

# Farm Forestry Booklet

Options & Supports

## Forestry Programme 2023 – 2027

Sow the Future, Reap the Benefits:  
Farm Forestry for Sustainable Growth



# Introduction

Welcome to ACA's Farm Forestry booklet. The Agricultural Consultants Association (ACA) proudly represents the private agricultural consultants and advisors in Ireland, a nation known for its vibrant and agriculturally rich landscape. With approximately 185 member offices spanning the country, our organisation boasts a team of 280 dedicated Agricultural, Environmental, and Forestry agricultural consultants, supported by an additional 200 administrative and technical staff members and growing. Our enduring mission is to provide steadfast support and guidance to the agricultural sector, a mission reinforced by our impressive numbers.

According to data from the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (DAFM), ACA members extend their advisory services to over 55,000 farmers across the country, participating in a variety of programs and schemes. In the ever-evolving realm of Irish agriculture, we have been an important pillar of support to farmers, expertly navigating the complex terrain of policies, practices, and sustainability objectives. Our commitment to driving positive transformation in the agricultural sector remains unwavering.

With the dawn of the Forestry Programme 2023-2027, our primary objective is to urgently expand the national forest estate, encompassing both public and private lands, in a manner that will usher in lasting benefits for climate change, biodiversity, water quality, wood production, economic development, employment, and the overall quality of life. All of this is in alignment with the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) programme. This ambition involves introducing a revised framework tailored for the implementation of the Forest Strategy and the new Forestry Programme.

This progressive programme signifies a leap towards diverse, multifunctional forests that fortify the economic viability of rural communities, safeguard the environment, and demonstrate resilience in the face of climate change. It provides incentives to encourage all landowners to engage in tree planting and management practices that improve and safeguard our environment. The greater the ambition in terms of delivering these ecosystem services, the greater the reward. The drive to harness Ireland's afforestation potential to fulfill national emission reduction obligations while boosting incomes across various farming systems lies at the heart of this initiative.

At ACA, we take pride in our expanding role as the largest farm advisory body in Ireland, with expectations of our farmer client numbers within our network exceeding 60,000 by year-end. As our industry continues to thrive, it is imperative that we equip our members with the knowledge and tools necessary to meet the challenges and objectives of the agricultural sector. We recognise the need for behavioural change and the adoption of sustainable farm practices among Irish farmers to align with government policies and climate change objectives. The unique and enduring relationships between private farm advisory services and their farmer clients, some lasting over 30 years, underscore the significance of our role in realising these objectives.

Sustaining and resourcing forestry programmes is critical to ensure a continued positive contribution throughout the next CAP programme. ACA's contribution, along with our extensive network of farmer clients, plays a pivotal role in the agricultural industry. Our commitment to the realisation of the Common Agricultural Policy from 2023, the Irish government's Climate Action Plan, and other sectoral policies reinforces our significant role in shaping the future of Irish agriculture. Together, we stand poised to lead the way in achieving a sustainable, prosperous, and resilient agricultural future for Ireland.

Before we explore ACA's Farm Forestry booklet, we must express our sincere gratitude to our forestry members Marina Conway and Paddy Bruton for crafting this resource and making this booklet an essential guide for anyone interested in forestry. With appreciation for their commitment, let's delve into the contents of this booklet, enriched by their contributions.



## Ireland's Forest Industry

Ireland has a mild, maritime climate which is ideally suited to growing trees. There are currently 24,000 forest owners who have planted trees in Ireland.

Forests clean the air we breathe, protect our soils and water and increase biodiversity by providing habitats for birds, animals and insects. In addition, forests tackle climate change by sequestering carbon from the atmosphere.



**24,000**

Irish forest owners  
planted trees



**2 billion**

to the Irish  
economy annually

Irish forests support over 9,000 jobs and contributes over €2 billion to the Irish economy annually.



# Irish Forestry Fact Sheet



**2030**

reducing carbon mission by half



**11.6%**

forest cover in Ireland



**1.3 billion**

committed by government to Irish Forestry for 2023 - 2027



**690,000 ha**

planted in 100 years

**The forest estate is comprised of 70% conifer and 30% broadleaf**

There are over 20 million recreational visits to Irish forests every year



## Commitment

Government has committed €1.3 billion to Irish Forestry for 2023 - 2027



## National Afforestation

National afforestation policy has been a great success, with 690,000 hectares planted in 100 years 1922 -2022, reaching 11.6% of the total land area, the largest land-use change since the foundation of the state



## Climate Action Plan

The Climate Action plan identifies afforestation as the single largest land based mitigation measure available and sets a roadmap for halving carbon emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero no later than 2050. In order to do this, we need:

- o Area of land under forest to increase to 18% of the total land area
- o Afforestation rates need to be 18,000 hectares per year to achieve 18% land cover
- o The further this target is missed the greater the need will be to deliver reductions from other sources, including agriculture



## Private Ownership

Over half of the total forest area is in private ownership



## Lowest in the EU

At 11.6% forest cover, Ireland is one of the lowest in the EU 27, where the average forest cover is 38%; worldwide forest cover is 31%



Approximately 80% of forest products produced in Ireland are exported, key markets include the UK, Germany and the Benelux countries.

