

Forestry

Conference on forest protection



Minister Hackett to address the forestry conference about safeguarding Ireland's forests and woodlands from insects, pests, diseases and other threats. Donal Magner reports

Most of the events set to mark the 2020 International Year of Plant Health were either cancelled or postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As we are growing accustomed to Zoom webinars, conferences are being rearranged to address this important topic. The national forestry conference 'Protecting our trees and forests' has been rearranged for October 8 and will be addressed by Pippa Hackett, Minister of State with responsibility for Forestry, Land Use and Biodiversity.

She will be joined by six speakers to discuss the importance of safeguarding forests and woodlands from insect pest, disease, storm, fire and other damage.

"The conference is compatible with the FAO's objective to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect the environment and boost economic development," says Ken Bucke, president of the Society of Irish Foresters (SIF), the co-organiser of the event along with the Wood Marketing Federation.

Ireland has invested heavily in forestry over the past century and now has a valuable forest industry, but there are many biotic and abiotic threats to this resource.

"It is vital that this multifunctional forest resource is protected," says Pat O'Sullivan, technical director, SIF.

"Ash dieback caused by the fungal pathogen *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* and *Phytophthora ramorum*, which kills larch, are reminders of the threat to our trees and woodland, just as Dutch elm disease virtually wiped out native and introduced elm species since the 1970s."

There are also threats from mammals, including deer and grey squirrel, while fire and storms can destroy large tracts of forests in Ireland. Forests recover from these attacks, but insect and fungal damage to trees and forests can be permanent.

Plant health is regulated in the EU under the EU Plant Health Directive (Council Directive 2000/29/EC), but globalisation, climate change and trade of plant material and wood products between countries increases the risk. Insects can be introduced in plants, logs, sawn timbers, packaging



This ash plantation faces total destruction from ash dieback, caused by the fungal pathogen *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, while the Norway spruce in the background could suffer a similar fate if the eight-toothed spruce bark beetle (*Ips typographus*) is introduced to Ireland. Forestry conference on October 8 will address disease threats to Irish forests.

Donal Magner

and ship's dunnage.

Our island location is a help in reducing risk, but hasn't saved Britain from the introduction of the eight-toothed spruce bark beetle (*Ips typographus*). This beetle causes catastrophic damage to forests in Central Europe and remains a constant threat

to both Irish forests and the timber processing industry.

The conference has broad appeal, says Pat O'Sullivan: "It should be of interest to forest owners and wood processors, who stand to lose most if forests are damaged."

"Presentations will also be aimed at

researchers, foresters, forestry companies, environmentalists, as well as key policy makers in agriculture and land use, environment, energy and industry.

"The event will also have relevance to State agencies, local authorities, nurseries, parkland owners and the public," he maintains.

Line up for national forestry conference on forest protection

The keynote address at the national forestry conference will be provided by Pippa Hackett, Minister of State.

Dr Richard O'Hanlon, principal plant pathologist in the grassland and plant science branch of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) Belfast, will discuss actual and potential threats to forests throughout Ireland.

Tom McDonald's presentation will be about safeguarding the forest resource. McDonald, who is Inspector of Forest Health in the Forest Service, will outline the Department's policy to maintain a healthy forest environment by ensuring good management, identifying risks and maintaining a

sustained commitment to measures that prevent the entry and establishment of destructive forest pests and diseases.

Brian Murphy, CEO of Balcas and chairperson of Forest Industries Ireland, will discuss threats to Irish forests from the sawmiller's perspective.

Mechteld Schuller of the Irish Timber Growers Association will make a presentation titled 'As the grower sees it'. She will explore the wider threats to Irish forests, from establishment to harvesting.

The topic chosen by Dr Miguel Nemesio-Gorritz, research officer, Teagasc, is 'New findings in ash research'. He

will also address the adaptation of native ash to the current climate in Ireland. Dr Melanie Tuffen, postdoctoral researcher and plant health science advisor, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in the UK, will make a presentation on pest risk analysis in protecting commercial forests, including Sitka spruce.

The conference, which is free of charge, is facilitated by the Irish Bio-energy Association (IrBEA).

The webinar link is <https://zoom.us/j/91948382082?pwd=MytwcXVS Tm1GcDhNM2hnZWp0aXN5Zz09>, and further details are available at info@wood.ie and info@soif.ie.



Invitation to National Forestry Conference 2020 Zoom Webinar

PROTECTING OUR TREES AND FORESTS

The importance of safeguarding Ireland's forests from pest, diseases and other damage
8 October 2020 at 9:30am Dublin

Introduced by Minister of State, Pippa Hackett

Register in advance for this webinar: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Lu-b_x4SR5eOKEwRujoaQ

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Supported by COFORD, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Organised by the Wood Marketing Federation (info@wood.ie) and the Society of Irish Foresters (info@soif.ie)

