



## Forest Certification - Promoting the Sustainable Management of the World's Forests

The ongoing problem of deforestation in many parts of the world, particularly in the tropics, hardly needs to be highlighted. Perhaps less widely appreciated is the fact that this deforestation is directly responsible for approximately 20% of global carbon dioxide emissions - greater than the entire transport sector combined - and while energy generation from fossil fuels remains the biggest single culprit, the emissions from deforestation and agriculture together constitute the largest global source of greenhouse gases. The double tragedy to this is that where forests are properly managed their vital role as carbon sinks can be enhanced.

Throughout the world vast areas of forest remain unsustainably managed, illegal logging is rife, and, regrettably, we in Ireland are complicit in all this as we continue to import large volumes of timber from illegal and highly questionable sources. To give just two recent examples: timber used in the



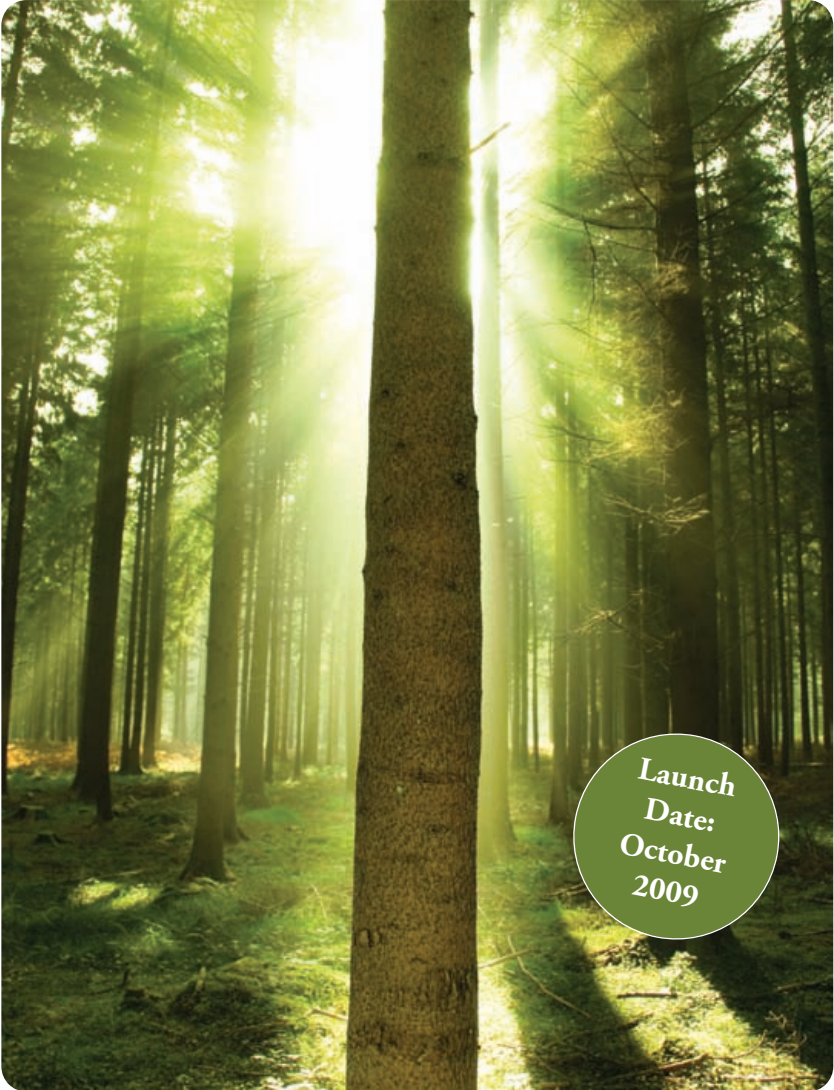
construction of both the Irish Aid Centre in Dublin and the new civic offices in Mullingar was independently tested and found to contain endangered tropical species; in the case of the civic offices, plywood used in their construction

**“illegal logging is rife, and regrettably, we in Ireland are complicit”**

contained bintangor and nyatoh, two species that grow in the rainforests of S.E. Asia, an area renowned for widespread illegal logging, unsustainable management practices and human rights abuses. As for the Irish Aid Centre, it is particularly ironic that as the public face of our aid programme, illegal timber from the developing world was used in its construction.

It is estimated that we import about €100 million worth of tropical hardwood annually, only a fraction  
*continued over*

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*past performance is no guarantee of future returns*

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of which is proven to come from sustainably managed forests. In 2007/08 alone we imported over 150,000 m<sup>3</sup> of Chinese-manufactured plywood, despite it being well established that much of the timber used in its manufacture comes from illegally logged and endangered species. Think about it: a single stack of that amount of plywood 10 metres wide by 5 metres high would be 3 kilometres long! Moreover, this material directly competes



*Field trip to a PEFC-certified forest in the Jura in eastern France earlier this year*

with Irish-made panel boards, manufactured from Irish timber grown in certified sustainably managed forests.

It follows that it is incumbent upon every consumer of timber and wood based-products (including paper) to ensure that the materials used in their manufacture have the soundest possible environmental credentials.

