



Media Information

4th May 2005

Wood energy market could contribute €70 million to rural economy in Ireland - SEI

With a favourable growing climate, Ireland has the potential to develop an indigenous fuel supply from forestry and wood industry waste for domestic and industrial markets. By 2020 refined wood fuels produced in Ireland could be meeting 3 - 5% of our heating needs and contributing approximately €70 million per year to the rural economy. That is according to David Taylor chief executive of Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) who was announcing details of the forthcoming 'Wood Energy 2005' Conference and Study Tour.

Organised jointly by SEI and the National Council for Forest Research and Development (COFORD), Wood Energy 2005 takes place at the Marriot's Druid's Glen Hotel and Country Club, Co Wicklow on 19 - 20 May 2005.

According to Mr. Taylor, "Given the continued threat of climate change, the volatility of oil prices, Ireland's rising energy demands and the need to find additional secure and affordable sources of energy, refined wood fuels in the form of wood pellets are an attractive fuel for the Irish heat market. The development of a wood energy industry in Ireland could also play a significant role in rural regeneration, putting millions of euro back into rural economies. In the future it is a possibility that many towns in Ireland could have a wood power plant – managed and maintained with local labour and powered by locally grown wood, and locally produced wood pellets and chips".

Currently, wood pellets are used in applications ranging from pellet stoves to automatic wood-fuelled boilers heating homes and public and commercial buildings including hospitals, schools, hotels and leisure centres. Other potential industrial and commercial markets in Ireland include the food and drink, pharmaceutical and wood processing sectors as well as the housing and commercial building sector.

The wood heating market in Ireland has witnessed increased growth. For example, Balcas, a wood processing company, has invested €13 million in an integrated wood-fuelled combined heat and power (CHP) plant and one of Europe's largest wood pellet production facilities in Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh.

During the two-day conference and study tour, leading wood energy technology experts from Ireland, Austria, Germany, Finland and Denmark, will share their experiences and expertise. The conference will focus on wood fuel supply markets, address the important issue of quality both in terms of the fuel and technology, take a closer look at Irish success stories, unveil plans for a Renewable Energy Installers Academy, and feature a session on financing bio-energy projects.

Commenting, Dr. Eugene Hendrick, Director of COFORD, said, "Refined fuels such as wood pellets (processed sawdust), offer many advantages being compact, clean, easy to store, and they have a very high energy content. It is an emerging industry that offers benefits for forest owners and managers, project developers, consumers, local communities and the environment. Wood biomass from sustainable sources is carbon neutral and its more widespread usage can make a significant contribution to our greenhouse gas emissions reduction target as set out under the Kyoto agreement on climate change."

-ends-

For further information please contact:

Diarmuid O'Neill
Edelman
01-6789333

Notes to Editors:

Sustainable Energy Ireland, was established on May 1st, 2002, as a statutory authority charged with promoting and assisting the development of a sustainable national energy economy and is funded by the Irish Government under the National Development Plan 2000-2006 with programmes part financed by the European Union.

COFORD, the National Council for Forest Research and Development coordinates and funds research to secure long-term industrial viability and optimise social, environmental and cultural developments associated with forestry. Supported under the National Development Plan 2000-2006 it also engages in international networking and monitors progress to ensure effective technology transfer.