Over the period 2021 to 2035, roundwood production from Irish forests is forecast to increase from 4.7 million cubic meters to 7.9 million cubic meters, almost all this increase will be from the private sector, **mainly farmers.**



# Forestry Programme 2023 – 2027

Ireland's forests produce enough wood to build over 45,000 homes per year, and this figure is growing

## Forestry Programme 2023 – 2027

The Forestry Programme is the main vehicle that the Department uses to encourage the establishment and sustainable management of our forests. There are supports for the creation of new forests, and support for the management and replanting of existing forests.

### Afforestation (New Planting)

There are 11 different Forest Types that can be planted by farmers under the new Forestry Programme. The farmer premium duration has been increased to 20 years (15 years for non-farmer). The Afforestation Grant Scheme (AGS) includes an establishment and fencing grant as well as an annual premium payment.

### Afforestation Grant Scheme Forest Types & Forest Premium Rates

	Forest Type (FT)	Annual Forestry Premium/Ha	Farmer premium Duration Years
FT1	Native Forests	€1,103	20
FT2	Forests for Water*	€1,142	20
FT3	Forests on Public Lands	N/A	N/A
FT4	Neighbour Woods**	€1,142	20
FT5	Emergent Forest	€350	20
FT6	Broadleaves (Oak/Beech)	€1,037	20
FT7	Other Broadleaves	€973	20
FT8	Agroforestry Silvopastoral (Trees & animals)	€975	10
	Silvoarable (Trees & Crops)	€829	10
	Forest Gardening	€829	10
FT9	Seed Orchards	€1,142	20
FT10	Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF)	€912	20
FT11	Mixed Conifers	€863	20
FT12	Sitka spruce	€746	20

\* Additional payment of €1,000 per ha will be paid to landowner on completion of planting

\*\* Grant includes Trails, Seats & Signage Facilities payment

# Forestry Programme 2023 – 2027

## Definition of a Farmer

Applicants that pass the Active Farmer check and submit a Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS) application in the forestry application year and submitted a BISS or Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) application in the previous 4 years will be considered a farmer.

New and young farmers will only need to be in BISS or BPS from the year they were approved to either the Young Farmer schemes or the National Reserve schemes.

Applicants of inherited or planned inheritance (gifted) land, will benefit from succession/inheritance rules relating to immediate family members and will be able to fulfil the farmer qualifying criteria.

## Native Tree Area Scheme (NTA)

The Native tree Area Scheme (NTA) is for the creation of small native woodlands up to 1ha in size on farms. The NTA scheme does not require an afforestation licence and approval into the scheme is via direct entry as per other agri-environmental schemes. There is an establishment grant and a forestry premium payment for ten years. There are two types of forest that can be established under the scheme and payment is for ten years (a maximum of 1 ha of either NTA 1 or NTA 2, max 2ha in total):

	Forest Type (FT)	Annual Forestry Premium/Ha	Farmer premium Duration Years
NTA1	Native Forests on Farms	€2,206	10
NTA2	Native Forests for Water Protection	€2,284	10



Photo credit: Marina Conway



# Additional Afforestation Grant Supports

You can avail of additional grant support towards the planting of your land, namely:

## Woodland Environmental Fund (WEF)

The WEF offers some landowners the possibility of an additional €1,000 per hectare as an incentive to plant Native Forests. This once off payment is paid following satisfactory completion of the planting and is a top up to the €1,103 per hectare annual forest premium payable for native forests under FTI.

## Environmental Report Grant (ERG)

Grant aid is available to support the cost of additional environmental reports, where required with afforestation licence applications. This is paid following satisfactory completion of the planting. The grant rates per application are

 **€450** per ha for first ha

 **€400** for second ha

 **€350** for third ha

 **€50** per ha for subsequent hectares to a maximum of 20 hectares



## Farm Forestry Case Study

Presenting compelling case studies featuring two of our esteemed farmer clients. Their journey demonstrates the positive effects of sustainable forestry. They've nurtured thriving forests, bolstered biodiversity, and balanced responsible forestry with expert guidance, enhancing their economic prospects and environmental stewardship. Their stories inspire sustainable agriculture's potential to benefit landowners and the environment.