Fortunately, this is easier to do than it might seem as there are a number of credible forest certification schemes in existence which provide an assurance mechanism that claims made about a product's environmental credentials have been independently verified.

In Europe there are two such schemes of consequence - the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC). Of the two, PEFC is the larger by certified forest area (about 220 million hectares versus FSC's 100 million), while FSC has the greater number of "Chain of Custody" certificates issued to date. Rather than enter into futile debate over which scheme is the "better" one, it is far more productive to promote credible certification schemes in general, as the serious point at issue here is the fact that less than 10% of the world's forests are certified as being sustainably managed. Moreover, following rigorous independent analysis, both schemes were accorded equal status in the UK government's public timber procurement policy, regarded as the most advanced such policy in Europe and the template for other EU member countries to follow. The two schemes adopt slightly different approaches to achieve the same end - namely an

assessment by an independent, accredited expert that the management practices in a given forest comply with internationally accepted principles and criteria for sustainable forest management. This is achieved by carrying out an audit of forest management against a certification standard which has been endorsed by one or both of the certification schemes.

However, the remit of a forest management certificate stops at the forest gate. Thereafter, a separate process known as "Chain of Custody" certification takes over. This is a mechanism for tracing material from the forest to the final product to provide certainty that claims made about the product's origins in a certified forest are genuine. Only

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**"At the present time, Ireland does not have a national forest certification standard"**

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if the chain is unbroken and each manufacturer or handler of the product is certified can credible claims be made about the finished article. For example, the timber laid in a floor is quite likely to have gone from forest to sawmill to timber merchant to flooring contractor, each one of which must be certified if a claim that the floor is made of sustainably produced timber can be relied upon. (I choose this as an example because at the moment just one specialist timber flooring contractor in the entire country is certified to either scheme, due apparently to lack of demand for certified timber...!)

At the present time, Ireland does not have a national forest certification standard. Both Coillte and IFUT's forests are certified by FSC, but to a generic, rather than a national, standard. (PEFC only certifies to endorsed national standards and does not grant certification to generic standards, whereas FSC allows the latter as an interim measure.) Both FSC Ireland and PEFC Ireland are currently drafting national standards for eventual endorsement by their respective international bodies, and FSC Ireland's draft standard was in fact recently made available for the required public consultation process. It is hoped that both will be fully endorsed and available to forest owners sometime in 2010.

So, whether you're the procurement officer of a local authority, educational establishment or corporation, or just a home-owner laying a new timber floor, ensure that the roof-truss manufacturer, flooring contractor or printing company engaged to supply the wood-based materials you are purchasing is in possession of a valid chain of custody certificate to either PEFC, FSC, or both. By doing so, you will become part of the solution by helping to promote sustainable forest management and, one day, ending the tragedy that is deforestation.

## Open Season on Alien Muntjac Deer



**The Chinese Muntjac, which is about the size of a fox and barks like a dog, has been illegally introduced into the wild in Ireland. It is believed that the first release may have been in the south east region and it now poses a huge threat to our native flora.**

The Muntjac, which weighs between 15kg and 20kg, becomes sexually mature at six months so there is no closed breeding season as they breed within weeks of birthing and live for about fifteen years. They create the same problems as other deer species and like all kinds of woodland and young roots. They will eat farm crops and are very opportunistic.

Mr. John Gormley T.D., Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, stated that he has



recently made an order under the Wildlife Act to set a 12 month open season for the hunting of wild Muntjac deer. This allows holders of deer hunting licences to hunt the species throughout the State from 1 September, 2008 subject to the permission of the landowner.

"Muntjac Deer are susceptible to, or may act as a reservoir for, Bovine TB, Foot and Mouth Disease, Lyme's disease and Bluetongue Virus; they also have a record of crop damage. The Minister said "The introduction of the Muntjac deer in Britain has resulted in significant damage to commercial woodland, farm crops and gardens over the years. I am of the view that this authorisation will allow deer hunters to hunt the species and help to ensure that the species does not gain a foothold in the country. My Department is examining further measures with a view to eradicating this alien species before it becomes established."

The Muntjac's small size and its liking for woodland habitats together with its extended breeding season, allows it to build up numbers and reach high densities quickly. The Department warned it is a criminal offence to introduce and release Muntjac deer and Mr. Gormley said they would vigorously pursue "any individual introducing invasive species into the State."

## Copenhagen 2009 Climate Change Summit

**Environment ministers and officials are meeting in Copenhagen in December to agree a new climate change treaty as the successor to the Kyoto protocol. The talks are the latest in an annual series of UN meetings which began with the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, which focused on coordinating international action against climate change.**



The name given to this upcoming summit is COP15 which is the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The COP consists of environment ministers who meet once a year to discuss developments in the convention. One hundred and ninety-two countries have signed the climate change convention.

