

Introduction

The Irish Timber Growers Association is pleased to publish its *Forestry and Timber Yearbook* for 2011, the definitive annual guide to the forest industry in Ireland.

For some years now, it appears that new opportunities and challenges continue to face the industry. 2010 marked an exceptional year for timber sales as seen in our timber sales database – substantial increases in price driven by limited timber supply, while at the same time wood products manufacturers have developed export markets against a background of lower domestic demand. The supply demand balance is a clear demonstration of the viability of our industry and its potential to contribute to national economic recovery.

At the same time we are facing a challenged funding environment where limited resources could undermine the necessary and positive contribution which the industry can make from an environmental and state financial point of view.

This country faces significant costs in order to meet its obligations under the Kyoto agreement on reducing net greenhouse gas emissions. It is a real financial cost which can either be lost to the economy by spending overseas to purchase carbon credits from other countries or it can be used to generate new forests in this country which will contribute to carbon sequestration, help us meet Kyoto targets and generate significant employment and economic growth.

The demand for timber and new forests is very real but it is necessary to have the appropriate structures in place for land owners to commit their resources to it. Falling planting levels have been put forward as an argument to reduce funding – but it is the very short term stop start approach to funding which undermines the confidence of landowners to commit to this long term national asset.

The Irish Timber growers Association represents and aids forest owners through education (meetings, field days, newsletters and the website www.itga.ie), policy and protocol development (timber sales dispatch system, timber price database and initiating the PEFC certification system in Ireland), and the association is also active nationally at Government, Departmental and local level to promote the industry and timber growers interests.



Brendan Lacey
Chairman
Irish Timber Growers
Association

“

The demand for timber and new forests is very real but it is necessary to have the appropriate structures in place for land owners to commit their resources to it.

”

“
An afforestation programme of 15,000 ha per annum would be necessary for Ireland to meet its carbon sequestration obligations on a sustainable basis.
”

ITGA has had a role during the past year in a number of major national policy groups – the 2020 Food Harvest Report and the Forest Policy Review Group. Arising from the 2020 Report it is clear that forestry has a critical role to play in facilitating the agriculture industry to meet its potential. An afforestation programme of 15,000 ha per annum would be necessary for Ireland to meet its carbon sequestration obligations on a sustainable basis.

The Association appreciates the support of its members without whom we would not be able to represent the interests of growers. The work of the committee and the hard work of the technical director and secretariat ensure that ITGA continues to function and to maintain its focus on the interests of the members. I would like once again to record my appreciation for their work in the past year. I would also like to thank those associations with whom we have worked, interacted with or who have supported us through joint initiatives, participation in events and industry committees. The assistance and co-operation of the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Coillte, COFORD, the Society of Irish Foresters, Teagasc and many others has been a great help to the Association during 2010. I would also like to express my appreciation to William Merivale who has co-ordinated the PEFC process in Ireland and has helped bring it to a stage where the draft standard has been submitted for international endorsement. We hope to see the first of many PEFC certified forests in 2011.

2011 has great possibility for the industry and for timber growers. Strong demand for our product, new markets for export and growing domestic demand will give confidence to land owners to plant. The necessary piece to make this happen and to realise the economic growth and environmental potential is a positive National Forest Policy framework.



Brendan Lacey
Chairman
Irish Timber Growers Association