

# Foreword

*The Forestry and Timber Yearbook* again provides a wealth of information for timber growers and foresters. Access to facts and figures on timber prices and taxation are essential reading for private timber producers. This is particularly the case as we see an increasing amount of timber coming onto the market from private sources. Indeed 2018 saw private timber production exceed the 1 million cubic metres mark for the first time. Total roundwood harvested reached its highest levels since records began with over 3.69 million cubic metres recorded in 2018. This is in line with projected forecasts which will increase significantly over the next 10 years.

Significant challenges still need to be overcome if we are to realise the full economic value of this resource, not just for the owners themselves but for rural communities more generally. During the year my Department continued to fund its Knowledge Transfer Group scheme with over 600 forest owners participating in 2018 and roughly the same again in 2019. The scheme provides an ideal platform for forest owners to learn from the experience of others and to plan for the future management of their valuable resource.

Last May, the Government declared a climate and biodiversity emergency which once again put the multifunctional benefits of forestry into sharp focus. It is not surprising therefore that forestry features so prominently in the recently launched Climate Action Plan with its potential for climate change mitigation and addressing biodiversity loss. This plan outlines a series of actions which includes increasing the level of afforestation to 8,000ha per annum and increasing the level of forest road construction to 125 kilometres by 2020.

I am fully aware of the delays in issuing licences for afforestation and felling. In July, I commissioned a comprehensive review of the Department's process and procedures on forestry applications and approvals similar to an exercise undertaken in Scotland. I expect this review will provide further opportunities to make the licensing process more efficient and effective.

To assist in the promotion of the multifunctional benefits of forestry, my Department is providing €830,000 in funding to 15 projects countrywide including a woodland festival in



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and the Marine with special  
responsibility for forestry*

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County Leitrim, open days for native woodland establishment, promotion of hardwood in the bio-economy and numerous school-based initiatives to teach school children about the importance of biodiversity, forests and climate change. Teagasc is actively promoting forestry through a substantial programme of educational and forestry events, including the introduction of a new forestry curriculum in agricultural colleges.

The Department's new Woodland Environmental Fund, which brings together the business community, Government and landowners in a collaborative effort to establish more native woodlands, is starting to gain traction. An Post and Accenture were the first businesses to get behind this new initiative with a combined commitment of almost 35 hectares. More announcements will be forthcoming in 2020.

I congratulate the ITGA on another excellent edition of the *Forestry and Timber Yearbook*, which has become an indispensable resource for forest owners and I look forward to working with all those involved in the sector again in 2020.



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