

Grants and premium payments for afforestation and support measures



Allocation of €111.6m announced for forestry in Budget 2017 to promote funding for 7,100 ha of afforestation and 110km of new forest roads.

Andrew Doyle, Minister of State with responsibility for forestry announced a €111.6m allocation for forestry in Budget 2017. "This will provide funding for over 7,100 ha of new forests, almost 800 ha more than the total area planted in 2015," he said. He maintained that this level of funding will support the construction of 110 km of new forest roads and for forest management initiatives which will improve the productivity of our forests while maintaining the highest environmental standards. The afforestation target for 2017 is marginally less than the Forestry Programme 2015-2020 (Table 1).

Apart from the welcomed introduction of the reconstitution scheme for windblown forests, the schemes for 2017 are broadly the same as 2016 when premium payments and grants were increased over the previous forestry programme but the funding period was reduced from 20 to 15 years. There is no premium differentiation between farmers and non-farmers.

Table 1: Planting targets (ha) for afforestation in Forestry Programme 2015-2020

Scheme	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	TOTAL
Afforestation	5,700	6,300	6,475	6,700	6,925	7,450	39,550
Native woodland	500	500	500	500	500	500	3,000
Agroforestry	10	20	25	40	50	50	195
Energy/fibre	100	200	500	500	1,000	1,000	3,300
TOTAL	6,310	7,020	7,500	7,740	8,475	9,000	46,045

Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (2014)

The following is a summary of the 11 measures in the Forestry Programme 2014-2020:

1. AFFORESTATION

The Grant and Premium Category (GPC) afforestation schemes (Tables 2 and 3) are as follows.

- Premiums to be payable for a maximum period of 15 years instead of 20 years.
- There will be a single premium rate for farmers and non-farmers.

Table 2: Proposed Afforestation Grant Rates (€/ha) in Forestry Programme 2015 – 2020

Grant / premium category (GPC)	1st Grant	2nd Grant	Total	Additional fencing allocation IS436	Fencing allocation non-IS436	Total available funding
1 - Unenclosed	1575	525	2100	500	350	2600
2 - Sitka spruce / LP	2310	735	3045	500	350	3545
3 - 10% Diverse Conifer	2360	790	3150	500	350	3650
4 - Diverse Conifer	2625	840	3465	500	350	3965
5 - Broadleaf	3780	1155	4935	500	450	5435
6 - Oak / Beech	3990	1260	5250	500	450	5750
7 - Beech	3990	1260	5250	500	450	5750
8 - Alder	2520	840	3360	500	450	3860
9 - Native Woodland establishment (Scenarios 1-4)	3990	1260	5250	500	450	5750
10 - Native Woodland establishment (Scenario 4)	3780	1155	4935	500	450	5435
11 - Agro-forestry	2960	990	3950	500	450	4450
12a - Forestry for Fibre	1460	490	1950	500	450	2450
12b - Forestry for fibre (Aspen,1400)	1245	420	1665	500	450	2165

Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Note: 5% increase on fixed rate grant

Table 3: Annual afforestation premiums (€/ha) for grant premium categories (GPCs) in Forestry Programme to 2020

Grant / premium category (GPC)	Old rate – farmer	New rate – farmer/non-farmer	No. years years
1 - Unenclosed	€ 155	€ 185	15
2 - Sitka spruce / LP	€ 369	€ 440	15
3 - 10% Diverse Conifer	€ 427	€ 510	15
4 - Diverse Conifer	€ 454	€ 560	15
5 - Broadleaf	€ 481	€ 575	15
6 - Oak / Beech	€ 515	€ 615	15
7 - Beech	€ 515	€ 615	15
8 - Alder	€ 481	€ 575	15
9 - Native Woodland establishment (Scenarios 1-3)	€ 515	€ 635	15
10 - Native Woodland establishment (Scenario 4)	€ 515	€ 635	15
11 - Agro-forestry	-	€ 260	5
12 - Forestry for Fibre	-	€ 180	10

Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Note: GPC numbers 9-12 are new additions. Farmers and non farmers received same premiums under new scheme.

MEASURES IN THE FORESTRY PROGRAMME 2014-2020



The programme contains the following measures:

1. Afforestation and creation of woodlands.
2. Forest infrastructure – Forest Road Scheme.
3. Prevention and restoration of damage to forests – Reconstitution Scheme.
4. Improving environmental and community value of forestry – NeighbourWood Scheme.
5. Improving broadleaved woodlands – Woodland Improvement Scheme.
6. Improving and conserving indigenous woodlands – Native Woodland Scheme.
7. Knowledge transfer and information actions.
8. Support for producer groups.
9. Investment in forestry technology.
10. Improvement of forest genetic reproductive material for native species.
11. Support for private owners to produce forest management plans (FMPs).

