests are thinned, and how the wood is harvested, stored and processed. COFORD has been funding a national programme of research and development in the wood energy area – FORESTENERGY – since 2006, and since its establishment has funded a number of projects on wood energy use.

The project in this thematic area is:

- **FORESTENERGY:** Harvesting and processing forest biomass for energy production in Ireland.

