# Forest recreation and human health in plantation forests

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# EFI 2009 Annual Conference Dublin, Ireland



**Scientific Programme**

- Scientific Seminar
- Scientific Committee
- Poster Presentations

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## Scientific Seminar – Friday September 4th 2009

### Forest Ecosystem Management in the 21st Century

Scientific forest management has until recently, been directed at one product of the forest only, wood. This involved regulation of the harvest so as to ensure a constant supply of timber, in perpetuity. The forest, in particular the plantation forest, was seen as a wood factory.

This view of the forest has changed within the past two decades. The forest is now valued for the wide range of goods and services it offers. The need to manage the forest in order to produce multiple benefits is now recognised. In effect, forest managers are being called upon to act as ecosystem managers. This can be difficult because in many cases, forests established with the single objective of wood production are now expected to deliver wider benefits. In addition, foresters trained within the narrow constraints of traditional forest management, are being called upon to deal with the broader issues of multifunctional management.

Are Europe's forestry schools producing the type of graduate required to function in these changed circumstances? Has the balance tipped too far towards "softer" "green" objectives at the expense of sustained yield management? How are managers adapting to the new challenges? How can we best respond on a Pan-European basis to the demands being placed on our forests in the 21st century. The conference will aim to provide answers to these questions and to stimulate debate on the challenges generated by the changing view of the forest and the demands which society places upon it.

## Programme

The programme for the seminar will consist of invited speakers only. Voluntary poster contributions are very welcome.

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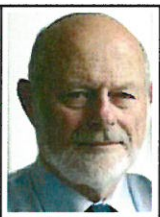
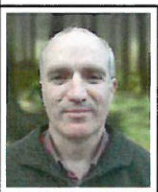
|---|---|---|---|
| 9.15 |  | **Opening of the Scientific Seminar**<br>**Prof. Patrick Cunningham**, Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government. | |
| **Morning Session. Chair: Professor Dr Hubert Hasenauer, BOKU, Vienna.** | | | |
| 9.30 |  | **Dr Eugene Hendrick**,<br>COFORD, Ireland.<br>Forest research for 21st century Ireland. Identifying and meeting society's needs. | Download Abstract |
| 10.15 |  | **Dr Antoine Kremer**,<br>INRA, UMR BIOGECO, Cestas, France.<br>Evolutionary responses of trees to climate change. | Download Abstract |
| 11.00 | **Coffee** | | |
| 11.45 |  | **Dr Ken Byrne**,<br>University of Limerick, Ireland.<br>The Role of plantation forestry in Ireland in the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions. | Download Abstract |
| 12.30 | **Lunch** | | |
| **Afternoon Session. Chair: Professor Margarida Tomé, ISA, Lisbon.** | | | |
| 2.00 |  | **Dr Kevin Black**[1,2], Georgios Xenakis[3], Armand Tene[2,3], Maarten Nieuwenhuis[2], Matthew Saunders[2] and Duncan Ray[3].<br>[1] FERS Ltd, Cabinteely, Dublin 18, Ireland<br>[2] School of Biology and Environmental Science, University College Dublin, Ireland<br>[3] Forest Research, Roslin, Midlothian, Scotland.<br>Development of strategic adaptive climate change tools for Irish forestry. | Download Abstract |

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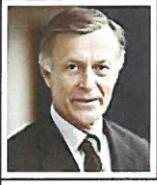
| 2.45 |  | **Professor Niels Elers Koch** and Frank Søndergaard Jensen,<br>Danish Centre for Forest, Landscape and Planning, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.<br><br>Forest recreation and human health in plantation forests. | Download Abstract |
| 3.30 | **Coffee** | | |
| 4.00 |  | **Dr Annette Schuck**,<br>University of Joensuu, Finland.<br><br>Who will educate the European forest professionals of the future? | Download Abstract |
| 4.45 | **General Discussion** | | |
| 5.30 | **Close of Seminar** | | |

# Forest recreation and human health in plantation forests

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The literature documents – or at least indicates – a number of positive relationships between peoples' forest use and their health, e.g.: reducing stress, insomnia, hypertension and consumption of medicines, as well as improved humour/spirit, concentration and motor function, or just a general increase in well being.

A number of public forest agencies around Europe are already today focusing on the possible use of forests as "green fitness centres". – But is there really a need for fitness training and obesity campaigns? – A couple of figures put this problem in perspective: in England the obesity levels for 6 year olds have doubled over the last 10 years and trebled for 15 years old.

In the future, we will see an increasing need for developing some plantation forests to serve the public health and welfare sector – together with all the other functions which are demanded from the forests today. No doubt, many plantation forests can excellently fulfil welfare demands from society. However, one concern is how to do this without urbanizing the (more or less) natural environment, maintaining the contrast between the forest and the urban environment – a contrast which is highly appreciated by most people. There is a lack of concrete knowledge for handling such planning and management problems. However, one thing is certain: easy access and proximity to green space, including plantation forests, are very important tools. For example, Danish research has concluded that the number of forest visits is more than halved if the distance from your dwelling place to the nearest forest is increased from e.g. 2 to 4 km. Therefore, with respect to recreation, human health and forests, existing local plantation forests and urban afforestation will play a key role.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the impact of the legislative framework. Overall, state owned forests in Europe are open to public access. When it comes to privately owned forest, the picture is more diverse. In general, the access is more restrictive compared to public forests, and also differences in opportunities between countries occur: in some countries the traditional 'Everyman's right' is dominant, meaning free access (Scandinavia), while the contrary is the case in a few countries (e.g. France) where in principle access to private forests is prohibited. There seems to be a trend to stimulate private forest owners to open their forests to the public, and – on a European level – it does not seem to be the legislation that prevents the forests from playing an important future role for the recreation and human health of the public.