

THE IRISH FORESTER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY OF IRISH FORESTERS



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Government Spending Cutbacks

There has been only one talking point amongst foresters over the last month and that has been the government decision to cut spending on forestry development in 2003.

From within the industry, foresters have naturally been dismayed at the obvious implications of such cut-backs and the unashamed abandonment of the government's forestry strategy. What is perhaps more surprising, given forestry's frequent negative media profile, is the level of public support which forestry found when in its hour of need. The countless media comments on the situation all focused on the economic implications of the cutbacks to forestry in general and people's livelihoods in particular. For the first time in many years, it seemed, the real contribution that forestry makes to the rural economy was being recognised by both the public and the media, but not by the government.

Confidence in the sector has been severely affected. Many foresters and other industry members find themselves in a situation where, although stated government policy is to expand the sector across the board, there is no real idea of where next years earnings are going to come from. And what about the prospects for 2004 and beyond?

Again the Society of Irish Foresters calls on the Forest Service to urgently review the strategic plan in order that the industry can progress, in partnership with its stakeholders and with strong leadership and committed backing from the government and the European Union. The current situation, full of uncertainty and doubt, is seriously damaging to an industry with such strong potential and committed members.

Northern Ireland and the Mid-term Review of Agenda 2000

On the 4th October the first Annual Conference of the Rural Stakeholder Forum was held at Loughrey College County Tyrone. The meeting discussed the EU Commission's proposals for the Mid Term Review of the Agenda 2000 CAP Agreement which were published in July. The Rural Stakeholder Forum is a broadly based body, which accommodates the wide range of interests that shape rural society. The meeting was addressed by the then Minister for Agriculture Brid Rodgers and Special Adviser to Commissioner Franz Fischler, Mr David Roberts. The morning session of the conference concentrated on a description and analysis of the EU Commission's reform proposals. The afternoon session was taken up by parallel discussion groups, at which delegates were able to discuss

the nature of the reform proposals. The 3 key aspects for producers in Northern Ireland were discussed which included: decoupling, modulation and agricultural development, and the reform of the arable and livestock regimes. Decoupling is the process of removing direct payments paid per hectare of crops or per head of livestock and replacing them with an equivalent payment not linked to the production of any crop or livestock. Modulation is the redistribution of funds to promote the environment, rural development, food safety, food quality and animal welfare. The Forum was well attended and provoked lively discussion. The views aired were on the whole concerned with loss of income to farming. What impact the proposals will have on forestry remains to be seen.



Society Members at the September Field Day in Wicklow

Liability Insurances - Who needs them and why?

This year we have all been affected by the dramatic premium increases in insurance protection and however valid the reasons behind those increases, it has meant either a re-evaluation or re-consolidation in the type of covers needed. All too often this has meant a number of important policies can fall by the wayside or get overlooked in the desire to save costs. In the area of negligence, and the duty of care that any professional owes to clients, employees and the public at large, there are three main covers that have to be considered.

Professional Indemnity

It wasn't so long ago that most disagreements with clients could be settled with an apology and/or a rebate. Mounting

economic pressures, an increased compensation culture and more public awareness of consumer rights, means that clients will often go further. If they perceive that they have lost money or opportunities through your mistake, error, inefficiency or negligence, the tendency is for them to issue a writ, which can be followed by long and costly legal action and perhaps, an even more expensive settlement.

When anyone sets up in business, they promote themselves as being competent to perform with a prescribed degree of skill and care. Failure will result in that person being liable for the consequences of the errors just in the same way that a manufacturer or supplier of a faulty product can be held liable. The unlimited liability status often held by the professional means that the ultimate loss is not always restricted to some prearranged monetary amount but can extend to the full value of their personal fortune.

In my experience, even the most innocuous of risks have produced substantial claims against professionals, and without some kind of protection, the financial security of the business can be threatened, and you don't have to be in the wrong to be sued. Innocent targets can find defending their hard earned reputation against spurious allegations to be an increasingly expensive proposition.

