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## Foreword

The *Forestry and Timber Yearbook 2010* is an invaluable information resource for our sector and an opportunity to communicate with readers on our shared interest in forestry and timber.

Forestry as an alternative land-use, is a valuable source of income to landowners, is a source of clean, renewable energy and it plays an important role in combating climate change. We, as stakeholders in the forestry sector, know and appreciate all of these facts. In order to maintain and, indeed, develop the sector, we need to make the public at large more aware of the importance of forestry.

Trees have been a constant on our landscape and timber has been a versatile commodity down through the years. However their importance is under-estimated and the benefits of forestry are not fully appreciated.

The COFORD Council launched a series of papers entitled 'Forestry 2030' in October 2009 which sought to highlight the contribution and importance of forestry. The paper on 'Irish forestry and the economy' points out that 'the forest industry, comprising growing, harvesting and processing of forest products makes a significant and growing contribution to the Irish economy' with an output in 2008 of c. €1.89 billion, or just under 1% of GDP. In today's economic climate, these facts underline the contribution that forestry makes. The contribution of forestry by way of climate change mitigation and renewable energy generation are two other aspects covered in the papers.

All of this information is a welcome endorsement, if any were needed, for the Government's significant investment in the development of forestry over the years. This investment seeks to ensure that there is a critical mass of wood coming on stream to sustain the timber and timber products sector and also to underpin the many other benefits derived from forestry such as climate change mitigation, enhancement of biodiversity and provision of recreational facilities to name but a few.

In order to maximise the return from forestry, management of the crop is an essential prerequisite. In the case of forestry, one management task that can make a difference to the end value of the crop is thinning, when and where appropriate.



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Thinnings are important, not only for the eventual quality of, and return from, the timber, but also to provide the raw material for the wood energy sector. The formation of producer groups throughout the country is a welcome development as these groups of forest-owners are working together to pool their resources to ensure the continuity of supply of timber and to reduce maintenance, thinning and harvesting costs by using economies of scale. Many of the producer groups have also worked on developing markets in their hinterland for such thinnings. I expect that further progress will be made in this area in 2010.

The important contribution of forestry is reflected in the commitment relating to the sector which the Government has outlined in the 'Renewed Programme for Government' as we seek to take advantage of our natural resources. I would like to assure stakeholders within the sector that I will continue to work, with my colleagues in Government, to support and develop the sector and to address associated issues, in order that we, and future generations, can continue to enjoy the many benefits of forestry at a personal, community and national level.

In conclusion, I compliment the Irish Timber Growers Association on their production of this yearbook, which is much more than a diary as it also provides informative articles, invaluable reference material, forestry statistics and a contacts directory. I am sure that readers will refer to it on many occasions during 2010 and I wish you all well in your endeavours during the year.



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