

Distr.
GENERAL

TIM/EFC/WP.1/SEM.54/2002/R.26 (Summary)
23 July 2002

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
Timber Committee

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION
European Forestry Commission

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION



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 24th session of the Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on
Forest Technology, Management and Training

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

Coillte Practicing SFM in a Commercial Environment

Basic paper by Mr. Tim Crowley

Summary

Coillte is Irish private limited company that operates in forestry and related activities on a commercial basis. The company was established under the Forestry Act of 1988 and is owned by the Minister for Finance and Minister for Forestry. Coillte owns and manages over 430,000 ha of plantation forests and establishes over 10,000 ha of forests annually.

Today, a greater awareness and appreciation of the environment and increasing prosperity and urbanisation are changing Irish society's expectations from forests. A more multi-purpose approach to forest management is being sought that will deliver both timber and non-timber benefits. Coillte has responded to this need through the adoption of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) as the principle by which it will manage its forests in the future.

The practice of SFM and its subsequent verification through the Forest Certification process have resulted in major shifts in Coillte's policies and practices. Environmental and social aspects of the company's business have been strengthened, and this, over time, will change the nature of the forest resource. New policies include: designating 15% of the forest estate for nature conservation;

commitments to chemical reduction and the use of bio-oils; consultations with stakeholders on management plans; and a move towards more species diversity in both afforestation and restock sites. New practices include: planning at a more local level; more intensive monitoring of the impacts of forest operations; greater emphasis on forest design in sensitive landscapes; the protection of small biodiversity features; and the provision of deadwood habitats.

SFM and Certification has provided a framework by which the company has been able to engage with stakeholders in a structured fashion. The FSC Irish Forestry Standard provides a balanced approach to sustainably managing forests, and compliance with the Standard, verified by independent auditing, has provided a new assurance to the public that the company's forests are being responsibly managed to international standards.

Coillte's achievement of Certification has been widely acknowledged by stakeholders but some campaigning environmental NGOs remain sceptical and regard the Standard as being inadequate.

Despite the considerable effort and cost to Coillte, the benefits of Certification outweigh the negative aspects.
