

# Forestry supports to remain in place for 2022

Forestry grants, premia and other support measures to be revised in 2022.

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Minister of State Senator Pippa Hackett announced "strong support for forestry with the allocation of over €100m" during a press briefing at Budget 2022. Forestry grants and premia will remain in place until a new programme is agreed between the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the forestry and forest products sector in 2022 so 2021 rates are provided in the following report. At the time of writing the sector and relevant stakeholders are contributing to Project Woodland which is addressing issues raised by Jo O'Hara's report on the implementation of the Mackinnon Review including forestry licences and barriers in achieving a viable afforestation programme.

Afforestation performance continues to fall with the likely outturn in 2021 to be approximately 2,300ha compared with 2,434ha in 2020. Afforestation licence applications and approvals have also dropped with approximately 1,000 licences in the system at the time of writing. At the completion of the six-year afforestation programme (2015-2020) 28,404ha were planted compared with a planting target of 46,045ha (Table 1).

*Table 1. Planting targets (ha) for afforestation and output 2015-2020*

SCHEME	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	TOTAL
Afforestation	5,700	6,300	6,475	6,700	6,925	7,450	39,550
Native woodland	500	500	500	500	500	500	3,000
Agroforestry	10	20	25	40	50	50	195
Energy/fibre	100	200	500	500	1,000	1,000	3,300
TOTAL	6,310	7,020	7,500	7,740	8,475	9,000	46,045
TOTAL ACHIEVED	6,293	6,500	5,536	4,025	3,550	2,434	28,338

Source: Adapted from Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (2015-20).

To achieve the Government's 8,000ha annual afforestation programme, approximately 40 licences would need to be issued each week by the Department based on 50% of applicants going ahead and planting in the medium term. Approximately 3,500 applications remain in the system for felling and roading.

The Department increased the number of personnel to deal with licences in 2021. "On licensing, we have significantly increased the resources in our forestry divisions," Brendan Gleeson, secretary general told the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine in September. "The number of ecologists has increased from one in 2018 to 27. The number of forestry inspectors has increased from 40 in 2020 to 61 now and we have a system that is capable of issuing more than 100 licences a week."

This output dropped in July and August when a new statutory instrument introduced by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in late June required the introduction of an additional 30-day consultation period between the completion of an appropriate assessment (AA) report and the issue of a final appropriate (AA) determination.

After this period licences began to flow again. There was an increase in licences issued during September with an average of 122 approved for felling and roading weekly but only 10 issued for afforestation.

It was accepted by the Department that the 4,500 licence approval target for 2021 would not be reached.

**Table 2: Afforestation grant rates (€/ha) for grant premium categories (GPCs) in Forestry Programme (2015-2020) to be extended throughout 2021.**

Grant / premium category (GPC)	1st Grant	2nd Grant	Fencing to IS436 standard	Total available funding
1 - Unenclosed	1605	535	600	2740
2 - Sitka spruce / lodgepole pine	2330	775	600	3705
3 - Conifers broadleaves	2410	805	600	3815
4 - Diverse conifer broadleaves	2785	925	600	4310
5 - Broadleaf	3960	1320	600	5880
6 - Oak	4215	1405	600	6220
7 - Beech	4215	1405	600	6220
8 - Alder	2695	900	600	4195
9 - Native Woodland Establishment (Scenarios 1-3)*	4215	1405	600	6220
10 - Native Woodland establishment (Scenario 4)**	3960	1320	600	5880
11 - Agro-forestry	4215	1405	600	6220
12 - Forestry for Fibre	2410	805	600	3815

\*Soils: podzols, brown podzolics and brown earths. \*\* Soils: brown earths.

New Scenario 5 in GPC 9 or 10.

Source: Adapted by D. Magner from Dept. Agriculture, Food & Marine, 2020.

**Table 3: Annual afforestation premiums (€/ha) for grant premium categories (GPCs) in Forestry Programme (2015-2020) to be extended throughout 2021.**

Grant / premium category (GPC)	Revised rates <10ha	Revised rates >10ha	Number of years
1 - Unenclosed	185	190	15
2 - Sitka spruce / lodgepole pine	440	450	15
3 - Diverse conifer/broadleaf	510	520	15
4 - Diverse conifers	590	600	15
5 - Broadleaf	605	620	15
6 & 7 - Oak, beech	645	660	15
8 - Alder	605	620	15
9 & 10 - Native Woodland Establishment schemes	665	680	15
11 - Agro-forestry	645	660	5
12 - Forestry for Fibre	510	520	15

Source: Adapted by D. Magner from Dept. Agriculture, Food & Marine, 2020.



*The minimum area of grant aided afforestation in Ireland is 0.1ha for broadleaves and 1.0ha for conifers.*

The following measures in the forestry programme will apply until a new programme is announced. The information when it is agreed will be featured in the ITGA newsletter and next years yearbook. We feature key measures from the forestry programme.

**MEASURE 1: AFFORESTATION AND CREATION OF WOODLANDS**

The Afforestation Grant and Premium Schemes in 2020 will continue throughout 2022. Details on the grants and premia are provided in Tables 1 and 2 (page 56). The afforestation premium period is 15 years with the exception of agro-forestry. The minimum area eligible for planting is 0.1ha for broadleaves and 1ha for conifers.

