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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

**Private Afforestation in Ireland – Past Achievements and Future Directions**

Basic paper by Mr. Tim O'Brien

**Summary**

**Past Achievements**

Up to the early 1980s in Ireland, both the level of interest and the level of development in private afforestation were minimal. With the introduction of EU-supported incentives in 1981, the level of planting got off to a slow start, expanded rapidly from 1985 onwards, peaked in 1995 and '96, and has since dropped back 30%. However, a total of 166,000 ha of new forests were planted by the private sector over the past 20 years, which was no mean achievement.

During the 1980s the main reasons for expansion were:

- the introduction of the Western Package Scheme, grant aiding up to 85% of costs;
- 4-year Fixed Price Package to establish a forest provided by Green Belt;
- the lead given by financial institutions by investing pension funds in forestry.

During the 1990s the reasons are farmer-related:

- introduction of the Forest Premium Scheme, i.e. annual payment to farmers for 20 years;

- the Strategic Plan for the Development of the Forestry Sector in Ireland, produced by the Government to afforest an additional 10% of Ireland's land area;
- the increasing acceptance by farmers of the growing of trees as a legitimate farming activity.

While there has been substantial progress, current planting is 30-40% below targets because:

- annual premiums payable to farmers are not competitive with other schemes; and
- the Afforestation Grant Scheme and the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS) are not integrated.

### **Future direction**

It is critical that the afforestation target of 20,000 ha per year is achieved to ensure the sustainability of the timber processing sector by:

- making annual forestry premiums competitive; and
- integrating forestry and REPS schemes.

The forests of the future should be designed to facilitate continuous cover with a greater diversity of species especially broadleaves, with the objective of achieving 50% broadleaf cover in the second rotation.

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