The object of professional indemnity protection is to protect against the legal liability to pay damages to those who sustain a loss arising out of the negligence, error or omission your business may cause. Cover would include the provision of all costs and expenses incurred in the defence and settlement of such actions and usually extend to account for libel and slander, loss of documents, breach of confidentiality and employee dishonesty.

Employer's Liability

You have an obligation (where an employer) to ensure that there is adequate protection available for those sustaining an accident while employed by you.

Employer's liability therefore covers the legal liability that can arise for accidental bodily injury or disease contracted by employees in the course of their employment in the business.

Public Liability

Insurance covering the legal liability resulting from accidental bodily injury to any third party, person or damage to their property arising in connection with the carrying on of a business.

At a time when the agricultural and forestry industries are under considerable pressure, it can be all too easy to ignore the simple realities - your clients will not hesitate to pursue a claim if they consider that a substandard service has been provided. Protection must be in place, otherwise the business is at risk. With adequate protection, the business can continue to do what it does best, to the best of its abilities.

This article was provided by Cefyn James who is Special Risks Director at the Tyrrell Coakley Insurance Group.

"Trees for Ireland" calls it a day

Trees for Ireland was established in October 1950 and one of its main proponents was Seán Mac Bride. The late Professor Clear suggested the name *Trees for Ireland* following consultation with the writer Padraig O'Conaire. The objective of *Trees for Ireland* was to create an informed public opinion on forestry, on the importance of a supply of homegrown timber and on tree planting for amenity. The first Chairman was The O'Rahilly and Rurairi Bruagh was a committee member from the start. Padraig O'Caoimh, then General Secretary of the GAA was very supportive, for many years the late Aidan Brady represented the GAA on the council.

Trees for Ireland was imbued with great enthusiasm for tree planting and they championed the cause of afforestation especially among the political establishment. In the early years, *Trees for Ireland* published many pamphlets and books. The driving force was HM FitzPatrick with David Luke as publisher. Arbor Days were a feature in many parts of the country, and enjoyed wide political support. They arranged for the planting of demonstration plots of trees and these helped landowners to understand species selection, site cultivation, methods of tree plantation, etc.

The organisation was designed to be representative of the main players in rural Ireland, the GAA, ICMSA, ICA, INTO, Macra na Feirme and the Vocational Teachers Association were members. Its last President, John Joe Connolly represented the INTO. Many well-known names in forestry were past presidents of the organisation, viz. HM FitzPatrick, Kathleen Delap, Harry Harbourne, Sean Feeney, Jack Durand, Niall O'Muirgeasa. Many others like OV Mooney, Prof Pauric Joyce, Tom Maloney, Dan Mc Glynn, Gilbert Mc Cool, Paddy Delaney and Myles Cosgrave gave splendid support. The names of Sal Cahill and Ann Luke are synonymous with dedicated service totaling over four decades. At a meeting earlier this year, Dr Jack Durand, Ann Luke, Mary O'Reilly and Niall O'Muirgeasa decided reluctantly to wind up the affairs of the organisation.

In recent years the organisation failed to attract new members and for the past ten years or so, has been in decline. Some of the remaining member organisations will be absorbed into the *Tree Council of Ireland*.

And there is a message in this for the Society of Irish Foresters. Unless we can continue to attract new members and unless new members take part actively in the Society, it too may not survive.

Union of European Foresters (UEF)

At the UEF Governing Council Meeting held in Poznan, Poland, on 10th-13th October 2002, the Society of Irish Foresters was admitted as a full council member. The meeting was attended by the Technical Director - Tony Mannion.

