



Draft Forestry Programme 2014 – 2020

Consultation Process

Wicklow Private Woodland Owners Group (WPWOG) Submission

13th October 2014

Background

2005. 12,000ha planted. 85% private owners

2010 - 2013. Less than 6,500ha p/a planted

2013. 18.5k ha approved for planting – limited go ahead. Budgetary constraints.

Land availability stated to be an issue (Coford) however level of applications don't support this.

National target new planting: 10k ha 2015 and 15k ha 2016. Draft Forestry plan indicates target 18% cover by 2046.

- To meet Ireland's sustainability criteria and climate change targets critical to meet afforestation of 15k ha p/a
- 2020 government projections biomass supply of 4 million green tonnes. Requires 15k ha annual planting (for 20 years). Currently meeting less than 50%. (Coford)
- Government policy *Growing for the Future* (1996) to achieve 17% cover by 2020, 18% by 2046. Requires planting 20 – 25k ha p/a to reach 17% national cover by 2020.
- **Draft Forestry Programme 2014 - 2020 plan**
 - All present new forests now planted by private owners – 100% grant driven
 - Budget allocation €110m can only support 6.5h ha p/a new planting
 - Question: How to square the circle?
 - Answer:
 - Allocate more funds from Exchequer
 - National Forestry Bond Issue
 - Other?

Draft Proposals

Positives

- Acknowledgement of importance of Producer Groups
- Knowledge Transfer Groups promoted and funding proposed
- Financial support indicated for Producer Groups and KTGs

Challenges

- Need substantial increase in budget to meet national planting targets 18% forest cover by 2046.
- Limited total planting targets in Plan 6,310ha in 2015 rising to 9,000ha in 2020
- No reasonable land owner would / should participate in short term programmes (Agro – Forestry and Forestry for Fibre) which freeze their land for forestry in perpetuity
- Obligation to replant in forestry post clear-fell a real inhibitor to new afforestation. Un-necessary – since most planted land unlikely to revert to mainline agriculture due to demographics and cost of restoration
- Considerable amount of land excluded from afforestation - regulatory designations (SPAs, Hen Harrier, National Park), restrictive elevation guidelines (should be re-considered)
- Reduction to 15 year premium a dis-incentive to planting.
- Big challenge for many is how to replace premium income in period between end of premium and clearfell. 20 – 25 years. Periodic thin income relatively insignificant.
- Taxation changes negative

PART 1.

Producer Groups and KTGs

The Draft Forestry Plan proposal to support the establishment of Producer Groups and engaging accredited facilitators is most welcome. The proposals for KTGs is also welcome and should be an integral part of Producer Groups responsibilities

An effective and efficient delivery mechanism would involve a 3 way process

- Producer Group funded to engage Facilitator
- Facilitator delivers programme as agreed with Producer Group
- KTGs controlled by Producer Groups and organised / administered by Facilitator

Producer Groups – suggestions

Plan states that only new groups supported – should be changed to include ALL groups

Arguments to support funding existing groups

- Already established in counties with substantial private forestry

- Effectively involving owners to engage with their forestry business (often for first time)
- Strong commitment to capacity building of private owners
- Forestry companies driven by own commercial objectives. Growth of mis-trust
- Makes sense to support what is seen to be working
- Groups have built up a level of experience and a membership base
- Readiness to organise and commercialise activities
- Legal structures in place
- Urgency to mobilise group/cluster thinning of 18 + year private plantations
- As plantations reach thinning stage evidence of increased demand for information and training.
- Recognised weakness among owners on marketing and selling timber
- Challenge for Groups to develop scale for commercial sustainability
- Low initial fee income possibilities for Group for thinning services due to low value of thinnings
- Need kick start funding to build up to commercial sustainability
- The programme required is incapable of being provided by voluntary effort alone
- Producer Group model central plank of European forestry
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Role of Producer Groups (as modelled on WPWOG agreement for LEADER funding)

- Engage Animator (Facilitator)
- Promote cooperation within timber sector while facilitating growers to add value to their primary produce by developing appropriate supply chains
- Increase the amount of private timber brought to market
- Encourage the development of ancillary businesses and provide a link between potential funders and prospective promoters
- Assist owners to explore options for tourism and recreation opportunities
- Identify training needs amongst the sector and to co-ordinate, with a separately funded training programme, for the delivery of identified needs (KTGs),
- Actively engage with stakeholders through public events, information days, local and individual meetings
- Generate a database of forest owners and service providers
- Facilitate the transition of private grower groups from discussion group to a legal entity in a position to effectively market and co-ordinate the sale of timber and biomass products on behalf of the members.
- Provide the necessary administration services including keeping proper books of account, pay bills, provide monthly management and financial reports, prepare budgets and other necessary tasks as required by Producer Group and support funder
- **Role of Facilitator would include:**
- Supporting capacity building of private forest owner/manager
- Build Producer Group ethos
 - KTG formation and delivery (subject to policy and terms)

