

# Farmers can earn extra cash from new biomass plant: Kenny

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**A new biomass power generating station will have the capacity to supply 140,000 homes.**

The €180m project - which will create 350 jobs during the construction phase - is on the site of the former Asahi Chemicals site in Killala, which shut down in 1997 with the loss of more than 300 jobs.

Taoiseach Enda Kenny described the Mayo Renewable Power project, which will create 30 permanent jobs, as a vote of confidence in the region,

Gerry Crotty, chairman of Mayo Renewable Power which is backed by New Jersey-based investment company Wiechert Enterprise, said the plant would be operational in 18 months.

The company estimated that 100 people would be indirectly employed in growing, harvesting, and transporting the fuel, and in other ancillary services.

Construction work will begin immediately because the company has secured all necessary planning permissions and permits.

Mr Crotty said that while the plant would initially be supplied by biomass imported from the US, he hoped local farmers would in time grow and supply the willow and spruce needed.

The heat that normally escapes from a generating station will be captured at the Killala development, and used in an adjoining plant to dry and process biomass for the local market.

The Taoiseach said the country was making good progress in meeting its renewable energy targets .

"I hope now that over the next 18 months during the construction period, that local farmers will realize that they have X amount of land on which they can grow a renewable crop and that they will avail of that. That will lessen the dependency on imports for the team here, and will also provide extra cash income for many farmers right across the west and north west and I hope they avail of that."

But he added that farmers would not grow a crop unless it paid .

Mr Kenny added that a "regional jobs spread" was important.

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