



SOCIETY OF IRISH FORESTERS

Cumann Foraoiseóirí na hÉireann

Glenealy
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SUBMISSION

ON THE CONSULTATION PAPER

FORESTRY PROGRAMME 2014-2020

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED MEASURES

MARCH 2014 DRAFT PROPOSALS



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The Society of Irish Foresters was founded in 1942 to advance and spread the knowledge of forestry in all its aspects and to improve professional standards in the Irish forestry industry. The Society currently has 660 members who work across the entire spectrum of the industry.

The Society appreciates the opportunity afforded it to comment on these draft proposals. Our comments are as follows:-

- The Society welcomes the commitment to expand the forest estate to achieve a forest cover of 18% by 2046 in Measure 4.1, Afforestation and Creation of Woodlands. In section 3.2 on National Forest Policy, the document refers to the current strategic plan for forestry ‘Growing for the Future’ and the recent policy review in draft form. The review pointed out that up to 2009 only 53% of the target had been achieved with a cumulative shortfall of 143,952 hectares. The original target of 17% forest cover by 2030 has effectively been pushed out to 2046. Among the reasons cited for this shortfall are:- Reduced funding in 2003 which undermined confidence in afforestation for a number of years; the success of competing land schemes e.g. REPS and constraints on land availability due to increased regulatory requirements.
- These issues must be addressed in the new measures to ensure that these revised targets will be achieved.
- The Society welcomes the abolition of the farmer/non farmer distinction. However, we are concerned that the reduction of the premium period to 12 years could have an impact similar to that experienced in 2003.



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- It is imperative that schemes for forestry are competitive with agricultural schemes and supports. There should be a firm commitment that this will be the case bearing in mind the long term nature of an investment in forestry.
- Land availability will be a key factor in achieving the targets. The Society points to the report ‘Classification of Lands Suitable for Afforestation in the Republic of Ireland’ (Farrelly N. and Gallagher G., 2013). The recommendations of this report must be considered in detail. This includes the detailed evaluation of unenclosed land together with a review of land use policy in the light of 21st century issues. The most recent forest inventory shows that the area of the forest estate which is subject to one or more environment constraints has increased to more than 50% of the estate.
- The Society welcomes Measures 2 to Measure 6.
- In particular, we support the continuation of the Forest Road Scheme 9 (Measure 4.2). This is essential to ensure that timber from the forests can get to market and to ensure good silvicultural practice. It is essential that road densities and supports are adequate to enable forest owners to harvest their forests.
- Likewise the Reconstitution Scheme (Measure 4.3) will remove some of the risks faced by owners arising from natural causes and thus should encourage participation in the afforestation programme.
- The Society fully supports Measure 7, Knowledge Transfer and Information Actions, and in particular Measure 4.7.1.2, Continuous Professional Development (CPD). As a body representing the forestry profession in Ireland, the Society introduced a CPD programme on 1st January 2003. Given



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the importance of CPD, the Society's Education & Professional Standards Management Board has been reviewing our CPD programme which has now reached its 10th anniversary.

- The Society acknowledges the acceptance by the Forest Service of members of the Society with the MSIF designation for inclusion on the list of Registered Foresters. We have always carefully vetted applicants for Technical Membership to ensure professional competence. In addition, the Society assesses relevant courses and programmes in third level institutions. The Society welcomes the proposed mandatory nature of the CPD programme and would welcome the opportunity to discuss its CPD programme with the Forest Service and to play its part in enabling this measure to be implemented.

- Measure 9, Investments in Forestry Technology and Measure 10, Forest Environment and Climate Services:- Forest Genetic Reproductive Material. While necessary in their own right, these measures are dependant on a solid research base. It is regrettable that forest research as a measure in its own right is notably absent from the proposals. The Society recommends that this serious omission should be rectified as a matter of urgency. Forestry is facing a diverse list of challenges which range from climate change to new pathogens. The improved genetic reproductive material in Measure 10 is as a result of a lengthy and continuous research programme. In addition there are opportunities such as carbon sequestration which will require ongoing research. The Society has recently published a policy position paper on Forest Research (already submitted to the Forest Service for consideration). The recommendations in this policy position paper could form the basis of a new research measure.



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- The Society welcomes the proposals on Forest Management Plans (FMP), Measure 11. Forest plans should be available online and designed to enable the Forest Service Inspectorate to focus its resources on priority sites. The FMP should contain full details of the management of all facets of the forest which are relevant to the implementation of the principles of Sustainable Forest Management. The issuing of Felling Licences should be linked to FMP.

Pacelli Breathnach

President.