General Information

• UEF is a federation of professional foresters organisations from several European countries. It was created in 1955 in Berlin and groups together 20 forestry associations from 17 countries. In total, it represents some 60,000 foresters of all ranks working for the state, community and private sectors. UEF is represented by a Presidency, consisting of the president, 3 vice-presidents, secretary, assistant secretary and treasurer. The Presidency forms part of the Governing Council, UEF's supreme authority, which is further composed of one representative of each member-association. A UEF congress is held every three years. The Presidency and the Governing Council meet in between. The UEF has at its disposal an office, established in Brussels, which provides, on a regular basis (via a mailing service) the member associations of UEF, with relevant information and offers infrastructural facilities.

UEF Objectives

- To enhance the principles of sustainable forest management and strengthen the links between the forestry sector and society;
- To develop and promote at European level the professional, ethical and material interests of the individual members of its member organisations;
- To develop to their full value the potential contributions from the forestry sector to rural development, employment, environment and to overall sustainable development of society.

UEF Activities

UEF promotes contacts between different forester associations in Europe, exchange of information, courses and personal meetings. UEF thus encourages meetings between European foresters and regular visits of young foresters to different European countries, and exchange programs between forest organisations. UEF's role is to provide advice and information for organising such meetings. It relies on the support of the official bodies in the various countries and the assistance of local foresters;

UEF submits proposals and implements actions to help solve the current problems of European forests. For that purpose, it has established links with:

- The EU Commission;
- The European Parliament in Brussels and Strasbourg;
- The Council of Europe;
- National governments;
- UEF has cooperated to define proposals that contributed to the document "Forestry Action Program";
- UEF is a member of the consultative Committee on Forestry and wood-using Industries ("Woodchain") of the EU Commission;

UEF has the observer-status as a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in the Council of Europe and participates in the Expert Level of the Ministerial Conference on the protection of forests in Europe. UEF has co-operated to define proposals that contributed to the CAP accompanying measures and forestry measures in agriculture. In addition, the UEF has undertaken specific action in the following sectors:

- Forestry education in each European country aimed at ensuring coordination between the different countries (organisation of study trips abroad and of individual training for forestry students);
- Forestry activities and nature protection;
- European Union: establishing close connections resulting in recognition of UEF by the EU Commission;
- Concerted action to promote a national forestry policy in European countries;
- Role of forests in the Mediterranean countries;
- Forest deterioration due to pollution and fires;
- Improving connections with the countries of Eastern and Central Europe;
- Advisor to EU's Forestry Strategy;
- Stimulating the foundation of a European Forestry School;
- Involvement in the Advisory Committee on forestry and Forest based Industries - DG Enterprise;
- The Advisory Committee on Forestry/Cork - DG Agriculture. There is no advisory committee for DG Environment, but UEF is active in an unofficial capacity.



UEF Delegates at the Governing Council Meeting in Poznan, Poland, in October at which the Society of Irish Foresters was admitted as a full council member.

Irish Forestry Certification Initiative - Taking stock and future direction

The development of a Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) approved 'Forest Management Standard' for Ireland has been ongoing for over three years now. Initially, considerable progress was made and a draft standard produced, which was ratified by the Irish Forestry Certification Initiative (IFCI) Steering Group composed of its four constituent chambers, i.e. Economic, Social, Environmental and Small Timber Growers. This draft went to public consultation in 2000 and submissions were subsequently received from stakeholders in all representative chambers. However, since the public

consultation phase, little progress has been made and the process was effectively stalled for a variety of reasons, including disagreements between the constituent chambers on the Steering Group and a lack of resources to proceed effectively. In the meantime, Coillte has received certification whilst small growers and other segments of the industry remain uncertified. During this period, the image of IFCI has suffered and there are many who question its ability to deliver an agreed, final Irish forestry standard. The recent AGM held in Tullamore, Co. Offaly last September did nothing to either advance the process or enhance the image of IFCI.

