

Introduction

ITGA are pleased to continue the publication of the *Forestry and Timber Yearbook* this year. Looking back at previous yearbooks I have been struck by the way it has chronicled the shift in emphasis of growers' interests over the years.

The main purpose of the yearbook is to give an up to date directory of services available to growers as well as statistical information on the industry. It also provides information through articles on relevant and emerging topics. Earlier editions concentrated very much on new planting and have moved on to more of a market focus, as many members are now harvesting and selling timber from those forests established in the 1980s and 1990s. What seemed like a long term investment, at the time, is now a real source of income for a growing number of forest owners.

The ITGA, too, has grown and matured in the services it provides to members. With the ongoing publication of timber price information and the development and use of our ITGA timber sales dispatch system, we continue to provide meaningful assistance and support to the private timber grower. In 2011 we hosted the ITGA Education and Conference Centre at the Irish Forestry Show as well as our regular field days, newsletters and our website.

The yearbook started publication long before Forest Certification became an established means of verifying the sustainability of forest produce and I am pleased that the ITGA sponsored PEFC initiative in Ireland has successfully drafted an Irish PEFC Certification Standard for forest management, which is expected to be endorsed internationally, allowing Ireland's first PEFC Certified forests to be audited and approved in 2012.

The Association has been involved in the government's Forest Policy Review group and we hope to see its report published in the near future. It is more important now, in uncertain economic times, that the value and potential of this natural resource is recognised and that a proper strategy and planning is put in place to ensure the forest industry is positioned to contribute fully to Ireland's economic recovery and success in the future.



Brendan Lacey
Chairman
Irish Timber Growers
Association

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ITGA will continue to work for a sustainable forest planting programme to be implemented to optimise the role of forestry in meeting our national Kyoto targets for net greenhouse gas mitigation. Regarding the future for private growers, we have seen the steady growth of privately owned plantations which now constitutes almost half of the national forest estate. This will continue to grow and, more than ever, requires strong representation.

We are grateful for the support members have given to the Association and we encourage you to continue to make your voice heard. Government must make the right decisions for the economic, social and environmental resource that is the forest industry. The forthcoming policy review must be completed and send out the right message if we are to have a clear focus for the future.

This yearbook has not been produced without a lot of effort and assistance. I would like to thank the editorial and production staff, our advertisers, sponsors and supporters, including the Forest Service, for making it possible to continue its publication so you the grower can have it as a valuable reference guide. Please also remember that a lot of helpful information is available on our website www.itga.ie and also www.forestryyearbook.ie



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