

MINISTER MICHAEL CREED OPENS €59M SMARTPLY MANUFACTURING FACILITY

Minister for Agriculture, Food and Marine Michael Creed T.D officially opened the €59M Medite SmartPly manufacturing facility in Belview, Waterford Port, Co. Kilkenny on Friday 9th December. Medite SmartPly, part of Coillte Group, manufactures and supplies innovative and sustainable wood panel products to customers throughout Europe. In 2016 a €59M upgrade of the plant was completed securing it as one of the South-East region's largest exporters.

Medite SmartPly employs over 160 people directly at the Kilkenny plant with a further 200 jobs supported indirectly in the wider community. The Medite SmartPly plant uses trees, harvested mainly in the Southern part of the country, to manufacture innovative and sustainable wood products used in construction, flooring and furniture sectors.

Minister Michael Creed said "Forestry and the timber processing sector play a crucial role in Ireland's export industry. The investment of €59M in the development of this state of the art facility will enhance SmartPly's ability to manufacture innovative products to meet the ever-evolving needs of international customers while providing a very important outlet for pulpwood from Coillte's forests and private forests across the South East region. I welcome this investment as SmartPly generates significant employment in the region, both directly and indirectly, and also assists in the development of forestry in the region."

The upgrade of the facility was completed over 16 months with 220 additional people employed during construction. A state of the art manufacturing line was assembled within the new building delivering significant operational facilities and underpinning new product development. Medite SmartPly's strategic vision is to become the leading European supplier of innovative, market led wood panel products Medium Density Fibreboard (MDF) and Oriented Strand Board (OSB).

Coillte Chairman John Moloney said "We are delighted to mark the official opening of the Medite SmartPly facility. The €59M investment was part of a strategy to develop innovative, value added products that meet customer needs and enable the company to increase sales. For suppliers, including farmers and private forestry growers, this new facility provides a long-term destination for pulp wood from forest thinnings, as well as underpinning Coillte's own supply to Medite SmartPly. Today this investment is already contributing significantly to the local economy, sustaining 360 direct and indirect jobs in the South East region, and we wish it every success for the future."

CEO of Coillte Fergal Leamy said "This is a very important day for Coillte and Medite SmartPly as we mark the completion of the €59M upgrade with Minister Creed. We are now positioned strongly to grow our panels business and have the platform to become the number one provider of value added wood panels in Europe over the next five years. Production output from the facility is already close to full capacity, which is a testament to our Medite SmartPly

team. Our team continue to pursue new market opportunities, nurture strong customer relationships and understand market drivers and future customer needs, which through innovation, are being developed into new profitable revenue streams.”

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