Considerable soul searching continued subsequently and the Steering Group at its most recent meeting agreed to make substantial changes and progress or risk disbandment in the short term. To this end, changes have been made regarding the Officers that make up the Steering Group and a new Chair appointed. A sub-group has been formed to review IFCI procedures and protocols. In addition, some financial support has been received from the Forest Service. Constituent organisations have offered to provide meeting facilities, facilitate Technical Working Group meetings and to disseminate information about upcoming events and FSC bulletins. There is also a very positive attitude in the current Steering Group to tackle the difficult issues inherent in devising a new draft standard. Since our last meeting, the Technical Working Group has begun in earnest to revise the current draft standard and provision will be made for further stakeholder input before the new draft is finalised prior to the next public consultation phase.

For stakeholders committed to certification under FSC principles there is now an opportunity to produce a third draft forestry standard for Ireland. However, it behoves all of us involved in IFCI to responsibly represent the chambers on which we were elected. It is in no ones interest that further unnecessary delays occur. It is also expected that the third draft standard will be ready by the middle of 2003 at the latest, after which it will go to public consultation. By its very nature it will be a compromise document between diverse interest groups. There will be stakeholder individuals and groups who do not support FSC certification under any circumstances whilst others will only agree to it on their terms. These parties may wish to undermine the process of certification as the rate of positive change is not adequate in their view. In addition, even for those stakeholders that support FSC certification, it is likely that not all of the constituent members of each chamber within the general public will agree on every detail of its content. It is unlikely to represent the perfect solution for individual interest groups involved. Nonetheless, it is a means through which all stakeholders together may strive toward improved standards and a vision for forestry that incorporates sustainable management and development. It should also be recognised that once agreed, the standard will be reviewed every five years and all parties certified against FSC principles are obliged to comply with it. This allows for continual improvement as new information and technologies comes to light.

This is probably the last chance there is to agree an FSC-approved standard for Irish forestry. Let us put past divisions and dissention behind us and respect each other's differences

as we strive toward an agreed compromise. The progress that is currently being made should be allowed to continue so that further improvements in forestry practise can be achieved for the benefit of all. After nearly four years of effort, we at least owe that much to all stakeholders in Irish forestry. Otherwise, the alternatives are clear; non-certification of a considerable portion of the forest industry or the adoption of other certification systems in Ireland such as the pan-European Forest Certification system (PEFC).

Article supplied by Irish Forestry Certification Initiative (IFCI)

On the Move

The Society of Irish Foresters would like to congratulate the following people on their recent appointments:

Sean Lenihan has left Coillte to become principal of Kestrel Forestry Consultants.

Niall Farrelly has been appointed as a forester with the Forest Service in the Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources.

Orla Fahy has been appointed as an ecologist with the Forest Service in the Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources.

Emmet Burns has been appointed as an archaeologist with the Forest Service in the Department of Communications, Marine & Natural Resources.

Recent Publications

"Forestry and Bird Diversity in Ireland: A Management and Planning Guide." O'Halloran, J., Walsh, P. M., Giller, P. S. and Kelly, T. C. (2002). Published by COFORD, Dublin.

"Forest Protection Guidelines." Available from The Forest Service.

"Native Trees and Forests of Ireland." Hickie, D. with photography by Mike O'Toole, Published by Gill and Macmillan.

"Sitka Spruce in Ireland." Joyce, P. M. and OCarroll, N. (2002). Published by COFORD, Dublin.

"Report on Christmas tree research." Edited by E. Hendrick (2002). Available from COFORD, Dublin.

"Managing the impacts of forest clearfelling on stream environments." Giller, P., Johnson, M. and O'Halloran, J. (2002). Available from COFORD, Dublin.

"Forest Mammals - Management and Control." Rooney, S. and Hayden, T. J. (2002). Available from COFORD, Dublin.

"Factors influencing farmer participation in forestry." Collier, P., Dorgan, J. and Bell, P. (2002). Available from COFORD, Dublin.

New Members

The SIF would like to welcome the following new members:

<i>Technical</i>	<i>Associate</i>
Patrick Carroll	Charles Harper