Forest Machine Operator Training Programme

PROGRAMME PROSPECTUS
The 2-stage training programme will prepare trainees for forest harvesting activities in Ireland, encompassing Forwarder Operations in Stage 1 and Harvester Operations in Stage 2.

“Programme participants will be provided with practical knowledge and training that will readily transfer to a working environment.”

Programme Overview

The Forest Machine Operator Training Programme has been designed to develop a broad-based employment focused competence in timber harvesting operations.

It is a highly practical programme that has been created by key industry stakeholders who understand the growing need for highly skilled and competent forest machine operators.

With increasing safety, environmental and efficiency demands on timber harvesting operations, forest machine operators require a comprehensive range of skills and knowledge to work safely, productively and in an environmentally sensitive manner within the forest harvesting sector. As Ireland’s privately owned forest resource matures, there is a significant increase in harvesting activity, especially in farm-forestry thinning operations which require a more advanced skill set which this programme can provide.

The 2-stage training programme will prepare trainees for forest harvesting activities in Ireland, encompassing Forwarder Operations in Stage 1 and Harvester Operations in Stage 2. The programme is highly practical in nature and is focused on the specific skills and knowledge required to operate in today’s dynamic forest industry.

The goal of the Forest Machine Operator Training Programme is to equip trainees with the appropriate balance of skills, knowledge and practical experience to work safely and productively within the forest harvesting sector. The comprehensive programme content reflects the growing requirement for operators to have a broad range of machine skills and forestry knowledge to operate with minimal levels of supervision.

The programme is designed to accommodate the training of:

- **Existing Operators** who wish to up-skill and broaden their knowledge of forest harvesting operations;
- **New Entrants** who wish to gain the necessary skills and knowledge in preparation for a career in forest harvesting operations in Ireland;
- **Students** who are currently enrolled in a forestry training programme or course.

Machine operator training and assessment modules have been developed specifically for this programme and a forestry machine simulator has been incorporated into the programme to provide state-of-the-art forestry machine operation skills training and assessment within a safe and structured environment. Programme participants will be provided with practical knowledge and training that will readily transfer to a working environment. The programme has been designed to work with industry mentors from the timber harvesting sector and is heavily focused on practical, on the job training.

Both training programme Stages are QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) accredited.
Training Programme Structure & Delivery

The Forest Machine Operator Training Programme is delivered through a combination of self-learning modules, teaching, field trips and on-site mentoring and involves a range of theory and skills assessments.

Comprehensive Training Programme Manuals guide trainees through the two programme stages. Trainees keep a Log Book to record all training activity completed.

The training programme incorporates a state-of-the-art Harvester & Forwarder Simulator which allows trainees to develop a range of operational skills in a safe and controlled “virtual environment”. The simulator is used to:

- **screen prospective candidates** to determine whether they have a basic aptitude for forest machine operation;
- **teach machine operation skills**, preparing trainees before they commence their work on a live harvesting site;
- **teach machine management skills**, ensuring that trainees become comfortable with the array of controls and telemetry systems found on modern forest harvesting machinery;
- **assess the development of trainee skills** and knowledge in a standardised manner.

The programme is designed to facilitate different routes through the learning process, via formal training, informal training and distance learning, allowing programme access to existing forest machine operators, new entrants and full-time & part-time students.

Mentorships

The Forest Machine Operator Training Programme has a strong focus on practical skills development in a working environment and is aligned with industry mentors who provide some important modules of skills training along with periods of practical work experience within the timber supply chain. Mentorship training includes:

- Forest Machine Operation skills training and practice on live harvesting sites (under supervision);
- Training days at a harvesting machinery workshop;
- Training days on forest harvesting sites with harvest site managers (foresters);
- Training days on forest harvesting sites with sawmill timber procurement managers;
- Visits to sawmills and panelboard mills.

While it is an advantage for students to have aligned themselves with a registered mentor, the Training Programme will endeavour to link prospective trainees with approved industry mentors.
"Stage 1 aims to equip trainees with the knowledge, skill and competence to operate and maintain a FORWARDER safely in accordance with industry best practice..."

http://www.qqi.ie

"Stage 1 is open to new entrants who have no previous experience in forest harvesting operations and to existing operators who wish to improve their forwarder skills, improve their forestry knowledge or gain formal accreditation within their area of expertise."

You can download further information on this QQI Minor Award at: http://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/AwardDetails?awardCode=5N3413
"Stage 2 aims to equip trainees with the knowledge, skill and competence to operate and maintain a HARVESTER safely and efficiently in accordance with industry best practice. Training will build on the knowledge and skills that have been developed during Stage 1 training, including some more advanced forestry skills..."

http://www.qqi.ie

"Stage 2 is open to trainees who have successfully completed Stage 1 (Forwarder Operations)."

You can download further information on this QQI Minor Award at: http://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/AwardDetails?awardCode=6N3412
Stakeholder Comments

“...The Forest Machine Operator training programme provides an excellent opportunity for existing operators and new trainees to develop expert skills in forest machine operations. I am particularly interested in seeing a new standard of machine operator trained specifically to carry out forest thinnings.”

Traolach Layton
Timber Procurement Manager
GPWood, Cork

“I need highly trained operators to make my timber harvesting business a success. High quality skills training is key to successful forest harvesting operations.”

Alfie Neville
Owner
Roland Forestry Harvesting Contractors

Training Programme Accreditation

Certification of both Forest Machine Operator Training Programme stages is accredited by QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland). Each stage is associated with a QQI Minor Award. Each minor award is a component of the QQI Level 5 and Level 6 Certificate in Forestry, allowing progression through the National Framework of Qualifications.

On completion of a Forest Machine Operator Training Programme stage, trainees will also be prepared for an industry standard on-site machine skills assessment. The programme complements the existing NPTC City & Guilds skills assessment industry standard.

Employment Prospects

The Forest Machine Operator Training Programme will prepare trainees for a career in the timber harvesting sector in Ireland. Activity in this sector is forecast to grow rapidly over the next 10 years, with increasing demand for highly skilled operators who can work with minimal levels of supervision, particularly within forest thinning operations. Trainees who complete this programme can find employment working for timber harvesting contractors or might consider developing their own timber harvesting contracting businesses.

Programme Location & Contacts

The Forest Machine Operator Training Programme Centre is based in Teagasc Ballyhaise College, County Cavan.

Ballyhaise College is located 8km north of Cavan town on an estate of 220 hectares of grassland and is a leading provider of training in Agriculture and Forestry. Close links have been developed with the local Institute of Technology in Dundalk (DkIT). Over 1000 students are currently registered on courses at Ballyhaise College.

As the training programme is highly practical in nature, much of the learning time will be based in the forest, participating in timber harvesting operations. Practical skills training will take place in forests across Ireland, depending on mentor harvesting site locations.

For further information on the Forest Machine Training Programme please contact:

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