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DOYLE HIGHLIGHTS MEASURES TO ENCOURAGE WOOD MOBILISATION

Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine with responsibility for forestry, Andrew Doyle, TD, speaking at the opening of the National Forestry Conference organised by the Wood Marketing Federation and the Society of Irish Foresters, highlighted the availability of grants under his Department's Forest Road Scheme, the aim of which is to encourage and assist in the mobilisation of timber. The conference, the focus of which was 'Wood Mobilisation', took place today in the Johnstown House Hotel, Enfield, Co. Meath.

Minister of State Doyle, to whom responsibility for forestry was recently assigned, commented that the Conference was one of his first opportunities to meet and talk with people involved in the forestry sector. The Minister of State added that, as well as ensuring that there is a continuous and ongoing programme of afforestation to supply Irish sawmills and timber processing industry, "*we must also maximise the volume of raw material that is harvested from our existing forests, not just roundwood for our processors but also the less traditional assortments for our growing renewable energy sector*".

In his address to the Conference, the Minister of State updated the attendance on a range of measures currently being progressed by this Department under the Forestry Programme 2014-2020. In this context, he referred to the development of a Forest Machine Operator training course and the proposed establishment of forest certification groups, both of which would contribute to the mobilisation of timber and meeting demand for certified timber. He

also noted the recent launch of the Irish Timber Growers Association Wood Price Quarterly initiative, adding that *“While the ITGA’s roundwood price database has been in operation since 2005, important information on the value of a forest owner’s timber crop is now available to all for the first time. This information will be invaluable to forest owners when assessing the market or making decisions on thinning and felling sales.”*

Commenting on the range of topics and notable speakers participating in the Conference, Minister of State Doyle thanked the Wood Marketing Federation and the Society of Irish Foresters for organising the Conference as well as the companies, industry representative bodies and agencies who made it possible through their support and participation.

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