

PEFC (Ireland) Ltd Press Notice

Over recent years there has been a growing international demand for forest products to be independently verified as being sourced from sustainably managed woodlands. Consequently, there has been growing pressure on forest owners to have their forests certified to a recognised international Forest Certification Scheme demonstrating compliance with the principles of Sustainable Forest Management.

PEFC (Ireland) Ltd wishes to announce that it is coordinating an initiative to draft an Irish Forest Management Certification Standard in accordance with the regulations laid down by the PEFC Council. Once completed, the Standard will be presented to the PEFC Council for endorsement.

The PEFC Council is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, founded in 1999, which promotes sustainably managed forests through independent third party certification. The PEFC provides an assurance mechanism to purchasers of wood and paper products that they are promoting the sustainable management of forests. PEFC has in its membership 35 independent national forest certification systems of which 25 to date have been through a rigorous endorsement process, accounting for more than 200 million hectares of certified forests producing millions of tonnes of certified timber to the market place, making PEFC the world's largest forest certification system.

At present Ireland does not have a certification standard against which forest management practice can be audited. Without certification, markets for Irish grown timber will become increasingly restricted, consequently this process is essential for the long-term viability of the industry.

A Standard Setting Forum was established in January this year with representation from the timber industry, environmental and social organisations; and a Technical Working Group with equal representation from the economic, environmental and social chambers represented on the Forum has started work on drafting the Standard. The process is being chaired by Mr Sandy Greig, formerly the Head of Sustainable Forestry, Forestry Commission, England, now working as a private consultant based in Dublin. The intention is to complete work on the draft Standard by October this year, following which there will be a process of public consultation and pilot testing prior to completion and submission to the PEFC Council for endorsement in 2010.

Further information regarding the process will be made available on the web site of the Irish Timber Growers Association – www.itga.ie – as an interim measure prior to the establishment of a PEFC Ireland dedicated web site.

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