

Introduction

The Irish Timber Growers Association has been representing members for more than forty years. This is our 29th Yearbook and it continues to grow in value as the ‘go-to’ reference for the Irish Forest industry.

Forestry is wealth generating, environmentally friendly and a renewable resource, ideally suited to much of our land in Ireland. It has mitigation benefits in respect of climate change and offers a source of stable income for landowners on areas which are marginal for agriculture. Much of the focus of our membership is now turning to mobilisation of wood from their forests. The output from private forests is forecast to exceed that of the State sector by 2025 and ITGA are actively working to provide information and guidance to growers in planning this new phase in their forest management.

2018 will be the first full year for implementation of the Forestry Act 2014 which includes licencing provisions for some forest operations. New regulations can be complicated and take time to become established. ITGA are keen that they should not impose undue burdens on growers which could ultimately have undesirable consequences for achieving afforestation and other important industry targets.

Growers and regulators have a common aim to create and manage sustainable forests that contribute to the economy, the environment and our wider community. By working together regulators and organisations, such as ITGA, can achieve this aim.

An equally important issue in the coming year for timber growers and our industry will be developments relating to Brexit. As a country we currently export most of the forest sector output. The UK is the end market for 83% of those exports and the impact of Brexit will be significant for the sector and our members. ITGA are active participants in the All Ireland Sectoral Dialogue on Brexit and we will ensure that our members voice is heard in future critical developments.



*Brendan Lacey
Chairman
Irish Timber Growers Association*

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While these are headline issues, we do not lose sight of the importance of other policy and practical matters that impact on timber growers. Having a strong membership helps us to get our message across. We continue to represent members on issues such as research, climate change, forest policy and forest taxation and the Association is involved in the ongoing promotion of forestry. ITGA are active participants on many industry working groups such as the Land Mobility Working Group and the Hen Harrier Threat Response Plan Consultative Committee.

On wood mobilisation we participate in the COFORD Wood Mobilisation Working Group in addition to providing the ITGA Template Tree Sales Agreement and the Timber Sales Dispatch System to members. We provide price information to growers through the Wood Price Quarterly database, collated confidentially on our behalf by UCD. We regularly make submissions and participate in various important consultation processes. Among those in the past year have been the Climate Action Mitigation Plan, Forest Policy Review and the Forestry Programme Mid Term Review.

The ITGA *Forestry and Timber Yearbook* is the anchor for many of our other information services. Our Newsletters provide topical information to members throughout the year, our website www.itga.ie has experienced much increased traffic in addition to our ITGA Facebook page and in 2018 our field days will include topics such as group certification, harvesting, forest management and biodiversity in woodlands. Field days are an especially important opportunity for member feedback on issues of relevance as well as a practical learning experience and we look forward to your continued participation in our events and activities throughout 2018.



Brendan Lacey
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