

Harvesting your timber

Donal Whelan

The volume of timber forecast to come from forests in Ireland next year is just over 4 million cubic metres, of which 870 cubic metres is forecast to come from private forests. In 2015, the most recent year for which output figures from our forests is available, a total timber volume of 3.2 million cubic metres was harvested. Therefore, since 2015 a 25% increase in output is anticipated from Irish forests next year and much of this increase is forecast to come from private forests.



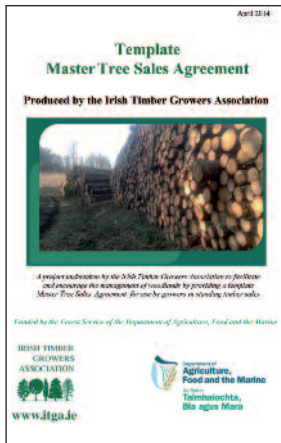
Planning for mobilising this increased output from private forests has already commenced and must continue to ensure we maximize the return to timber growers and to the State. For individual forest owners, now more than ever, it is important to plan your forest harvest whether thinnings or fellings.

In this regard, a good management plan will bring together many of the planning elements and time and resources must be allocated by growers to the following operations:

- Installation of inspection paths in forests.
- Construction of access road into forest. Currently planning permission may first be required to improve existing access and construct new access. A new single consent system for new access is to be introduced.
- Application for roading grant or broadleaved thinning grants, etc.
- Drafting Forest Management Plan & related plans incorporating timber measurements, outline inventory, etc.
- Application for Felling Licence from Forest Service to fell/thin.
- Timber sale including sale agreement/sale contract addressing all compliance requirements including Health & Safety/insurance/indemnity issues, etc.
- Monitoring of sale and harvest including timber sale dispatch procedures, timber security, etc and all follow up work.

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good by having a forest entrance/road in place and a felling licence one can then sell timber immediately making the most of favourable market conditions. Many forest owners are now planning their harvest 5 years or more in advance. Under the new Forestry Act there is a revised Felling Licence application procedure which seeks additional information and is likely to take on to four months before a licence is granted after the application is submitted. This time period must be taken into account by growers in their planning.

In order to assist growers in the thinning, felling and the timber sale process, the Forest Service is now circulating the *Template Tree Sales Agreement* as drafted by the Irish Timber Growers Association (ITGA) to those in receipt of Felling Licences. *The Template Tree Sales Agreement* is a timber sales agreement/contract template for growers to adapt to their particular timber sale. It provides a sale agreement structured under various headings. It is always prudent to use a good contract and get professional advice before embarking on a timber sale. *The Template Tree Sales Agreement* is also available on www.itga.ie/downloads.asp

Timber is a valuable commodity and timber demand in Ireland has been reasonably strong recently despite the position in our main UK market with weaker sterling following the Brexit vote. In relation to timber prices, there is good information available from the ITGA and from Teagasc, amongst others. In 2015 the ITGA launched an expanded roundwood price information initiative called the Wood Price Quarterly (WPQ) which is now available to all growers on the www.itga.ie website and included in this Yearbook.

These initiatives will assist in keeping forest harvesting on track and others will be developed employing improved technology particularly around timber security, tracking in sales, implementing improved health & safety and better communications between growers and processors in tailoring products to market. Such developments will involve important future collaboration between different organisations and companies in the sector in which ITGA will play a leading role.

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