- Programmes to promote first thinnings and steps to achieve this – inspection path development, apply for thinning licences, etc
- organise practical field days and work-shops on how to prepare for timber harvesting and sales, also on timber harvesting operations
- forest management events
- wood energy demonstrations
- support and work with promoters interested in developing alternative farm enterprises in the tourism and leisure sector which utilise woodland and adds to the overall product mix available for tourists
- promote private planting
- based on competence/legal status of Producer Group develop and provide private planting service
- Organise events for improving private management skills. Liaise / engage with other bodies, Teagasc, ITGA, Pro Silva, industry, etc.

Commercial role for Producer Group / Facilitator

- Clustering forest owners' crops for marketing / sale
- Organise collective sales of thinnings, biomass, ESCOs. Charge for services
- Provide a co-ordination service for local cluster groups for harvesting, roadway making, marketing, energy project development, etc. Charge for services
- Investigate and advise on market outlets for timber and associated products. Sawmills, wood energy customers, (Danone, B Na Mona, biomass users)
- Explore opportunities for small scale wood chip production by private forest owners using material from their forests for sales to local small to medium scale customers with wood-chip fired boilers for space and water heating. Austrian model
- Assist with grant planting applications, road grants, felling licenses. Charge for services
- Assist members access support services/advisors in relation to planting grants, roadways, Charge for services
- Provide support for owners who wish to develop wood based enterprises including in the wood energy sector. Charge for services

• **Possible Model for Forest Service funding**

- Producer Group to engage Facilitator – part time or full time depending on available resources
- Business Plan required for receipt of grant aid
- Producer Group to provide element of funding from own resources – should be low (10%). Limited own resources - unlikely to be totally raised from membership subscriptions. Most at €50 per member.

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• **Knowledge Transfer Groups (KTGs)**

- KTGs to be managed and run by Producer Groups (based on competence/experience to deliver)

- Funding for KTGs to be allocated via Producer Groups based on viable administration/delivery plan. Funding to provide educational and training courses and to engage specialist course providers.
- Facilitator to be liaison/organiser for KTGs
- KTGs to model on STAP, BTAP, etc with grant payment of €1000 pa per qualifying participant. Programmes designed to take account of differentiation of private forest owners (age profile, age of plantation and imminent activity requirement, forest management plan, etc)
- Participants in KTGs pay Producer Group towards programme delivery – suggest €400 per annum (Two year Programme)
- Courses may be provided from multiple specialist sources, Teagasc, Consultant foresters, biomass energy specialists, business consultants, chainsaw trainers, environmental consultants, bio-diversity advisors, etc.
- Producer Group may concurrently run a number of KTGs – could include management planning, pre and post planting stages, thinning, biomass, tourism / recreational depending on resources available

• PART 2.

• Other

- Species
- Value of plantations diminished by compulsory inclusion of non commercial species
- Forest Management Plans 5.11
 - Support private forest holders engagement in active management of forests
 - Critical periods for management planning, (a) Pre-planting. (b) First 4 years, (c) the 2 years pre thinning, (d) pre clearfell.
 - Compulsory element – important not to disincentivise
 - Should be simple enough to engage owner rather than passing over to consultant
 - Should be compatible with accreditation for certification
- Roads
 - Permit access to Coillte roads where practical. Coillte should be obliged to apply reasonable conditions for access by private owners
- Innovative Forest Technology Scheme 5.9
 - Should include grant aid for commercial level farm processing/drying for biomass, wood chip, firewood. Business plan necessary
- Reconstitution scheme
 - Should include damage from fire, wind, other natural disasters – floods, deer damage, Build in deer fencing grant. Under acknowledgement of damage by deer and lack of measures to control this
- Tourism
 - Amenity and Recreation 5.1.

- 40% owners declare interest
- Challenge to find commercial projects for private owners
- PL insurance an issue for recreational uses
- Potential for clustered approach to hunting – deer, game, vermin
- Woodland Improvement 5.5.
 - Scheme should include high pruning of conifers at appropriate times
 - Should include fertilisation of non-performing sections of forests post first thinning.
- CO2 sequestration: Seek transfer of benefits to forest owners
- Land availability
 - Problem overstated judging by 2013 application rate. Budgetary constraints
 - Case to relax prohibition on vast areas of suitable un-enclosed land
 - Subjective impediments to land use approval for forestry – acidity elevation, environmental. Overly restrictive
- Elevation for planting
 - Guidelines of 400m limit in East not practical. Very good Coillte and private forest above this level