The US Bush administration rejected the 1997 Kyoto protocol stating that the proposed 5% reduction in carbon emissions would seriously damage their economy whilst making no demands for similar reductions on emerging economies such as China and India. China, India and other developing countries believe that the industrialized nations should lead by example in reducing their carbon emissions. President Barack Obama has already stated that his administration intends to achieve an 80% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

The four essentials needing an international agreement in Copenhagen are:

- The level to which industrialized countries will reduce their greenhouse gas emissions
- The level to which developing countries will limit their emissions growth
- How to help developing countries engage in emissions reduction and the associated financing required
- How will such financing be managed?

Climate scientists say that growth in greenhouse gas emissions must stop immediately and that they should begin reducing from 2015 to 2020. The world must cut its emissions by 80% by 2050 compared with 1990 levels to limit global warming to a 2C average rise. The cost of funding to help developing countries either mitigate their emissions and/or deal with the inevitable consequences associated with climate change is immense and is further impacted by the global economic downturn.

There are many observers who are concerned that COP15 may not succeed and some believe that any action taken now may have little impact on preventing inevitable climate change consequences.

# Spanish chestnut

(*Castanea sativa* Mill.)

## Distribution & Provenance

Spanish or Sweet chestnut is a European species native to the Mediterranean region but with a range extending eastwards as far as northern Iran. In Ireland, the preferred seed sources for Spanish chestnut planting are French seed or chards. It is necessary to distinguish material for planting from edible nuts. The species was first introduced into Britain by the Romans. It is not known when the species was first introduced into Ireland.



## Silviculture & Management in Ireland

Spanish chestnut requires a deep, free draining, moderately fertile and acid soil (pH 4.0 – 4.5). It is intolerant of frost and exposure and should be grown where summer conditions are consistently warm and preferably sunny. Spanish chestnut is a fairly strong light demander and requires regular thinning to retain crown vigour and to avoid competition between neighbouring crowns. Normal rotations of Spanish chestnut are between 50 and 70 years, at which stage the final crop should consist of approximately 150 stems per hectare. The species is long lived but older timber is considered to be of lower value as it is subject to spiral grain and shake.

In England, Spanish chestnut is the most important commercially managed coppice species. Coppicing is the practice of cutting back a stem to the stump and managing the multi stemmed regrowth that occurs as a timber crop. This practice can be carried out again and again without resorting to replanting. Typically, Spanish chestnut coppice rotations are managed over a period of between 12 and 16 years. Spanish chestnut is subject to damage from a root rot fungus known as Ink Disease (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*). This is more prevalent on wetter soils, causing chestnut roots to rot and turn an inky colour while stems and coppice stools may die. Frost damage will cause forking and

Spanish chestnut is susceptible to browsing from deer, hares, rabbits and domestic stock..

## Non Timber Benefits

Spanish chestnut produces the familiar chestnuts roasted at Christmas and is used in a stuffing for poultry. However, the Irish climate rarely permits the swelling of these nuts and most of the chestnuts used in Ireland are imported from France and elsewhere in the Mediterranean region. Small nuts do develop in Ireland and these are a source of food for many wild animals. Spanish chestnuts are popular as free standing trees in large gardens and in a parkland context where they exhibit magnificent autumnal colouring.

## Position in Irish Forestry

Spanish chestnut is not a commonly planted species in Irish forestry and its occurrence is confined to small blocks in old estates or new broadleaved plantations. However, Irish nurseries produce and sell over 20,000 Spanish chestnut plants annually and these are purchased primarily by the private sector.

## Uses & Markets

Spanish chestnut timber bears a close resemblance to oak in both texture and colour. It is often used as an alternative to oak for construction purposes. It is an easily worked timber and finishes excellently with most hand and machine tools. Spanish chestnut is therefore widely sought after by furniture makers and by wood turners. It is an extremely durable timber and for this reason has been traditionally used for fencing posts, rails, gates and coffin boards

Spanish chestnut timber from older stems is often subject to shake and spiral grain. Coppiced chestnut is also used for fencing and other local uses such as walking sticks, barrel hoops and hop poles.

Source: Forest Service, Department of Agriculture Fisheries & Food

## Energy Efficiency

With an increasing interest in “energy efficiency” and “renewable technologies” energyquarter.ie has been launched to provide consumers with information on how to save money and save energy in their homes.

For anyone considering taking advantage of the Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) Home Energy Saving Scheme, the website provides details of this and other available SEI grants, as well as a step by step outline of the Building Energy Rating (BER) requirements. Consumers are also provided with direct access to a list of relevant suppliers and installers of the energy efficient products and services.

To receive a regular email newsletter, please visit [www.energyquarter.ie](http://www.energyquarter.ie)



## Change of Address or email



Don't forget to let us know if you change your address or email.

It is important that shareholders notify the Registrar in writing if changing address. Please remember to include Share Certificate Numbers and your signature on all correspondence. If you do not wish to remain on our mailing list please contact us and we will remove your details immediately.

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## Spread the Word !

The Irish Forestry Funds are designed to encourage and promote Irish forests to Irish people through collective ownership in order to ensure that the tax efficiencies inherent in commercial forestry are available to as wide an audience as possible.

Whilst you may not wish to take advantage of investing in the Eighth Forestry Growth Plan, which is due to be launched in October, you can help promote forestry ownership by passing this newsletter and any other published material to someone you know - recycling at its best!