**SIF Policy on Professional Standards in Forestry**

***Issue:***
Forestry is a major land use and economic activity in rural areas. Forest planning and management requires a technical knowledge of forestry. Farmers and investors getting involved in forestry should ensure that, whatever their objectives, their forestry project is developed and managed with the highest professional standards. Forest planning and management should be carried out by a person with a technical qualification in forestry.

All technical members of the Society of Irish Foresters are bound by the society’s code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. Compliance with this code demonstrates the respect of SIF members for the land and the social, economic, environmental and cultural values of forests. It demonstrates commitment to sustainable forest management and the wise management of ecosystems. It is designed to ensure just and honourable professional and human relationships, mutual confidence and respect and serves to guarantee the availability of competent professional services to clients, employers and the wider society. In the past, virtually all foresters practising in Ireland were graduates of the state training schools for foresters. Since the closure of these schools, and particularly in recent years, foresters have been qualifying from a number of different training institutions in Ireland. Each of these institutions have been training foresters to different levels (e.g. certificate, diploma, degree), using their own curricula. In addition, an increasing number of foresters trained in educational establishments outside of the state are now practising as foresters in Ireland.

***The Society of Irish Foresters’ Position:***

* Full technical members of the Society of Irish Foresters are entitled to use the designation MSIF. This designation is a pre-requisite for inclusion on the Forest Service list of approved foresters. Members of the public should always look for this designation when seeking professional advice on forestry.
* The Society of Irish Foresters will at all times maintain a list of full technical members entitled to use the MSIF designation and will make this available to the public.
* The Society of Irish Foresters supports the Forest Service policy of requiring afforestation plans, grant and premium applications and all other forest management plans and grant applications to be prepared and submitted by an approved forester.
* The Society of Irish Foresters has a programme of Continuous Professional development (CPD) whereby technical members develop their skills and services through, for example, attendance at seminars, workshops and symposia or through research. The CPD programme also serves to complement the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct and, as a condition of Technical Membership of the Society, acts as a further confidence building measure to forestry stakeholders.
* The Society of Irish Foresters accredits third level institutes involved in forestry education with a view to maintaining the highest educational standards.
* The Society of Irish Foresters is developing its own internal exam structure, independent of their level institutes. This will facilitate members professional progression, regardless of initial membership status.
* A procedure for complaints and discipline is clearly laid out in the society’s Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. This procedure may be used by any member of the public with a complaint regarding the service provided by a forester who is a technical member of the Society.
* The Society co-operates with international professional forestry bodies with a view to mutual recognition of designations such as MSIF, technology transfer and communication between foresters internationally.