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**JOINT FAO/ECE/ILO COMMITTEE ON FOREST TECHNOLOGY, MANAGEMENT AND TRAINING**

Seminar on  
**AFFORESTATION IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT**

in conjunction with the 24<sup>th</sup> session of the Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on  
Forest Technology, Management and Training

Ennis, Co. Clare, Ireland, 15-19 September 2002

**The Mechanisation of Planting on Restock Sites in Ireland**

Basic paper by Mr. Michael Keane

**Summary**

The mechanisation of forest operations has been erratic throughout the industry worldwide. In harvesting operations, mechanisation has become very important in many countries. This has not been the case in the establishment area, especially on restock sites, where mechanisation has proven particularly difficult due to ground conditions after clearfelling.

There are currently three main mechanical systems available for planting on restocking sites in northern Europe. The Silva Nova is a large, expensive piece of equipment based on a forwarder as the prime mover. Due to its size and cost, it is not considered suitable for Irish conditions at the moment. The Bracke planter is an excavator-based machine, which mounds and plants in the one machine pass. This equipment has proven its worth in this country and a Bracke planter has been working in the south east of the country (Wicklow/Wexford area) for three years. The third piece of equipment that is currently available for planting on restock sites is the EcoPlanter. This machine has been working in Ireland since January 2002. All three planters use container planting stock only.

Current costs for the Bracke and the EcoPlanter are approximately €100,000 and €250,000 respectively (including base units), with an annual planting capacity of 140 ha (Bracke) and 200 ha (EcoPlanter). Under Irish conditions, the productivities (plants/hour) claimed by the manufacturers have not been reached. This has resulted in the current costs of mechanised planting being roughly similar to those of manual planting. However, it is envisaged that, with reductions in overheads and increased competition, mechanised planting will play an increasingly large part in planting operations in Ireland.

While focusing primarily on restock sites, the experiences gained from this study are also extremely relevant to the mechanisation of planting on afforestation sites in Ireland.

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