

# Introduction

**T**he Irish Timber Growers Association is uniquely dedicated to representing private timber growers in Ireland and in 2017 the Association is celebrating its 40th Anniversary.

Just as the forests of our early members have matured, so too has the focus, representation and information services provided by your Association. As an industry, forestry has undergone dramatic changes and challenges over those four decades. From a low base, private forestry now accounts for almost half of the national forest estate and within the next decade private timber output is set to become greater than the harvest from public forests. The recently published COFORD All Ireland Roundwood Production Forecast highlights the need for continued development of services for growers so as to ensure they have the necessary knowledge and systems in place to maximise the value of their forest investment.

With private roundwood output set to eclipse that of the State by 2027, ITGA is preparing its members for increasing sales and we will continue to promote the use of our Master Tree Sales Agreement and the ITGA Model Timber Sales Dispatch System. Also, our collaboration with the Forest Service and UCD in the private roundwood price database called the Wood Price Quarterly (WPQ) will provide reliable market price information for growers. Our field days have attracted increasingly large attendances in 2016 and they highlighted the practical issues facing growers, both in relation to forest management and in bringing their timber crop to market and maximising its value.

With the increasing proportion of private roundwood to come to market, private forest certification is becoming more critical for the sector. ITGA have helped advance forest certification in Ireland through its role with PEFC. The Association will continue to work towards user friendly and affordable certification for private growers to ensure members will continue to have access to markets in which certification will increasingly become a requirement.

With the Forestry Act 2014 expected to be commenced in the very near future, it is important for growers' voices to be heard so as to ensure its implementation in a positive and productive way for the sector. The Association will continue to support the implementation of the national Forest Policy Review group report "Forests, Products and People, Ireland's Forest Policy – a renewed vision". This sets out strategic goals



*Brendan Lacey  
Chairman  
Irish Timber Growers Association*

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and recommendations for the forest sector and ITGA will participate fully in achieving its aims.

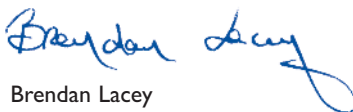
Regulatory processes have become considerably more detailed in relation to afforestation and environmental requirements in addition to requirements relating to other forest operations such as forest roading, felling licence applications and management plans amongst others. Membership of ITGA ensures the continuation of our many efforts on behalf of growers which is also positive for the forest industry as a whole.

One of the challenges that face us as an industry in the near future is the impact of Brexit on Irish timber exports to the UK. Ireland exports c. 80% of its forest products and the impact of currency exchange rates in addition to freedom of movement of goods are just two of the issues that need to be considered. These will affect both the movement of roundwood on the island of Ireland and also the movement of finished wood products to export markets. We also need to ensure that carbon sequestration by our forests is recognised now and into the future as new climate change agreements and targets are negotiated and implemented by the State.

From all the above, you will see that the representation activities of the association will be vital in the year ahead and we will continue to provide the range of information services and other works the association undertakes on your behalf. In this regard, I would like to thank the entire ITGA team, the executive and management committees, the yearbook team, the technical director and secretary and all those who hosted our field days and other events over the past year.

The *Forestry and Timber Yearbook*, as always, marks the start of our year and also in 2017 marks our 40th Anniversary. It will continue to give guidance on topical issues that will impact on all of us and the wider industry.

We are already planning our field days and newsletters for the coming year and we welcome the return of the now biennial Forestry Show – Timber 2017 to Stradbally Hall in Co. Laois. Our field days will again be held in various parts of the country to facilitate accessibility for members and we will continue to focus on forest management, wood mobilisation and related issues. We look forward to your continued participation in our events and activities over the coming twelve months.



Brendan Lacey  
Chairman  
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