



PEFC[™] *Promoting Sustainable Forest Management*
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PRESS RELEASE

PEFC (Ireland) Ltd announces that a Draft Irish Standard for Forest Management Certification has been completed and is being submitted for public consultation.

Developed during the course of 2008 to 2010, with input from representatives of environmental, social and economic organisations with interests in the wider forestry sector, the draft PEFC Irish Forest Certification Standard represents a significant development for the forestry sector in Ireland. Drafted along similar lines to the very successful United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Standard, it is intended to provide a practical document for woodland owners, irrespective of scale, against which forest management can be independently audited to determine whether a forest is being managed in accordance with the most rigorous, internationally agreed definitions of sustainability. Its implementation will enable verification of the responsible management of Irish forests and an ongoing improvement in forestry practice.

The period of public consultation will end on 28th May 2010, and the comments of all interested parties are sought prior to then. All comments will be analysed independently and the draft will be revised in the light of this analysis prior to submission to the PEFC Council for endorsement.

PEFC (The Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes) was initiated by the private forestry sector in Europe as a voluntary basis for the certification of forests. The PEFC Council is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, founded in 1999 to promote sustainable forest management through independent third party certification. At a time when consumers are increasingly seeking evidence of environmentally sound business practices, coupled with deforestation and illegal logging contributing to approximately 20% of global carbon dioxide emissions, the PEFC label provides proof of the sound environmental and ethical provenance of timber and wood-based products.

PEFC is a global umbrella organisation for the assessment and mutual recognition of national forest certification schemes developed in a multi-stakeholder process. These national schemes build upon the inter-governmental processes for the promotion of sustainable forest management, a series of on-going mechanisms supported by 149 governments in the world covering 85% of the world's forest area.

PEFC has in its membership 35 independent national forest certification systems of which 26 to date have been through a rigorous assessment process involving public consultation and the use of independent consultants to provide the assessments on which mutual recognition decisions are taken by the membership. These 26 systems account for more than 220 million

hectares of certified forests supplying millions of tonnes of certified timber and wood products to the market place, making PEFC the world's largest forest certification system. Most national governments with public procurement policies in place give equal recognition to PEFC as fulfilling all the criteria of sustainable forest management, as does an increasing number of corporations where wood-based products feature in their social responsibility policies.

PEFC (Ireland) Ltd is the National Governing Body in the Republic of Ireland for the PEFC Council. Sponsored by the Irish Timber Growers Association, and incorporated in 2008, the company established an independent Standard Setting Forum, in accordance with the PEFC Council's Rules for Standard Setting, to develop this draft Standard.

The Forum comprises an independent chairman and members representing environmental, social and economic organisations with an interest in forestry. Details of the member organisations can be found on the PEFC Ireland website www.pefc.ie. The Draft Standard is the result of intensive discussions and negotiations between the parties before agreeing that the draft is ready for public consultation. The document is divided into eight sections dealing with legal requirements; management planning; woodland design; operations; protection and maintenance; conservation and enhancement of biodiversity; the community; and the forestry workforce. In accordance with the PEFC Council's rules, the Pan European Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management (PEOLG), finalised at the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe held in Lisbon in 1998, and themselves drawn from the Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management agreed at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, were all incorporated into this Standard.

This public consultation process represents an opportunity for *all* stakeholders with an interest in forestry and the forest industry to consider the Draft Standard and assist in our aim of producing the best possible document for the assurance of sustainable forest management in Ireland. The text of the Draft can be downloaded from the website www.pefc.ie and comments are to be submitted online via the link on the site.

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