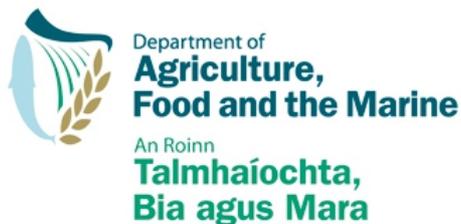


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PRESS RELEASE

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7 October 2013

DEPARTMENT ISSUES UPDATE ON ASH DIEBACK

Following confirmation of a finding of Ash Dieback (*Chalara fraxinea*) in Ireland in October 2012 (on plants imported from continental Europe), a major survey of ash has been carried out by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. This included targeted and systematic ash surveys of plantations, nurseries, roadsides, landscape and farm landscape plantings and hedgerows. To date there have been a total of 97 confirmed findings of the disease located throughout the country. The Department has worked with the IFA, nursery owners, landowners, forestry contractors and roads authority, to ensure as smooth a process as possible to clear these sites.

As part of the surveillance effort a systematic survey of Ireland's hedgerows as well as a targeted survey of hedgerows surrounding infected plantations was carried out. The Department today confirmed that trees have tested positive from both internal hedgerows within the first confirmed positive plantation and a hedgerow tree that is external to the plantation, in County Leitrim.

Speaking today Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Tom Hayes TD said *"I am fully aware of the significance of this finding and have asked my officials to put a comprehensive eradication plan into place immediately. This will start today (Monday October 7) with the assistance of Coillte."* He added *"There has been a massive effort to survey for this disease and remove the disease anywhere it has presented itself. We will continue this policy of eradication and will keep the policy under constant review as results come in from the surveys. My officials have discussed the latest finding with their counterparts in Northern Ireland as we have a joint all-Ireland strategy for Chalara."*

The Leitrim site was planted with imported ash plants in 2009 and these imported plants were confirmed positive for *Chalara fraxinea* in October 2012. This was the first site in Ireland where *Chalara fraxinea* was detected. To date, it remains by far the largest known outbreak of the disease in Ireland.

Notes to editors:Table of findings *Chalara fraxinea*, 4 October 2013

Location type	Number of Confirmed findings
Forestry Plantations	39
Horticultural Nurseries	16
Garden Centres	4
Private Garden	2
Farm landscaping/Agri-envir schemes	15
Roadside landscaping	20
Hedgerow	1

- *Chalara fraxinea* is a fungus which causes the disease known as “Ash Dieback”.
- National legislative measures (S.I. 431 of 2012) were introduced in November 2012 under the Destructive Insects and Pest Acts 1958 and 1991 to regulate the import of ash seed, plants and wood. Similar legislation was introduced in tandem by Northern Ireland.
- Ash has been delisted from the list of tree species approved under the afforestation grant schemes. In recent years 10% of the planting programme was ash.
- It is very important that members of the public watch out for ash dieback but most importantly that they know the symptoms to look out for when examining their ash as there are many other pests and diseases (albeit less harmful) associated with ash. Guidance on the symptoms of ash dieback caused by *Chalara fraxinea* is given on the Teagasc forestry website and the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine’s Chalara webpage <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/forests-service/ashdiebackchalara/>
- 22 Chalara information meetings around the country were organised by Teagasc and DAFM, in May 2013. Around 800 people attended and information was provided on what to look out for and the implications in terms of clearance of a forest plantation. Clarification was also given at these meetings on the implications to AEOS and REPS farmers where the disease is found on the trees planted under these schemes in relation to applying for *Force majeure* and the implications on payments etc.
- Following discussions with the GAA a one page advertisement was placed in the All Ireland Replay Hurling Final Programme requesting Patrons to look out for the symptoms of ash dieback. In addition the GAA have included an article in their monthly newsletter that goes out to all the clubs in the country in an effort to raise awareness further.
- The All Ireland Chalara Control Strategy was launched by Minister of State Tom Hayes and Minister O Neill on 9th July 2013, this strategy is on the Department’s Chalara web page.
- The *Chalara* Pest Risk Analysis (PRA) for UK and Ireland was published by the Forestry Commission UK following close co-operation and input from officials from DAFM and officials and experts from NI. This PRA aims to give a more sound legal footing to the measures introduced last year to restrict plants and wood from being imported from diseased areas. The document will be examined by the EU Standing Committee on Plant Health in relation to the appropriateness of our measures.

End