

Foreword

I welcome this year's edition of the *Forestry and Timber Yearbook* and commend the Irish Timber Growers Association on once again providing this excellent resource for the forest sector and beyond.

This year I am very pleased to note that, following an extensive period of engagement and consultation, we have published a Shared National Vision for Trees, Woods and Forests in Ireland until 2050. This comprehensive engagement throughout 2022 included a public attitudes survey, a citizens' assembly deliberative dialogue event, an online survey with more than 3,000 responses received, and a series of bilateral discussions between my Department and a wide range of stakeholders.

This Shared National Vision is ambitious and calls for an expansion of multi-functional and diverse forests, delivering multiple benefits for climate, nature, water quality, wood production, people, the wider economy and rural communities. The overarching statement of this Vision is 'The right trees in the right places for the right reasons with the right management, supporting a sustainable and thriving economy and society and a healthy environment.'

The Forest Strategy for Ireland to 2030 provides an overarching framework that identifies the actions needed to implement the change required if we are to deliver on the Shared National Vision, and it is underpinned by a new Forestry Programme for the period of 2023-2027. The new Forestry Programme will allow us to deliver on our ambitions to expand Ireland's forest estate and to increase the role of forestry in addressing the climate and biodiversity crises.

Significantly increased afforestation is a strong priority for Government, and a key policy measure by which we can help to meet our obligations under the Climate Action Plan. Government's commitment to forestry is demonstrated by the allocation of €1.318 billion to the next Forestry Programme, making this the biggest and best-funded Forestry Programme in the history of the State.

As we know, the national forest estate is an important store for carbon, estimated at over 312 million tonnes, and planting new forests is an excellent way to remove carbon dioxide



*Senator Pippa Hackett
Minister of State with
responsibility for Land Use,
Biodiversity and Forestry*

“
Government's
commitment to
forestry is
demonstrated by
the allocation of
€1.318 billion to
the next Forestry
Programme,
making this the
biggest and best-
funded Forestry
Programme in the
history of the
State.
”

“

In addition to increased planting for softwoods, the new Forestry Programme will deliver a considerable expansion of our native woodlands, helping us to meet our biodiversity goals.

”


from the atmosphere. Our existing forests and the timber that they produce will also lock up carbon in our buildings when we use wood in place of concrete and steel.

However, in order to increase tree planting, and the sustainable management of our forests and woodlands, forestry must be viewed as a viable option by landowners. Under the new Forestry Programme, annual premium rates have been increased by between 46% and 66%, and I am confident that these increases will attract the interest we need to see in our new afforestation schemes in order to reverse recent trends away from tree planting.

In addition to increased planting for softwoods, the new Forestry Programme will deliver a considerable expansion of our native woodlands, helping us to meet our biodiversity goals. The new Forestry Programme provides a new Forests for Water measure, which will encourage closer to nature forestry, as well as an expanded Continuous Cover Forestry initiative.

We will incentivise forest owners to deliver enhanced ecosystem services, and we will encourage reforestation that encompasses rich species diversity. Forest certification is also important for forest owners, and we will continue to explore initiatives that can increase uptake particularly in the private forest estate.

While we have encountered many challenges over the last few years in licensing, it is important to acknowledge that we have made significant progress, while recognising the need to continue our efforts in this area. This is an exciting time for Irish forestry, and I am confident that the new Forestry Programme will be a significant step on the road towards realising our ambitions under the Shared National Vision for Trees, Woods and Forests in Ireland until 2050.



Senator Pippa Hackett
The Minister of State with
responsibility for Land Use, Biodiversity and Forestry