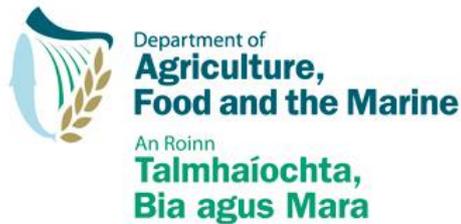


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31 May 2017

DOYLE OPENS NATIONAL FORESTRY CONFERENCE 2017

Mr. Andrew Doyle, TD, Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine with responsibility for forestry, today opened the National Forestry Conference, organised by the Wood Marketing Federation and the Society of Irish Foresters, in Johnstown House Hotel, Enfield, Co. Meath.

In his opening address to the Conference, Minister of State Doyle commented that *“I was very pleased to address this morning’s National Forestry Conference and have the opportunity to update on latest developments in Irish Forestry policy. This year’s theme of ‘Minor Conifers in Ireland’ offered all stakeholders in the Irish forest sector an opportunity to assess the future role of minor conifer species in Irish forestry and is therefore both timely and very relevant”*.

The Minister of State noted that conifers represent 74% of all Irish forests with broadleaved forests representing the remaining 26% adding that the results of the National Forest Inventory in 2012 found that Sitka Spruce occupied over 52% of all species. The Minister of State also noted that the forestry and timber industry, which contributes approximately €2.3 billion to the Irish economy and supports around 12,000 jobs, is reliant to a great extent on Sitka spruce and considered it timely to look at other options as a risk management measure.

He added that an objective of the current Forestry Programme, administered by his Department, is to encourage tree species diversity by offering increased grants and premiums and other supports for diverse conifers and broadleaves and drew attention to the increase in the relevant Grant and Premium Category (GPC 4) in the current Afforestation Grant and Premium Scheme.

The Minister of State also drew attention to the agreement of his Department to the provision of substantial grant aid to NUIG to carry out work on timber standards and innovation in the built environment, added that one of the more immediate tasks will be to characterise the strength properties of a number of species, including Douglas fir, so they can be traded as structural timber. The Minister reminded delegates that if the wider use of species such as Douglas fir and Norway spruce is to be encouraged, it is necessary to enable them to be used in structural applications in conformity with the CEN strength class system."

Concluding the Minister said *"I would like to congratulate the Wood Marketing Federation and the Society of Irish Foresters for an excellent conference today. It was both informative and timely and the focus on minor conifers was comprehensive covering everything from species selection and experiences with such species in other Countries. The Irish forestry sector continues to grow year on year and events like today are essential in taking stock of this progress and ensuring that our strategy for future growth is sustainable"*.

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