

FARMING

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Hot new projects powering up Scottish timber sector

Co-operative: Boss confident for future as milestone is reached

BY JOE WATSON

The boss of a timber co-operative said last night he was confident for the future as its members gathered to mark its silver jubilee.

Andrew Nicol said Aboyne's DWP Harvesting had achieved a great deal in its 25 years. It now markets timber from 36 properties covering nearly 30,000 acres in an area stretching from Deeside north to Inverness-shire and south into Perthshire.

Turnover last year hit a record £1.1million and the tonnage handled rose 2,000 to 34,000, the highest yet.

Mr Nicol was speaking as DWP met to mark its birthday at the Hill of Banchory business centre and the Hill of Banchory Energy Service Company's new biomass facility.

The biomass operation will provide district heating to 600 homes in Banchory. Two biomass boilers, which will generate 1.5MW of heat, are about to be commissioned, with the scheme going live later in this year.

Wood chips and short rotation coppice will be

burned to provide the heat.

Mr Nicol said the scheme was one of many which were diversifying the use of timber and in increasing demand for it.

Despite the recession there remains strong demand for use in the construction sector. Mr Nicol said significant investments by sawmillers in improving their facilities across Scotland had secured

"This is a much better model. It is the way we should be going"

sales increases which had resulted in the market share for British timber doubling from 20% to 40% in recent years. They too had benefited from sterling's weakness against the euro which was keeping timber imports out.

He added: "It is a redoubtable achievement in securing a bigger proportion of a much smaller overall market which has retracted be-



CHIPS WITH EVERYTHING: Andrew Nicol with the wood chips which will be burned in the biomass boilers. Photograph: Kami Thomson

cause of the impact of the recession."

Mr Nicol said biomass provided another avenue for growers and sawmillers. He questioned the burning of wood solely to generate electricity in large-scale generation plants as the heat gener-

ated was not fully utilised. They also had an impact on the availability of wood for other sectors, including chipboard manufacturers.

But Mr Nicol said smaller-scale facilities, such as the Hill of Banchory operation, would be beneficial as they could be

serviced locally without any big disruption to national wood supplies. The heat was also fully used.

"This is a much better model. It is the way we should be going," he added.

Mr Nicol, who has managed DWP since it was

founded, said it had brought benefits to its forest-owner members. He added: "There is a range of activities and achievements that have succeeded with which go way beyond what individual estates or forest owners could have done on their own."

Eight is great for curlers at top event

A rare eight-ender was achieved in the Yara-sponsored Farmers' Curling Championships at Perth yesterday.

The Kinross rink - skipped by Robin Niven and including his brothers Mike and David, as well as Jim Stewart - pulled off the feat against a team skipped by Andy Pullar, of Leslie, Fife.

The Niven brothers all farm around Kinross and in Perthshire. Mr Stewart farms at Newtyle, Angus. It

is thought to be only the third time an eight-ender - where all eight stones score for one team - has been achieved in the 29-year history of the competition.

The championships, in the Dewars Centre, run until tomorrow.

There are 80 teams involving 320 farmers - several of whom are among Europe's top curlers - in the competition. The championship games will be played tomorrow.

Crisp-maker tastes award success

BY JOE WATSON

Crisp manufacturer Mackie's at Taypack was named Sainsbury's Scottish supplier of the year yesterday.

The business is run by the Mackie and Taylor farming families.

Mackie's is well known for its ice-cream which it makes on the farm at Rothienorman, while the Taylors have a large potato business and Aberdeen-Angus pedi-

gree at Inchtute, Perthshire.

Mackie's at Taypack managing director Kirstin Mackie said the business was appreciative of the support it had received from the supermarket chain.

"We've had an excellent year and sales are up 60% overall from last

year. We're really looking forward to continuing our partnership with Sainsbury's and we're already working on some new products to grow

the category," she added. The award was presented at

the retailer's regional supplier conference in Edinburgh, where it reaffirmed its pledge to buy more local produce from Scottish and British firms.

Sainsbury's has 60 stores in Scotland, stocks 1,500 Scottish lines and buys £600million of produce from businesses north of the border.



Kirstin Mackie: "We've had an excellent year"

REGISTER

Plea over cases of sheep worrying

A national register is being set up to record incidents where dogs have worried sheep.

The National Sheep Association is behind the register, which it hopes will increase awareness of the issue and improve responsible behaviour by dog owners. It will allow all sheep farmers to report incidents which will be recorded on their seriousness and location.

Association chief executive Phil Stocker said: "Sheep worrying and dog attacks appear to be on the increase and we are aware that many cases go unreported. It is important to create a picture of what is really happening and I would urge any farmer to phone the NSA on 01684 892661 in full confidence and report any cases of sheep worrying they experience."

Dairy shares pledge

Dairy farmers' co-operative First Milk has given an irrevocable undertaking to sell its 10.1% stake in Robert Wiseman Dairies to the German firm which has mounted a £279.5million takeover bid for it.

First Milk had at the time of the bid being launched last Monday signed a letter of intent saying it would sell its 7,162,026 shares to Muller group subsidiary, Muller Dairy (UK), for the offered £3.90-a-share.

The legal undertaking it has now given makes the share sell binding, unless a competing offer is received for Wiseman in excess of £4.30-a-share.