

# Forest Certification in Ireland

Donal Whelan

The following Q&A provides a broad outline of forest certification in Ireland.

## What is Forest Certification?

Forest Certification is a system that verifies forests are managed to a defined best practice and sustainable standard leading to a certificate issued by a recognised independent party. Certification works throughout the forest supply chain with the aim of promoting good practice in the forest and to ensure and verify that timber and non-timber forest products are produced with respect to ecological, social and ethical standards. A chain of custody system further ensures traceability of certified materials from the forest to the processors and ultimately to the consumer. Through labelling, customers and consumers are able to identify products from such sustainably managed forests.

## What are the relevant certification schemes in Ireland?

There are two main international certification schemes, FSC and PEFC.

- FSC - The Forest Stewardship Council is an international non-profit, multi-stakeholder organisation established in 1993 to promote responsible management of the world's forests.
- PEFC - Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) is an international non-profit, non-governmental organisation dedicated to promoting Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) through independent third-party certification. PEFC is an umbrella organization and is the world's largest forest certification scheme.

## Why is there a need for certification for private forests in Ireland?

Ultimately certification of private woodlands

is likely to be required in Ireland in the coming years as timber processors source increasing quantities of roundwood from privately owned forests. We export approximately 80% of all our timber products, and simply put, our export markets for these timber products require such products to be certified. Under the two main international certification schemes above, timber processors can take in a maximum of 30% of uncertified wood in their log supply to be permitted to label their output as certified. In the coming years, many timber processors will be taking in more than this proportion of wood from private forests and hence the need for certification, so as these products can be sold on international markets.

## What type of forest certification is available to growers?

Growers can seek individual forest certification through either of the two schemes, PEFC or FSC. Such individual forest certification can be expensive for timber growers and to reduce costs there is also the option of Group Certification. Group certification allows many forest owners to become certified as a Group and share the financial and administrative costs involved. Given the nature of private forest ownership in Ireland, Group Certification is likely to be the most cost effective and economic option which would facilitate access to competitive timber markets in the future.

## What is involved in Certification?

As a way of summarising the steps involved in general Group Forest Certification, the following Flow Chart (see opposite) outlines a typical Group Certification process.

Donal Whelan, Technical Director, ITGA

# FLOW CHART SHOWING TYPICAL GROUP CERTIFICATION PROCESS

