

Foreword

The publication of the ITGA *Forestry and Timber Yearbook* is a timely opportunity to review progress and developments in the forest sector during the last year and to look forward. As in most other sectors, there are both opportunities and challenges and the way we address both will determine the future of the sector.

I was pleased to see forestry stakeholders come together in 2017 more than ever, to help develop the sector and strike a balance between the economic, social and environmental benefits that forestry can deliver. Considerable work has been done by stakeholders in the various COFORD policy review groups, for example, and also as part of the consultation process for the midterm review of the current Forestry Programme. This work has played a vital role in designing future forestry policy and in ensuring that forestry schemes are fit for purpose and able to deal with the different scenarios that may arise. Brexit, climate change mitigation, increased private timber production and post 2020 CAP will all exert some influence on how the forest sector evolves over the years ahead.

I want to reiterate my Department's commitment to achieving 18% forest cover by 2050 as set out in the current forest policy document, *Forests, Products and People*. I am confident that this can be achieved through efficient use of available resources, targeted promotion and an attractive afforestation scheme that continues to cover the cost of establishment while providing a generous premium payment for 15 years.

As well as increasing forest cover, an important priority for my Department is to address the barriers to mobilising the existing forest resource. The State has invested significantly in replanting Ireland with trees after centuries of deforestation. Much of these resources are now coming into production and, if properly managed, can make a huge contribution to the local economies of rural communities throughout Ireland.



Andrew Doyle TD,
Minister of State at the
Department of Agriculture, Food
and the Marine with special
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Organisations such as the ITGA and producer/forestry groups provide a vital link in the supply chain between private forest owners and timber processors. Education, technical support, seminars, field days and, indeed, publications like this Yearbook are all important services provided by these organisations that assist with the timely implementation of forest management activities such as thinning.

The Department’s work on the *Decision Tool for Felling* now enables private forest owners to see the financial impact of harvesting activities on their forest. Further support is being provided for forest management plans, certification and knowledge transfer groups which together help provide some answers to that perennial question asked by many private forest owners, “What do I do now with my forest?”.

At whatever stage your forest is in its rotation, the 2018 Yearbook will provide you with up-to-date information and the contacts you need to take your forest to the next level. In closing, I would like to congratulate ITGA on the publication of this 2018 edition of the Yearbook which will no doubt remain an important information resource for the Irish forest industry. I look forward to continuing working with ITGA and the various other stakeholders involved in the sector in further developing Ireland’s forest industry.



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