
Ireland: Coillte's FSC certified plantations questioned

In the last few centuries, there has been a massive deforestation of Irish land. What has been replaced, has been by and large replaced with foreign exotic near-monoculture conifer plantations, mainly by one company: Coillte, which owns 438,000ha of certified plantations.

In 2002, Coillte Teoranta obtained Forest Stewardship Council certification from the Soil Association/Woodmark (they were formerly certified by SGS).

However, certification of these plantations has been strongly criticised in Ireland for a number of reasons, among which because they:

- have contributed to pollution of water due to acidification, siltation and contamination by phosphate fertilisers.
- kill native flora due to the enormous decrease in light reaching the ground.
- create a higher risk of insect infestation and disease (e.g. pine weevil outbreaks, which were previously unknown in Ireland, have now taken place).
- are highly susceptible to fire due to the resin content of non-native species. This risk is increased on peatland.
- contribute to physical damage due to drainage, planting, road-making and felling.
- contribute to depopulation and decline of rural villages. Ireland's current type of forestry uses highly mechanised processes, and leads to minimal labour input.
- destroys native bio-diversity.

Due to the above, the Woodland League in Ireland has declared that "Despite all this, Coillte have managed to obtain FSC certification, to a National Standard that is far weaker to the FSC principles, developed by a company called IFCL."

Further information about the case of Coillte's plantations can be read at:
<http://woodlandleague.org/info/info/IT&F-Coillte&CertificationJan2005.htm>