The minimum mandatory broadleaf requirement is 15% while the Grant and Premium Categories (GPCs) remain as in 2021. These are:

**GPC 1 – Unenclosed/Unimproved land**

Typically comprises upland sites and marginal soils. The amount of unenclosed land in any application for financial approval cannot exceed 20% of the total area. The ITGA along with the IFA and forestry companies wish to review this requirement as recommended by the Mackinnon Review

**GPC 2 – Sitka spruce/lodgepole pine**

Does not comply with scheme requirements in isolation and can only be approved as a component of a larger project comprising other GPCs.

**GPC 3 – 15% Diverse Conifer/Broadleaf**

Comprises a mix of Sitka spruce/lodgepole pine together with at least 15% diverse conifer while broadleaves adjacent to roads and watercourses may also form part of this 15%.

**GPC 4 – Diverse Conifers**

Acceptable conifer species, other than Sitka spruce and lodgepole pine including Norway spruce, Scots pine and Douglas fir.

**GPC 5 – Broadleaves**

Acceptable broadleaf species – other than oak and beech – including, sweet chestnut, sycamore and maple .

**GPC 6 – Oak**

Pure oak, however nurse species may be planted where additional shelter required.



Pure alder or improved birch (above) with up to 10% of other species for diversity can be used for GPC 8.

**GPC 7 – Beech**

Pure beech, however nurse species may be planted where additional shelter required.

**GPC 8 – Alder/birch**

Pure alder or improved birch with up to 10% of other species for diversity.

**GPC 9 and GPC 10 – Native Woodland Establishment**

This category supports the establishment of new native woodlands on ‘green field’ sites with focus on native species, minimal site disturbance and long-term ‘close-to-nature’ management (see Native Woodland Scheme page 62). It provides opportunities for planting in environmentally sensitive areas.

**GPC 11 – Agroforestry**

Silvopastoral agroforestry is a combination of trees and pasture where silage and hay production and sheep grazing are also permitted. Review may consider extending five-year premium period.

**GPC 12 – Forestry for Fibre**

This scheme supports fast-growing tree species to produce wood biomass yields in the region of 150-300 m<sup>3</sup>/ha over 10 to 15 years.

**MEASURE 2: NEIGHBOURWOOD SCHEME**

- The scheme will be open to applications throughout the year.
- Increase allocation will be made available to reflect the scale of works being undertaken within individual projects under this scheme.

**MEASURE 3: FOREST ROAD**

- Rates: €35 to €40/m.
- €5,000 available for special construction works and in some circumstances a further €800 per application provided for forest entrance.

**MEASURE 4: RECONSTITUTION**

The objective of this scheme is to restore the forest to its original form following significant damage by natural causes but excluding damage caused by fire. Natural causes eligible for funding include damage associated with frost, drought, diseases, deer, grey squirrel and vole. (see also ash RUS, page 40)



Due to delays in receiving approval for roading licences, it is advised to forward applications at least a year in advance of road construction.

## THE NATIVE WOODLAND SCHEME (NWS)

The purpose of the NWS is to identify the most appropriate native woodland type to promote onsite. The NWS forester and ecologist, appraise the site in terms of its location, soil, main habitats and vegetation, and matches it to one of the following five scenarios named after the basic soil type:

- Scenario 1: Podzols  
Oak-birch-holly woodland
- Scenario 2: Brown podzolics  
Oak-birch-holly with hazel woodland
- Scenario 3: Brown Earths  
Oak-ash-hazel woodland
- Scenario 4: Gleys  
Alder-oak-ash woodland
- Scenario 5: Highly modified peat and peaty podzols  
Pioneer birch woodland

The framework then identifies the associated woodland type and the relevant tree species mix and planting pattern to promote it, either through afforestation, (under NWS Establishment), or restoration planting or reforestation (both under NWS Conservation).

## GRANT RATES FOR RUS

Grant rates are as follows at appropriate GPC:

- Reconstitution – site clearance @ €1,000/ha cleared.
- Underplanting – site clearance @ €1,000/ha while underplanting grant paid at up to 60%, based on replanting up to 50% of the infected crop.

## MEASURE 5: WOODLAND IMPROVEMENT SCHEME (WIS)

- The WIS scheme is open to non grant aided broadleaf forests and all broadleaved mixtures that meet the required eligibility criteria.
- All broadleaved forests, including mixtures are eligible for 2nd thinning grants of €500/ha.

### Support for Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF)

The CCF element of WIS is open to conifer, mixed and broadleaf forests. Successful applicants are eligible for three WIS payments (€750) for three separate interventions under the WIS scheme over a period of 12 years,

The work needs to be in line with the approved transformation to CCF plan.

## MEASURE 6: NATIVE WOODLAND CONSERVATION

- Grant available under the Public High Forest category to that of the Private High Forest.
- Allow access to forest fencing and tree shelter scheme.
- Fencing allowances available under the Afforestation Grant & Premium Scheme also apply to NWS Conservation.

## MEASURE 7: KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND INFORMATION ACTIONS

A national scheme for Forestry Knowledge Transfer Groups (KTGs) was introduced in 2018, focusing on the mobilisation of timber and biomass.

The KTGs are designed to recruit up to 1,000 participants to attend forestry field days, classes and demonstrations. KPIs are likely to take place in 2021 subject to Covid-19 guidelines.

## RECONSTITUTION AND UNDERPLANTING SCHEME (RUS) (for ash dieback)

The RUS was introduced "to encourage the active management of ash plantations control and spread of ash dieback disease". As ash plantations are dead or dying, the main objective is to introduce an alternative species. Most ash plantation owners have not engaged with the RUS as it provides no compensation for loss of plantations. Producer groups, the IFA and Oireachtas Committee have called for an introduction of a premium scheme to compensate ash plantation owners.