

Wood Availability in Ireland

A Statement to the UNECE Timber Meeting on Wood Availability
Geneva, April 2nd 2008

The estate

At the turn of the 20th century, forests covered less than 1% of Ireland's land area. Today, forest cover is 10% and Ireland has a well developed roundwood processing sector¹.

In the past the Irish forest estate was mainly state owned. However, the mid 1980s saw a significant increase in private afforestation following the introduction of state and EU funded grant and annual premium schemes designed to encourage private land owners, mainly farmers, to become involved in forestry. As a result, the national forest estate in Ireland has increased to over 700,000 ha. Coillte² the state forestry company owns 55% of the forest area, with the balance in private ownership. In 2006, 8,011 ha was afforested by private growers³.

Harvest

In 2006, roundwood processed in the Republic of Ireland totalled 3.154 million cubic metres (m³). Eighty six percent was supplied by Coillte, with the balance coming from the private sector and from imports. Production from private forests is anticipated to grow by over 1 million cubic metres between now and 2020. The Irish wood based panel (WBP) sector utilises roundwood, chips and post consumer wood.

There is strong demand for wood fibre both from the traditional wood processing sector⁴ and from the developing wood biomass sector. The wood biomass sector is actively supported by government⁵.

Information systems

The first National Forest Inventory (NFI)⁶ has recently been completed by the Forest Service⁷. Its objective is to assess the current extent, state and composition of Ireland's forest resource.⁸ Field data collection commenced in December 2004 and finished in November 2006. Data processing and analysis was undertaken in 2007.

In 2007, COFORD⁹ completed the EUROSTAT Joint Wood Energy Enquiry. This details the flow and use of wood fibre in the Irish wood biomass sector.

¹ <http://www.coford.ie/iopen24/pub/pub/woodflow.pdf>

² www.coillte.ie

³ http://www.client.teagasc.ie/docs/training/forestry/technical_info/stats/Annual%20Report%20Data%202006.xls

⁴ This comprises a sawmilling and a wood based panel sector. There is no wood pulp produced in Ireland.

⁵ http://www.woodenergy.ie/iopen24/pub/7_buckley.pdf

⁶ <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/index.jsp?file=forestry/pages/NFI.xml>

⁷ www.agriculture.gov.ie/index.jsp?file=forestry/pages/forest_service.xml

⁸ NFI results can be found at http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/index.jsp?file=forestry/NFI/NFI_results.xml

⁹ www.coford.ie