

Foreword

I am pleased to provide this Foreword for the *Forestry and Timber Yearbook 2014*. I have always been aware of the significance of forestry, as a land use option, a source of income, a provider of material for the timber industry and as the basis for employment in rural areas. However, since the assignment of responsibility for forestry to me in June 2013, I have been engaged in learning more about the forest sector and I appreciated the opportunities to date to meet with representatives of the various elements within the sector.

I am looking forward to working with the sector to ensure that we make the most of the economic, social and environmental opportunities that the sector presents. ITGA represents timber growers and I am aware that your interests are focussed on the production of the timber itself, including the ongoing maintenance of the forest plantations and the extraction of the timber, both during and at the end of the growing period.

We all know that challenges can and do arise that have to be addressed to assist us in realising the full economic potential of our forests.

A challenge which arose in late 2012 was the finding of *Chalara fraxinea*, a fungal disease also known as 'ash dieback' which causes significant damage to ash trees, in a number of locations around the country. My Department is continuing its work in relation to surveillance, identification and removal of infected trees. The continued co-operation of owners and the forestry sector in general is essential and I would like to commend all involved for their co-operation and swift actions in this regard. Of course, the threat of ash dieback relates to the entire island of Ireland. Developments in relation to the disease continue to be monitored closely by my Department and, in Northern Ireland, by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). Minister Michelle O'Neill MLA, my counterpart in Northern Ireland, and I also agreed an All-Ireland Chalara Control Strategy in July 2013, which sets out the policy and actions which will be taken to try to prevent the disease becoming established in Ireland.



*Tom Hayes TD
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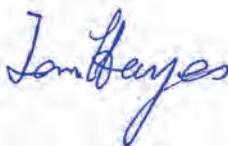
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Clearly, it is in all our interests to deal with this threat and I ask forest owners, contractors and foresters to be vigilant for this disease and, if they have concerns about unusual ill health in ash, to report it to my Department's Forest Service. Information on the disease and relevant contact details can be found on the Department's website.

Co-operation, knowledge and communication are essential, not only in dealing with the threat posed by ash dieback disease, but also in our efforts to grow and develop the forestry industry. In that regard, I am pleased that my Department has been in a position to continue its support for the publication of the *Forestry and Timber Yearbook*.

I wish to acknowledge its assistance to the Department in highlighting and providing information on issues over the years such as forest management, the importance and benefits of thinning, *Phytophthora ramorum* and forest fires.

The Yearbook is highly regarded within the forestry sector as a source of up-to-date information on aspects of forestry immediately relevant to timber growers and includes a comprehensive list of contacts. As the Yearbook enters its 25th year with the 2014 edition, I would like to congratulate ITGA for their production of this important publication and I believe that the *Forestry and Timber Yearbook* will continue to be a mainstay for the forestry sector for many years to come.



Tom Hayes TD
Minister of State
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine