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To: <admin.dwogs@gmail.com>  
Date: Tue, 20 Apr 2010 13:59:56 +0200  
Subject: Response to Government Afforestation Grant question

Dear Anne,

Please excuse the delay in replying to you on the matter of the Government Afforestation Grant.

Attached, please find a copy of a response from the Commissioner for Agriculture, Dacian Cioloş to a question on afforestation. I hope this clears up some of the issues regarding this subject and if there is anything further we can do for you on this matter, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,

John Harkin

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Answer given by Mr Cioloş  
on behalf of the Commission  
(04.03.2010)

When forestry is funded as part of a Rural Development Programme, any amendments need to be submitted to the Commission and are subject to an approval process. However, the Irish Government has not requested that forestry be included within the programming for the 2007-2013 programming period. Therefore this approval and amendment process does not apply.

National aids for forestry must comply with the state aid rules, and Ireland has several such schemes approved by the Commission under these rules. However, such approvals normally set only a maximum amount of aid that may be payable, in order to prevent the distortion of competition. A reduction in the level of a grant payment would not normally constitute a breach of the state aid rules or require a further notification.

Any reductions in national funding are therefore the responsibility of the Irish Government. If the Irish Government is in breach of contracts agreed with farmers, or any legitimate expectations they may be considered to have, this is a matter for the national courts.