

PEFC – woodland certification for private growers



Forest certification in Ireland has come of age. At the time of writing (October 2011), the *PEFC Irish Forest Certification Standard* is in the last stages of the endorsement process and all indications point towards it being ready for implementation in Irish woodlands from the start of 2012.

For the first time an Irish certification standard, tailor made for Irish conditions and incorporating our own laws, regulations and Forest Service guidelines, will be available to the private woodland owner.

This comes at an opportune time as the supply of roundwood from private forests is on the cusp of a dramatic increase. Under the terms of their chain of custody certificates, the larger saw and panel mills can normally take in up to 30% uncertified timber which to date has not posed a problem for the private grower. This is changing, and given the forecasted timber to come from the private sector it is important that certification is available to private growers.

What can the private timber grower do? Inevitably there are costs involved and individual certification, even for the largest private owners, is not a viable option, consequently PEFC has pioneered the concept of group certification, whereby forest owners can join forces and avail of significant economies of scale – the more members in a group, the greater the cost saving to each member.

In Ireland there are now a number of emerging producer groups of woodland owners and these are likely to be at the forefront of group certification, moreover these could in turn amalgamate to form a "supergroup" – across Europe there are examples of group schemes with thousands of members, rather than scores, resulting in considerable cost reductions.



*William Merivale,
National Secretary, PEFC*

PEFC is here to help and is a response to the increasing market demand for certified timber and wood products. Further details are available on the PEFC Ireland website www.pefc.ie or from the National Secretary, William Merivale, william@pefc.ie and owners with woodlands approaching the productive stage are urged to seek further advice either from PEFC Ireland, the Irish Timber Growers Association, Teagasc, or their forestry adviser.