

# Foreword

I welcome the 2016 edition of *Forestry and Timber Yearbook* compiled and published by the Irish Timber Growers Association. My foreword for the 2015 edition indicated that 2015 would see the roll-out of a new Forestry Programme to cover the period to 2020. A year on, it is useful to look back on the progress that has been achieved since then.

I was pleased to announce, in February 2015, that State Aid approval for the new Forestry Programme covering the period 2014 – 2020 had been secured, following a long and detailed process of negotiation with the European Commission. I consider that the outcome is a forestry programme which puts forestry development on a sustainable path for the period to 2020.

The Programme offers a broad range of forestry measures aimed at increasing timber production while at the same time improving the quality of our natural environment. A significant level of investment, a total of €482 million, has been committed to the Programme over its lifetime in order to achieve these objectives.

The Forestry Programme is designed to facilitate an increase in forest cover by almost 44,000 hectares up to December 2020. While this focus on afforestation is vital, it was also essential to make provision for our current timber resource.

As we know, forest roads are essential for access so that proper forest management can take place and to facilitate the mobilisation of timber. This mobilisation of our existing timber resource is important to sustain our forest industry and to enable it to develop further.

The new Forestry Programme accordingly provides almost €28 million of funding towards the building of forest roads over the programme period.



*Tom Hayes TD  
Minister of State with  
responsibility for forestry at the  
Department of Agriculture, Food  
and the Marine.*

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A lot of thought and effort has gone into the design of these schemes. This Yearbook provides a comprehensive overview of forestry schemes and I encourage land owners, and those already in forestry, to read up on what is available and see for yourselves the improvements made to the various schemes.

The rollout of the Schemes under the new Forestry Programme, and the funding commitment that it involves, all of which comes from the Exchequer, illustrates the commitment of the Government to the ongoing development of the forestry industry in Ireland. This commitment also acknowledges the importance of forestry and the invaluable contribution that it makes to our economy, to our environment and to our efforts to meet our climate change commitments.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the ITGA on the publication of the updated edition of the Yearbook and I look forward to continuing my engagement with the Association and the various other stakeholders involved in the sector to achieve our mutual goal — the development of Ireland's forestry industry into the future.



Tom Hayes TD  
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Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine