



Energy Crops Subgroup – First Meeting

6th February 2012, Louis Fitzgerald Hotel, Nass Road, Dublin

Attended by:

Comment [O1]: Have I missed anyone?

Michale Doran	(Chairperson)	Action Renewables Belfast
Roisin Grimes	(Subgroup Executive)	Irbea
Bill Madigan		Kilogen
John O'Halloran		Bord na Móna
Paddy O'Toole		Quinns of Baltinglass
Niall Mc Grath		Agri Bio-fuel Ireland
Briain Smyth		Bio-tricity
Declan Kennedy		Bio-tricity
Noel Gavigan		IrBEA Executive
Peter Farrelly		Farrelly Brothers Willow
Thomas Flynn		Thomas Flynn and Sons
John Flynn		Thomas Flynn and Sons
Chris Johnston		AFBI
Alan Hagen		BENI
Pauline Leonard		WDC
Helen McHenry		WDC
Dan O'Sullivan		Institute of Technology Carlow
David Tyrrell		Quinns of Baltinglass
John Keely		Energy Crops Consultant
Brendan Kilian		Mayo Energy
Paddy Phelan		Carlow Killkenny Energy Agency
Elaine Colwell		IrBEA
Annicka Wänn		Malachy Walsh and Partners
Ken Fitzgerald		Malachy Walsh and Partners
Barry Caslin		Teagasc
John Finnan		Teagasc
Peter Meehan		Teagasc
Manfred Klaas		Teagasc
Isabella Donnelly		Teagasc
John O'loughlin		Teagasc



Summary of Meeting

This was the first meeting of the recently formed IrBEA Energy Crops Subgroup. There were * in attendance, with representatives from across all sectors of the industry. The meeting began with a discussion of what the group's overall aims should be. It was agreed that this subgroup should establish itself as a voice to policy makers, to achieve progress in the energy crops industry across Ireland, both North and South.

It was felt that * members was too large to be effective, therefore it was decided a 5 membered subgroup committee would be preferable, containing representative from across all the energy crops sectors. Five volunteers came forward: Niall McGrath, Briain Smyth, John O'Halloran, Bill Madigan and Paddy O'Toole.

The subgroup agreed that there were both short and medium term goals to achieve. In the short term, many in the group expressed that emergency action was needed to address the current threat of further energy crop removal, particularly miscanthus. In the medium to long term, the consensus was that more support was needed to develop sustainable, more localised supply chains for energy crops.

A discussion on the current problems within the energy crops industry took place, which focused on what this subgroup could do to alleviate each. One priority for the group was to lobby for the introduction of subsidised transport for energy crops to Edenderry Power plant. This would assist in achieving the short term goal of keeping crops in the ground.

Currently in Ireland the predominant end use for energy crops is electricity production at Edenderry Power Plant. Although it was stated that Bord na Móna can handle all miscanthus crops currently in Ireland, the transportation distance for many growers renders this avenue unprofitable.

This leads to the next issue identified, which is the lack of localised end uses for these crops, particularly in the heat sector. The subgroup viewed the introduction of an incentive to encourage biomass boiler installations across Ireland as a necessity, if mature energy crop supply chains were to develop. IrBEA is already in the process of lobbying for the reintroduction of the Miscanthus Boiler Pilot Demonstration Scheme, administered by SEAI. Such a scheme would illustrate best practice in installing and using these types of boilers. The subgroup felt that for the scheme to be successful, a focus should be given to funding large scale, strategically placed boilers, and are therefore working on case studies and business plans to back-up this proposal.

In addition, following the success of the RHI scheme in the UK, the subgroup viewed the introduction of a similar scheme in the south of Ireland as a necessity, if a heat sector for these crops is to develop. This would give hope of future end markets to growers and may persuade them to keep the crops in the ground.

However, a major portion of the discussion was dedicated to the lack of positive political and farming leadership, actively pushing the energy crops agenda in Ireland. It was felt that to achieve both the short and long term goals, a positive commitment to support energy crops/biomass energy from government, IFA and UFU is needed. In addition, a decision on the bioenergy strategy would be paramount in giving assurances of a more positive future in terms of industry development.



The subgroup is therefore working to secure a meeting with relevant government departments, MEP's, the IFA and the UFU, to lobby for their support. The group wishes to work in partnership these bodies to help address the issues outlined above. Prior to this meeting the subgroup will be compiling a policy position statement, clearly outlining policy recommendations for developing this industry across the Island of Ireland.

Finally, within the up-and-coming Rural Development Programme there may also be some prospects for funding industry developments in the medium to long term. The group therefore agreed to make a submission to the RDP consultation in the hope of securing future financing for industry progression.

A number of other issues were also discussed, which are outlined in the table below, along with an action plan and timeframe for completion. However, the priority subgroup objectives are as follows:

- **Priority Action 1: Secure a meeting(s) with the DAFM, DCENR, IFA and UFU to lobby for a positive commitment towards supporting the energy crops industry in Ireland, both in the long and short term*.**

*Use this meeting to present a position statement with regards to issues on policy (e.g. the Bioenergy Strategy for Ireland) and financial support (e.g. an RHI for the South of Ireland).

- **Priority Action 2: Lobby for emergency financial support for growers to transport energy crops to Edenderry Power Station, until viable localised markets develop.**
- **Priority Action 3: Continue to lobby for the introduction of a Miscanthus Pilot Demonstration Scheme in the South of Ireland.**
- **Priority Action 4: Investigate the issues with spreading sewage sludge on Energy Crops in Ireland, and produce a position statement for sewage sludge application to energy crops.**

Topic	Notes	Action	Time Frame
1) Internal Subgroup Policy	<p>1.1 - Communication Via Email for general communication, no need for a social media presence for subgroup.</p> <p>1.2 - Meetings Organise next meeting within next 6-8 weeks to ensure sufficient progress has been made before reconvening.</p> <p>1.3 - Policy Document Agreed that an internal subgroup policy document would be useful. The equivalent AD subgroup document will be used as a template.</p> <p>1.4 - Energy Crops Committee Decided that 30+ was too large to effectively operate, a committee of 5 volunteers from all sectors of the industry would be preferable. Volunteers as follows: Bill Madigan John O'Halloran Paddy O'Toole Niall McGrath Briain Smyth</p> <p>1.5 - Press releases These can act to increase support and public/political awareness of this industry, highlighting specific issues which need to/are being addressed.</p>	<p>RG will set up a Doodle Poll to ascertain most suitable date for next meeting.</p> <p>RG will produce internal group policy document, distribute to whole subgroup for consultation.</p> <p>RG and MD will communicate with the committee members where appropriate to be effectively in achieving subgroup objectives.</p> <p>RG will write press releases where appropriate and issue to the committee for approval.</p>	<p>17th-31st of March 2014</p> <p>Completed by Friday 21st February 2014</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>On-going</p>



<p>2) Incentives/ Political Support</p>	<p>2.1 - Political Support Lack of positive political/IFA support for energy crops. Growers need positive news of commitment to supporting energy crops (through RHI, capital grants scheme etc.) to ensure no further removal of energy crops.</p> <p>CJ felt that similar action is needed in Northern Ireland with regards to the UFU.</p> <p>Need to address broader political action. Require clearer decision on bioenergy strategy with regards to renewable energy targets.</p> <p>BS has many useful contacts in this respect, which he agreed to work with to secure a meeting with our subgroup.</p> <p>2.2 - IFA Members IFA take instruction from members, subgroup agreed that we need to get IFA members that grow energy crops affirm with our objectives as a group.</p>	<p>BS will assist in approaching DAFM, DCENR and IFA to secure a meeting for the committee to voice issues and request that they readdress their position towards energy crops.</p> <p>Prior to this meeting a position statement will be drawn up, in consultation with subgroup committee.</p> <p>RG will work to secure a meeting with UFU in the North.</p> <p>Ask Fred Tottenham (IrBEA president) to speak to Fergus O'Dowd on our behalf with regards to the bioenergy strategy.</p> <p>Contact energy crop growers which are part of IFA. Make them aware of our position and ask for their support.</p>	<p>Preliminary meeting date set 26th February 2014. Position statement will be circulated at least 3 days prior to this.</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
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	<p>2.3 - Energy Crops Policy Recommendation In 2013 Teagasc brought together stakeholders from the energy crops industry to compile an evidence and recommendation report on achieving the potential to grow energy crops on Irish Farms. It was agreed that these recommendations would be similar to those which the subgroup had discussed. The group agreed to build on this document as something which could be brought to IFA/government in persuasion of support.</p> <p>2.4 - Policy Consultations NG explained that some financial support under the RDP 2014-2020 maybe applicable to the energy crops industry. Subgroup will make a contribution to the IrBEA response on the Draft RDP. The subgroup will continue to contribute to relevant government consultations to ensure medium/long term support for the energy crops industry in Ireland, both North and South.</p>	<p>Use Teagasc biomass report as a policy document. RG will circulate the document to committee members for consultation.</p> <p>RG will communicate with NG and circulate a draft IrBEA response on the proposed RDP to the subgroup. RG will consolidate subgroup suggestions and feed into IrBEA's final consultation response.</p> <p>RG will continue to forward relevant consultations to the subgroup for response on an ongoing basis</p>	<p>Responses due Friday 14th February</p> <p>17th February 2014</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>3) Crop</p>	<p>3.1 - Sewage Sludge Application There was uncertainty about quantity of sewage sludge which can be applied to energy crops grown on farms registered with Bord Bia, under the Bord Bia Quality Assurance Scheme. PF believed it was 0.5t/hc.</p>	<p>RG will liaise with BC and CJ to gain clarification on this issue.</p> <p>RG will approach Bord Bia for clarification on their regulations in relation to energy crops.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>By 21st February 2014</p>

