

Report on attendance by the Forest Genetic Resources Trust (FGRT) at a forest seed meeting in Killarney on 15/11/2023

I attended a forest tree seed meeting in Killarney recently on behalf of the trust. The meeting was convened by the Seed Group of the Technical Advisory Panel of Woodlands of Ireland (WoI).

FGRT is conscious of the need for traceability in forest reproductive material, and this extends to forest tree seed collection. Without such systems and related provenance certificates in place, it is not possible to properly assess the performance of reproductive material used to establish and regenerate forests. For these reasons it is a fundamental requirement and essential for regulatory compliance that all forest establishment and regeneration properly record the origin of the forest trees being used. This information, if properly stored and archived, will allow foresters and researchers to investigate the growth and general performance of species, provenances and improved material.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss issues around forest tree seed collection and related regulations including the process of registration, along with the requirements of forest tree seed collection, preparation and processing. The meeting was well attended, with a good representation of seed collectors, forest tree seed processors and nursery personnel from across the country.

After a welcome and introduction from Joe Gowran (WoI), Enda Coates of the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) provided an overview of the regulations around forest tree seed collection and related matters.

In order to provide forest tree seed to the market and comply with the relevant regulations, the person(s) involved must be registered by DAFM, or if not registered and intending to supply seed to the market they need to apply to DAFM for registration. The registration process involves completing a DAFM application form to include the following information:

- contact details
- the category for which the applicant wishes to apply:
 - seed collector
 - seed processor
 - seed broker
 - seed tester
 - nursery
 - plant broker/supplier

The process also requires the person to state if they are a registered operator under the EU Plant Health Regulation. Further information on registration can be obtained by contacting frm@agriculture.gov.ie, while general information on forest reproduction material is available at an be obtained from:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/regulation-forest-health-and-resources/#forest-seed-and-plant-marketing-regulations-forest-reproductive-materialfrm>

The meeting continued with a presentation by Darragh Fadden of the Forest Service on the EU Forest Reproductive Material Regulation and the categories of forest reproductive material listed in the regulation. These are:

1. source identified
2. selected
3. qualified
4. tested.

These presentations concluded the morning session.

In the afternoon a visit was made to the unique stand of yew (*Taxus baccata*) at the Muckcross Estate in Killarney, where a lively discussion ensued on the place of yew in Irish forestry. The stand is over 40 ha in extent and is believed to be the largest in Europe. There are a few similar stands of yew in Europe such as in Poland and the Czech Republic but these are smaller in extent

John Fennessy

FGRT Trustee

27 February 2024