### **Basil Henry Grange, Co. Sligo**

I farm part time with my son Ross on approximately 75 acres of owned and rented ground in Grange Co. Sligo. The land type in this area is very variable ranging from free draining brown earth to higher elevated poor draining podzol type ground. We run a flock of Texel cross commercial ewes alongside a flock of pure-bred Texel ewes (Benview Texels) and dry cattle. Our aim here on the farm is to produce high quality livestock which will attract premium prices at specialised mart sales and in the factory.

This was one of the main reasons why we decided to plant the less fertile part of our farm because we were not satisfied with the weight gains been achieved on the higher ground and it was costing us money each year to try and control the weeds and furze on this land parcel. And so I planted 13 acres in 2012 with Sitka spruce, Larch, Birch and Rowan. We now receive our annual forest premium each spring and still claim our BISS (entitlements) on it as well so it is now viewed as a productive part of the farm again and an investment for our future.

The whole planting process was straight forward with the local Forester taking care of the application process, planting and maintenance and the trees are doing a lot better on this ground than my sheep ever did. As a forest owner now for 10 years we have found the whole experience very positive to date and we have a income tax free pension pot to look forward to in 30 years.

"The trees are doing a lot better on this ground than my sheep ever did."

## Farm Forestry Case Study



### **Fintan Rice, Fethard, Co. Tipperary**

I farm with my wife Valerie and son Louis in Fethard, Co. Tipperary. I commenced farming in 1982 and I am the 3rd generation to farm this land. The farming enterprise I took over from my father in 1996 was dairy, beef and tillage. In 1997, I converted the total farm, 185 acres to organic farming. This was not common at that time, but I made my decision based on future environmental and biodiversity concerns.

In 2000, 30 acres were planted with Ash & Sycamore with a further 45 acres planted in phases over 5 years (Ash, Sycamore, Oak and Alder). 110 acres remained in an organic dairy farming system. I decided to plant a further 30 acres in 2023 under the native woodland scheme with more being considered over the coming years. I also availed of the Woodland Environmental Fund for the 30 acres. This provides a once off €1,000 per ha in addition to the annual income tax free forest premium of €1,103 per Ha per year for 20 years. I continue to receive my BISS and retain ownership of the land. All forest establishment was undertaken without herbicide or fertiliser.

Unfortunately, the Ash is infected by Ash dieback. We are going to replace this crop with other broadleaf species under the Reconstitution scheme. Thankfully, we planted a variety of species and only a portion of my forestry is impacted by this deadly disease.

My decision to plant broadleaves was not based solely on the annual forest premium. The environmentally beneficial impact of broadleaf woodland was the main factor in the decision to plant.

"I made my decision based on future environmental and biodiversity concerns."

# Grant Support for Existing Forests

## Forest Roads

The COFORD All Ireland Roundwood production forecast projects the roundwood supply will increase from 4.7 million cubic meters in 2021 to 7.9 million cubic meters by 2035. Mobilising this increased volume will require the construction of forest roads.

Forest road construction is subject to a licence from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). Grant aid for forest road construction of up to 100% of eligible costs is available subject to the following maximum amounts:

# Grant Support for Existing Forests

## Forest road Grant

Category	Max Rate €/Linear metre (Excl vat)	Max Density (Metre/Ha)
Harvesting road	€55	25
Harvesting upgrade or extension	€40	variable
Special construction works	Up to €10,000 per project	Up to €10,000 per project
Ecologically Enhanced Forest Roads	€1,000 per project	€1,000 per project
Engineering Design Support Measure	€1,000 per project	€1,000 per project
Temporary Road Access Solution Measure	€10,000 per project	€10,000 per project

DAFM are the single consent authority for forest road applications where the forest road requires a new entrance onto a public road, other than a national road.

Forest roads provide additional biodiversity opportunities by increasing the amount of open space and forest edge, providing wildlife corridors and connectivity between habitats.

## Reconstitution of Woodland Scheme

This scheme is to assist and support forest owners in restoring forests following significant damage by natural causes such as storms, frost and disease. For example, forest owners impacted by Ash dieback can apply for grant aid under the Reconstitution of woodland scheme.

Operations eligible for grant aid include:

- The removal and destruction of diseased trees
- Ground preparation
- Replacement trees
- Planting
- Vegetation control for up to 4 years
- Tree shaping
- Creation of firebreaks and reservoirs
- Other operations approved in advance

# Grant Support for Existing Forests

## Woodland Improvement Scheme

This scheme provides support to forest owners to sustainably manage their forests. The primary objective is to offer forest owners a range of schemes to manage their forest sustainably to increase the delivery of ecosystem services, biodiversity, regenerating capacity and vitality. The following table outlines the different funding options available:

Woodland Improvement Measure	Number of payments	Max Grant per Ha	Premium payment per Ha	Number premium years
Thinning, Tending and Agroforestry Maintenance	2	€1,200	N/A	N/A
Continuous Cover Forestry	3	€1,200	€150	7
Coppice and Coppice with Standards	1	€1,200	N/A	N/A
Seed Stand Management	1	€1,200	€500	7

## Native Woodland Conservation Scheme

The aim of NW Conservation is to promote and support the appropriate restoration of existing native woodlands and associated biodiversity and the conversion, where appropriate, of existing non-native forests to native woodlands. NW Conservation protects our rare native woodland habitats that are often found on farms. Its emphasis is on minimal site disturbance, species selection based on the most appropriate native woodland type, the use of native planting stock, protection of watercourses and aquatic habitats and long-term 'close-to-nature' management. Support is provided in the form of cost-based grant payment.