	<p>In addition, restrictions also apply under the DOE Waste Management (Use of Sewage Sludge in Agriculture) regulations. Energy crops are not classified as an agricultural crop, therefore require an exemption certificate for sludge spreading (BC, JF).</p> <p>JF indicated that Eddie Forde is already in contact with EPA to request changes to the Department of Environment regulations.</p>	<p>If restrictions do apply to sludge spreading on energy crops under the Bord Bia Quality Assurance Scheme, the committee will lobby for change by putting forward a position statement, with consultation from CJ and BC.</p> <p>JF will keep in contact with Eddie Forde for information on progress with the Waste Management regulations, and report back to the committee.</p>	<p>To be confirmed</p> <p>N/A</p>
4) Infrastructure	<p>4.1 - Transportation Incentives Although there is a market for both willow and miscanthus at Edenderry power station, the transportation distance for many farmers renders this an unprofitable end use. In the interest of preventing further crop removal a transportation subsidy for Edenderry Powerplant would be favoured, until other localised heat markets develop. This is seen as an emergency priority.</p> <p>4.2- Centralised Depots Need for centralised depot for farmers to bring crops from field for storage and/or drying (depending on end uses). The Draft RDP 2014-2017 is currently in consultation, which contains sections which pertain to this issue. The Energy Crop subgroup could feed into IrBEA response on this.</p> <p>4.3 - Green Public Procurement There was a discussion about the current Exemplar Scheme for promoting procurement processes for biomass energy. This may open an end use for local farmers if successful.</p>	<p>RG will liaise with BM and NG to write a letter to Stephen Conway of DAFM. This letter will be circulated to committee members prior to mailing to Stephen Conway.</p> <p>See above action for section 2.4.</p> <p>RG will work with PP to monitor the Exemplar Scheme progression and report back to committee members where appropriate.</p>	<p>Letter sent by 17th/18th February 2014</p> <p>17th February 2014</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

	<p>4.4 - Discussion on Best Practice Guidelines There was a discussion on the economics of chip and dry models for willow use, as to whether these were out of date. It was agreed that this needed to be researched further.</p>	<p>RG will research this and come back with a position paper to circulate to the subgroup for consultation.</p>	<p>March/April 2014</p>
<p>5) Combustion</p>	<p>5.1 – Incentives - RHI Consensus that the heat market for energy crops needs to develop in Ireland to ensure a robust, profitable and sustainable energy crops industry. Subgroup agreed that some form of RHI, similar to that in UK would be the most effective means to achieve this. This will be discussed at the meeting with DAFM/DCENR.</p>	<p>This issue will be discussed at the meeting outlined in the action for section 2.1.</p>	<p>Preliminary date set 26th February 2014</p>
	<p>5.2 - SEAI Miscanthus Boiler Pilot Demonstration Scheme Failure of previous scheme was that it was not specifically tailored for larger strategically placed boilers, which is what this market requires. IrBEA has already called for the re-opening for this scheme with some amendments.</p>	<p>BM, POT and DT will work on a business cases and case studies, to put forward a considered opinion on scheme delivery, which would be appropriate to ask of DCENR.</p> <p>This will be discussed at meeting detailed in action for section 2.1</p>	<p>Preliminary date set 26th February 2014</p>
	<p>5.3 - Issues with Miscanthus Combustion There was a discussion that there are currently boilers available which could burn miscanthus and that there is unfair controversy in the public domain that boilers were unable to burn miscanthus. It was agreed that a position statement should be made by the subgroup on Miscanthus combustion.</p>	<p>RG is currently working on investigation into issues with miscanthus combustion, will circulate this to everyone for consultation.</p>	<p>End of March 2014</p>



<p>6) AOB</p>	<p>6.1 - Rocwood EU scheme to support energy crops. Committee member BS agreed to use contacts made in through this scheme to advance this subgroups agenda. In addition BS has agreed to circulate any relevant documents from Rocwood to this subgroup</p> <p>6.2 - BioPAD EU scheme for the support of the biomass supply chain in Northern Periphery regions. No immediate role for BioPAD in this subgroup but HMH will keep in contact about any relevant cross overs.</p>	<p>BS will keep in contact with RG in regards to any relevant contacts and documents which pertain to this subgroups aims</p> <p>HMH will keep in contact with RG with regards to any relevant crossovers between BioPAD and this subgroup.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
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