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DOYLE WELCOMES INITIATIVE TO FACILITATE FOREST CERTIFICATION

Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Andrew Doyle, T.D., with responsibility for forestry, has welcomed the development of a template for private forest owners to establish certification groups.

Noting that timber processors may only take in a maximum of 30% of uncertified timber if they wish to retain their certification status and continue to have access to the UK and European markets, the Minister of State commented, *“I am aware that there is growing concern amongst processors and forest owners alike that the lack of certification for private forest owners would hinder access to timber markets. The signing of the contract which encompasses the establishment of two certification groups, one in the north and one in the south, is an important milestone for Ireland’s growing forest industry as it represents a gateway to certification for private forest owners thereby removing a potential barrier to the timber market”*.

Minister Doyle was referring to the signature of the contract, on 14th November 2016, for the development of the template. The contract is with an international consortium led by Commercial Forestry Services Ltd., in partnership with The Forestry Company, UK Forest Certification Ltd. and the Soil Association Certification Ltd (UK). Key contributors to the project are Teagasc and the two participating forestry groups, North East Forestry Group and Forest Owners Co-operative Society. The signing of the contract was followed by an inaugural meeting at which the project timetable was outlined and forest management plans exchanged. It is intended that the project itself will be completed in May 2018 and will deliver the tools for other forestry groups, forestry companies and individual foresters to organise forest owners for the purpose of gaining certification.

Wishing the project every success, Minister Doyle added that *“The aim of my Department with regard to forest certification is to help put in place the necessary structure that will allow forest owners to become certified in a cost effective and sustainable manner. Once the certification groups have been established, the focus will be on growing the groups in terms of both area and in terms of the number of members. This can only be achieved with the co-operation of the industry as a whole and I am pleased to note the important linkages within this certification project”*.

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