Forest Scheme	Grant / Ha	Forest Premium / Ha	Duration years
Native Woodland Conservation	Up to €6,000	€500	7

# Grant Support for Existing Forests

## Climate Resilient Reforestation

Climate resilient reforestation is support for existing forest owners who wish to replant (reforest) their forest under permanent forest cover. The grant aid per hectare is a “Top up” grant towards additional reforestation costs or in the case of high ecological priority areas a full grant. They also attract a forest premium and ecosystem services payment per hectare for 7 years.

The different reforestation types will depend on the suitability of land to support different forest types as well as environmental sensitivities. The different forest types and grant support are being piloted as follows:

Forest Type	Grant per Ha	Forest Premium	Duration Years
Reforestation Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF)	€1,800	€150	7
Reforestation Native woodland - High ecological priority area	€6,000	€500 + €150	7
Reforestation Native Woodland	€2,225	€500 + €150	7
Reforestation for Water	€2,500	€350	7



# Grant Support for Existing Forests

## Forestry Knowledge Transfer Groups (KTGs)

The aim of the KTGs scheme is to increase peer to peer learning and knowledge about all aspects of the forest sector amongst private forest owners. Groups comprise a maximum of 20 participants who meet seven times in both indoor and outdoor events. The groups are typically facilitated by a professional forester. Each participant receives €80 per meeting to attend the KTGs.



# Environmental & Biodiversity benefits of forests

Irish Forests - Water & Carbon. Marina Conway, M Agr Sc (Forestry), MSIF

Forests and woodlands have a close relationship with our water resources. It is widely recognised that sustainably managed forests play an important role in maintaining water quality through the stabilisation of soil.

Woodlands protect our rivers and lakes by trapping sediments and pollutants from other land use activities. In Europe some 96 million hectares of forests are designated for the protection of soil and water alone.

Forests also have an important role in water availability. They influence the amount of available water by intercepting precipitation, evaporating moisture from land, soil moisture transpiration, capturing fog water and maintaining soil infiltration.

This important role of forests and water is recognised in FT2 – Forests for Water which is to create new native forests in strategic locations (e.g. ASSAP/LAWPRO areas) where this land use change would deliver specific ecosystem services regarding the protection of water and aquatic zones. This attracts an additional once off payment of €1,000/ha from DAFM in addition to the €1,142/ha annual forest premium.

**The national forest estate is an important and expanding sink for carbon, with some 317 million tonnes of carbon stored**

The planting of new forests is one of the most important land-based measures to help address the effects of climate change. Forests sequester (store) carbon by capturing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and transforming it into biomass through photosynthesis.

The national forest estate is an important and expanding sink for carbon, at 317 million tonnes. Ireland's forests have removed 2.8 to 4.8 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per year over the period 2006 to 2016. It is estimated by DAFM that conifer forests have a mean annual sequestration rate of 6.9 tonnes of carbon dioxide per hectare and 2.3 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents per hectare for the broadleaf forests.

# Environmental and Biodiversity Benefits of Forests

## Biodiversity in Irish forests. Fergal Scully, MSc., B.Sc. CIEEM

Ireland's natural woodlands which covered the majority of Ireland, developed in the millennia after the island's last glaciers melted away. The tree species found in these original woodlands colonised Ireland naturally and are today referred to as native tree species. Woodland clearance drastically reduced Ireland's native woodland resource, as these woodlands were lost so were the plants, insects and animals that relied upon them.

The biodiversity value of Ireland's native woodlands are well recognised, they provide food and habitat for hundreds of organisms. Planting of 'native woodland', which is composed of native Irish tree species, has become a popular option among landowners. With proper management, these new native woodlands will provide an important habitat for many woodland species into the future.

Conifer plantations constitute approximately 70% of Ireland's total forest area. Species richness in conifer plantations can be high, the dominant tree species in these plantations differs from native woodlands and so do the species the habitat supports. Conifer forests represent an important opportunity to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Areas for biodiversity enhancement are included within conifer forests, these areas include open space and retained habitats such as hedgerows. The provision of biodiversity is an integral component of Irish forests.



Elder (Sambucus nigra)



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