

# Foreword

The availability of reliable, comprehensive information is essential in any business, especially to assist in decision-making. The *Forestry and Timber Yearbook*, compiled and published by the Irish Timber Growers Association, provides valuable reference material including statistics and a wide range of contact details for Ireland's forestry and forest products sector.

I therefore appreciate this opportunity to communicate with its readers, who are, in the main, forest owners and hopefully, people considering planting forestry. We have a mutual interest in the development of forestry, and as Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine with special responsibility for forestry, I believe it is important that we are all equally aware of the current opportunities, and indeed the challenges, in our sector.

The opportunities include the range of schemes currently available under the Forestry Programme 2014-2020. These schemes include afforestation, agro-forestry, forestry for fibre, and native woodland establishment – the details of which are available on my Department's website. Existing forest owners may be interested to note that a Windblow Reconstitution Scheme was launched in September 2016, for those private forest owners who suffered significant financial loss both in terms of the value of timber lost and the cost in re-establishing the sites affected by the storms in early 2014, especially Storm Darwin. Once again, the Scheme details, along with the application form, are available on my Department's website with the closing date for receipt of applications on 24th February 2017.

While afforestation continues to be a key objective of the Forestry Programme, we also need to focus on maintenance of the current forest estate, including thinning as appropriate. I therefore would like to remind readers of the necessity to plan for such thinning, including the requirement for forest roads, and the availability of a Forest Roads Scheme to assist



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in the building of forest roads and, consequently, the mobilisation of timber. I am aware, in this regard, that the ITGA has developed a template Master Tree Sales Agreement and a Timber Sales Dispatch System.

The management and maintenance of the existing forest estate includes ongoing monitoring and surveillance of the health of our forests. As forest owners are no doubt aware, my Department is involved in ongoing monitoring in relation to Ash Dieback disease and *Phytophthora ramorum*. Recently, there was a first finding in Ireland of a disease commonly known as Dothistroma Needle Blight (DNB), which mainly affects pine species. As this is the first finding of the disease in Ireland, my Department has provided some information on it for the Yearbook. I believe that it is important that forest owners become aware of such issues in a timely fashion and this Yearbook presents a useful and practical means for conveying this information, especially as the information will be to hand for owners to refer to throughout the year.

I have met with a number of forest owner groups since my appointment and I believe that such groups are a great source of advice, experience and assistance in managing and maximising the value of your group. Forestry is a valuable natural asset and resource and I believe that by working together we can sustain and develop it for our benefit and the benefit of our children and future generations.



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