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Issue 4

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From the Minister of State's Desk

News from Andrew Doyle TD



September 2017

I am delighted to have this opportunity to update you on developments within my area of responsibility, which includes Food Safety, Forestry, Horticulture, the organic sector and the Greyhound industry. It is a very interesting portfolio which has kept me busy.

Successful round of UN meetings in Rome

At the start of July, I was in Rome to represent Ireland at the Conference of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the organisation's highest governing body. This year's theme is "*Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security*".

Alleviating the effects of climate change and contributing to food security is something we must all work towards. In Ireland our ambition is to be a global leader in sustainable food production. This means that, not only must our actions be coordinated and ambitious, they must also be environmentally, socially and economically responsive.

Ireland has been a committed partner of the FAO since its foundation in 1946. The FAO deals with the challenges of global food insecurity, with its mandate to raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity, better the lives of rural populations and contribute to the growth of the world economy.

As well as holding a number of trade bi-laterals with various countries, I met with the FAO Director-General, Jose Graziano da Silva, to discuss Ireland's support for FAO's work. I noted that voluntary funding from Ireland has supported FAO's work in response to the Syria crisis, as well as innovative projects aimed at reducing food loss and waste, and developing inclusive business models, in Africa.

While in Rome, I also contributed to the second African Union - European Union Agriculture Ministerial Conference – "*Making Sustainable Agriculture a future for youth in Africa*" - on the issues of climate smart agriculture and the need to reduce food loss and waste. On the 20th July, I attended GLAS, Ireland's national trade only horticultural and amenity landscape event in Citywest Convention Centre.

GLAS Horticultural and Amenity Landscape Event

GLAS has firmly established itself as one of the main events in the Irish amenity sector and provides a showcase for Irish nurseries and amenity businesses to meet all the key producers, buyers, suppliers and service providers to assist them to develop and enhance current and new business opportunities.

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GLAS which is now in its seventh year and supported by Bord Bia, showcases the best of Irish horticulture, attracting quality trade buyers to a key event in the industry calendar. With over 145 exhibitors and 44 new exhibitors participating for the first time, GLAS has set the standard for Ireland's only trade horticulture show and established itself as a key date in the diaries of all those working within the industry.

My Department continues to provide support to the amenity sector under the Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector. I was very glad to have committed additional funding for the Scheme bringing its total budget for the current year to €5m. This will facilitate capital investments to the value of almost €3m over the coming months in the Nursery Stock and related Amenity Plant Sector.



Andrew Doyle T.D., Minister of State pictured attending GLAS in the Citywest Convention Centre.

Launch of NeighbourWood Scheme Brochure

I recently launched the updated NeighbourWood Scheme Brochure at a new NeighbourWood site currently under development by the Roundwood and District Community Council (RDCC). This new community woodland will be located just outside the village of Roundwood, Co Wicklow.

I'm aware of the great work undertaken by this hardworking volunteer organisation. Since 2015, they have worked to restore over 10km of the trails around the Vartry Reservoirs, many of which were overgrown and in need of maintenance. This restoration is a great achievement for this volunteer organisation. The aim of the Roundwood NeighbourWood Project is to enhance the variety of walks within this woodland for all users and to provide greater linkages between the village of Roundwood and the network of walking trails that surround the Vartry Reservoirs.

The project to enhance and further develop this woodland is being supported with funding from my Department under the NeighbourWood Scheme. This Scheme is designed to help community groups, in cooperation with local authorities, to develop opportunities for recreation while creating and developing woodlands for the benefit of current and future generations.

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The scheme is also designed to provide outdoor classrooms for teachers to show children the important contribution forests make to society in terms of social, economic and environmental benefits. The Roundwood NeighbourWood Project itself will bring the existing woodland to a better standard for recreational use through surfacing trails, putting in place informative signage and carrying out maintenance programmes once dead trees and undergrowth have been cleared. The project will also raise awareness of the woods as an important natural heritage and landscape amenity area for residents and visitors.



Minister of State with responsibility for Forestry Andrew Doyle T.D., visiting Roundwood to mark the beginning of work to develop the site and also to launch a new brochure for the NeighbourWood scheme.

Annual Beekeeper's Summer School

At the end of July, I welcomed close to 700 participants from Ireland and abroad to the Federation of Irish Beekeepers Associations (FIBKA) 71st Annual Beekeeper's Summer School, which took place in Gormanston Co. Meath. It catered for all levels from the beginner right up to the experienced beekeeper.

FIBKA has made a huge contribution to the development of beekeepers' skills, promoting the important role played by bees as both pollinators for agricultural and horticultural crops and the maintenance of eco systems. I am delighted that good progress is being made on the actions set down for agriculture under the 2015-2020 All Ireland Pollinator Plan. The farming guidelines under the plan are currently being developed and will benefit all pollinators including honeybees.

I took the opportunity of the summer school to highlight my Department's call for Research Proposals across a number of thematic areas. I outlined two areas of particular relevance to the Irish beekeeping community. The first topic invites research proposals to mitigate the potential impacts of pesticide use on terrestrial ecosystems including pollinators. The second topic seeks research proposals to help establish the purity of Ireland's native honeybee population as well as examining mating behaviour, adaptive

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evolution and the dynamics that support survival of feral *Apis mellifera mellifera* populations.

This Call for Competitive Research Proposals represents a great opportunity for Irish beekeeping and biodiversity. In the case of the second topic, collaboration and consultation with Ireland's National Beekeeping Organisations will be vital to ensure successful delivery of any project that may be funded.

My Department continues to provide a number of other supports for the beekeeping sector including co-funding research under the National Apiculture Programme, provision of grant aid to facilitate capital investments in specialised beekeeping related equipment, support for activities conducted by national beekeeping organisations and provision of a free bee disease diagnostic service.

Teagasc 'Talking Timber' Event

In early September, I opened Teagasc's Talking Timber event in Tipperary. The event is one of two Talking Timber days organised by the Forestry Development Department of Teagasc, the first event took place in Ballyhaise, Co. Cavan.

Noting the State's investment in forestry over the last few decades, I pointed out that much of the resulting forest resource is now coming into production and, if properly managed, can make a huge contribution to the local economies of rural communities throughout Ireland. It is appropriate therefore that we invest in the development of the skills and technical support necessary to ensure that we utilize that resource fully and sustainably.

I mentioned a number of initiatives in this area by my Department, including the establishment of Knowledge Transfer Groups for forest owners. I announced that a second group in Co. Clare had been approved by my Department. This group together with the Donegal Woodland Owners Society, brings the number of forest owners participating in this initiative to 150. Following a successful pilot phase for Knowledge Transfer Groups, I hope to see more such Groups being approved in 2018.

Sustainable Development Goals

I was in New York in July to represent Ireland at the High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF). The HLPF meets annually to review global progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. This year's HLPF is themed around "*Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world*".

I noted that women constitute the majority of the world's poor and are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources. Climate change is undermining the well-being of many families and their ability to cope. Its impacts are far-reaching as it affects agriculture and food security, biodiversity and ecosystems, water resources, human health, human settlements and migration patterns. As challenges for poor communities intensify, Ireland will continue to focus in particular on action to help such communities to adapt and in the longer term to end extreme poverty, hunger and under-nutrition by 2030.

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The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), agreed by the UN membership in 2015, address the root causes of poverty and the universal need for development that works for all people by 2030. The Goals cover policy areas such as ending extreme poverty, ending hunger and achieving global food security, economic development, protection of the environment, access to health and education services, gender equality, peaceful societies and human rights.

As well as delivering Ireland's national statement to the HLPF, I met with representatives of the World Food Programme (WFP) to discuss challenges facing that organisation and how they can support implementation of the SDGs.

I also contributed to the SDG Business Forum on the theme of ending hunger and said agricultural management embodies how the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development interact and are mutually reinforcing. Sustainable agriculture supports the environment and can combat desertification and other negative impacts of climate change. It can promote decent livelihoods and lift people out of poverty. When we manage agriculture well we reduce pressures on cities, reduce involuntary migration and build resilience and support sustainable development.



Andrew Doyle T.D., Minister of State at the High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF) in New York.

Important Dates

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| 19-21 September: | National Ploughing Championships |
| 6 October: | National Potato Day |
| 9 October: | Native Woodlands Conference, Westport. |

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