MCENTEE MEETS FOREST NURSERIES AND HURLEY MAKERS TO STRENGTHEN MEASURES ON RECENT CHALARÁ OUTBREAK

The Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Shane McEntee TD, has met with representatives from the forest nursery sector, Coillte and the hurley manufacturers to brief them on the ash dieback disease *Chalara fraxinea* and to bring them up to date on measures being taken by his Department.

Minister McEntee confirmed the details of the outbreak, the emergency procedures being taken and stressed that the ash plants used from the same imported consignment related to the outbreak are currently being destroyed. The Minister welcomed the forest nurseries' commitment to strengthen their voluntary moratorium on the importation of ash plants - a high risk factor in the possible spread of the disease. A blanket commitment was given at the meeting not to use stock from continental Europe for this year's planting season.

In a separate meeting, the Irish Guild of Ash Hurleymakers met with the Minister and outlined their concerns regarding the risk of spread of the disease to Ireland and the potentially devastating effect it could have on their industry. They welcomed the Department's measures to eradicate the disease and to protect Ireland's all-island health status. At the meeting, they agreed to call on their members to ensure that ash wood for hurley making is either imported from countries free of the disease or that any hurley ash being brought in from Continental Europe would be in plank form with the bark sawn off.

Coillte, who supply most of the home grown ash for hurley manufacture, agreed to bring forward production of hurley ash material to help alleviate any supply issues that may arise from any disruption to the supply line, and committed to work with their contacts in the UK to increase the supply of hurley ash material. Minister McEntee agreed to meet with the representatives again later in the week to progress all the actions to combat the disease.

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