

Introduction

Welcome to the 2023 edition of the *Irish Timber Growers Association Forestry and Timber Yearbook*.

We are excited about two particularly important developments for the sector, the issuing of the consultation draft Forest Strategy and Implementation Plan for Irish Forestry and the announcement of proposed grant and premium rates for the afforestation schemes under the new Forestry Programme (2023-2027).

These initiatives represent opportunities for timber growers, particularly recognising the important role of forestry in achieving Ireland's climate change mitigation plan objectives. The strategy and implementation plan are ambitious but much still has to be done if it is to be achievable.

The licencing process for forestry activities remains an impediment to achieving our forestry targets nationally and practical structures and payments need to be introduced to compensate growers for the real contribution they are making to our environment and for wider ecosystem services.

Forestry is a long term commitment for land owners. It requires confidence in the industry to make the permanent commitment of resources to the sector. This includes confidence that a secure income can be achieved not just in the short to medium term but also for generations to come. While the long term benefits of forestry have been demonstrated historically, short term timber markets can be volatile. A flexible and practical regulatory framework would greatly support growers and give them the confidence to commit their land to growing trees. Recently, long delays for felling licences have meant many growers have lost beneficial opportunities to sell timber and replant forests when timber demand was at its peak.

ITGA has joined other industry representatives in calling for a forestry development agency. We believe this would be best placed to stimulate a resurgence in planting rates to dovetail with the new forestry programme and strategy. Promoting forestry is not just about planting and management but also ensuring its use as a sustainable building material, which has such potential to lock in carbon in long



*Brendan Lacey
Chairman
Irish Timber Growers Association*

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life forest products, while also displacing more fossil fuel and carbon intensive construction.

We are pleased to present several informative articles in this edition of the *Irish Timber and Forestry Yearbook* focusing on the role of forests for climate and the environment. We also include details of the proposed new grants and premia under the Forest Strategy implementation plan. This ambitious plan could be enhanced further by introducing a credible carbon trading mechanism for Irish forest owners.

Forest Certification is also a key development need for private forest owners in Ireland. ITGA believes the introduction of a national framework for forest certification would support the sector in achieving its full potential for the Irish economy and maximise the use of sustainable Irish timber in long term forest products.

Having completed a full year of activity in 2022, following the curtailment during the height of the Covid pandemic, we look forward to another year of informative events and publications for our members and the wider public and forestry community. Through sharing information and experience we advocate for a thriving forest sector.

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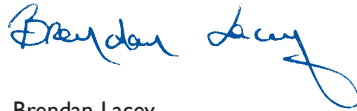
As private forest output increases substantially we call for renewed support for the production of timber price information. This depends on all timber growers contributions to the timber price quarterly managed independently by roundwooddatabase@ucd.ie. Unfortunately, there has not been a sufficient number of contributions in recent quarters to maintain this information service but it will be vital information for the industry as more of our forest resource matures in the coming years. This information also supports confidence in the sector for those new to forestry as the forest strategy implementation plan rolls out.

ITGA is grateful for the support it receives for the publication of this yearbook ranging from contributors, the editorial team, sponsors and advertisers. We are very grateful for the support we have received from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and thanks also to Minister Pippa Hackett for her foreword in this publication.

I would like to thank Mechteld Schuller, our executive secretary, who not only managed the administration of ITGA during a challenging period but has also become a significant contributor to several field days and events, particularly in relation to forest certification and Donal Whelan for his work and ongoing commitment as technical director of the association. I would also like to thank Donal Magner, Editor of our yearbook, and the entire production team of Ben and Gail Quinn, Gino Forte, Donal and Mechteld for maintaining the quality of information and presentation of this publication.

We greatly appreciate the support of the ITGA Committee members during the year and our field day hosts who gave so generously of their time, shared their experiences and perspectives on what forestry in 21st century Ireland entails.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as we can in the course of an active and eventful 2023.



Brendan Lacey
Chairman
Irish Timber Growers Association