2. ROADING

This measure supports the construction of forest roads and associated infrastructure. The primary objectives, are to improve the economic value and competitiveness of the forest resource and provide access for harvesting machinery and timber transport.

There have been a number of changes to the forest road scheme in relation to the area of eligibility and the timing of payments. In addition it is proposed that a grant of up to €5,000 for special construction works is provided as well as support for connecting to existing forest road networks.

3. RECONSTITUTION

The purpose of this measure is to restore and maintain forests and forest ecosystems following significant damage by natural causes. It is proposed that the measure will be primarily aimed at restoring forest potential as a result of damage, or potential damage, from disease outbreaks.

Support may also be considered towards the restoration of forests damaged by other natural and catastrophic events and/or climate change related events. The measure will operate in a similar manner to the existing scheme.

For example the Windblow Reconstitution Scheme provides financial aid to land owners whose plantations were damaged by windblow between 5 December 2013 and 12 February 2014. A maximum grant of €1,700/ha is available as outlined by John Casey, Teagasc (page 40).

4. NEIGHBOURWOOD

The NeighbourWood Scheme provides grant support towards the enhancement of existing woodlands for public access, education, recreation and enjoyment especially on sites near villages, towns and cities.

5. WOODLAND IMPROVEMENT

This measure, supports the thinning and tending of broadleaves to ensure “healthy tree growth, landscape improvement, biodiversity enhancement, soil protection and water protection”.

Funding may also be provided for brashing to improve access for manual application of fertiliser where aerial fertilisation is not possible.

6. NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME

The primary aim of the Native Woodland Scheme (NWS) is to encourage and support the protection and expansion of Ireland's native woodlands, using appropriate "close to nature" management techniques. The Forest Service and Woodlands of Ireland acknowledge the recent decrease in broadleaved planting and see the need to keep landowners, foresters and other relevant stakeholders well informed about planting native species. They have been organising courses for plantation owners, foresters, ecologists and other relevant stakeholders outlining the benefits of the NWS, especially woodland conservation and establishment.

The grant and premium rates are provided in Table 4 but applicants should check out additional supports for fencing including deer fencing.

Table 4: Grant and premium rates (€/ha) under two Native Woodland Schemes (NWS).

Conservation scheme				
NWS category	Total grant payable*	First instalment	Second instalment	Premium
Private High forest	5,000	3,800	1,200	350 (for 7 years)
Private Emergent Woodland	2,500	2,500	0	
Public Woodland	2,500	2,500	0	0
Establishment scheme rates per grant premium category (GPC)				
GPC 9	5250	3990	1260	635 (for 15 years)
GPC 10	4935	3780	1155	

Source: Adapted by D. Magner from Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. (2015).

*Applicants should check out additional supports such as fencing grants.

7. KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

This measure acknowledges that the transfer of awareness, knowledge and skills to forest owners through knowledge transfer groups can play a pivotal role in achieving objectives such as developing a culture of forest management. The proposed measure will support four elements:

1. Knowledge transfer groups, who will address training in areas of silviculture, financial management, forest health, environmental awareness, timber harvesting and marketing.
2. Continuous professional development – aimed at registered foresters.

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3. Targeted training, aimed at private forest holders, professional foresters and forestry workers.
4. Advisory services to include support for field days, work shop and other educational events.

8. PRODUCER GROUPS

The objective of this measure is to encourage and facilitate private forest owners to work co-operatively in the management and marketing of their forest resource. By coming together, forest owners can create economies of scale that will reduce management and marketing costs and improve the viability of private forests.

9. FORESTRY TECHNOLOGY

This measure aims to support the introduction of new technologies for use in private forests, which have the potential to increase efficiency, reduce costs and minimise the environmental impact of forestry operations. It is aimed at supporting small-scale technologies, which are applicable to private forest holders, producer groups, forest contractors and haulage operators.

10. GENETIC REPRODUCTIVE MATERIAL

The forest genetic measure will support the conservation of native forest genetic material and improve the resilience of Irish forest species to disease and the effects of climate change.

The proposed measure will provide support towards the costs related to the management and conservation of registered seed stands and production areas such as seed orchards.

Eligible forests include crops registered by the Department as seed production sites or seed stands and being actively used for seed production.

11. FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANS

The primary objective of this measure is to encourage and facilitate private forest owners to complete forest management plans (FMPs) and submit to the Department by 2020. These will facilitate the issuing of felling licences and will apply to forests exceeding a certain size, to be determined.

FMPs will enable forest owners to plan for future harvesting and other work as well as assisting in disease risk management, environmental protection and fire prevention. Properly co-ordinated they should also contribute to accurate national forecasting of timber production.



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