

## **Muintir na Coille Co-operative Society Ltd –Coppice Association of Ireland**

### **Response to the Draft Forestry Programme 2014 – 2020**

#### **4.1 Measure 1: Afforestation and Creation of Woodlands:**

Native woodland afforestation should only have one GPC to avoid the disconnect between the ecological objectives of the scheme and the reality of plant availability of Oak and Hazel in particular.

Closer mimicking of good quality semi-natural woodland in the design of all broadleaf and mixed species plantations should reduce pests and diseases and improve resilience to Climate Change

##### **4.1.2.1 Agro-forestry (GPC 9)**

This is becoming a missed opportunity to restock for fuel/ shelter /flood risk selected hedgerows and shelterbelts, as they are the existing forms of agroforestry.

We do not recommend the use of Sycamore in this Scheme and favour maximum usage of native species.

200ha per annum, regionally distributed, would be a more meaningful target.

##### **4.1.2.2 Forestry for fibre (GPC 10)**

We do not recommend the use of Eucalyptus or Sycamore in this Scheme

#### **4.3 Measure 3: Prevention and Restoration of Damage to Forests: - Reconstitution Scheme**

State aided Reconstitution should conform to Forest Service policy in terms of species diversity, broadleaf content and biodiversity guidelines etc

#### **4.4 Measure 4: Investments improving the Resilience and Environmental value of Forestry: - NeighbourWood Scheme**

We ask you to recognise that a proportion of compartments in most sites presented for Neighbourwood funding are likely to be best managed using Native Woodland Conservation methodology

#### **4.5 Measure 5: Investments improving the Resilience and Environmental value of Forestry:- Woodland Improvement (Thinning and Tending- Broadleaves)**

We ask you to recognise that many young broadleaved plantations presented for Thinning may be suitable for Close to Nature Silvicultural Systems namely conversion to Coppice with Standards

#### **4.6 Measure 6: Investments improving the Resilience and environmental value of Forests:- Native Woodland Scheme**

##### **Our top priority is Native Woodland Scheme: Measure 1 Conservation**

An appropriate level of Semi-natural Woodland Conservation and Management for the period 2015-2020 would take into account the average annual rate of hectares required to meet the States' obligations regarding the Fresh Water Pearl Mussel / Water Framework Directive, the Habitats Directive, Rural Development Regulations and the UNCBD

The demand (market need) for the scheme is likely to build up to around 500ha/annum, given that the scheme was genuinely available. This is based on an analysis of the 740ha average

take up per annum in the 2001-2007 period where there was both public and private sector sites submitted.

In the context of SFM, at least 10% of the c.130,000 ha of Semi-natural Woodland should be undergoing active management to maintain or enhance species and structural diversity in the time frame of 2015-2020, given the poor condition of most of that resource. This was the scale of the initial target set out when the scheme was launched in November 2001.

An adequate amount of activity (c.500ha/annum) with this scheme is needed to maintain the skills base associated with it, in terms of plant supply, focussed contractors, skilled labour and training

Between 1:10 and 1:20 could be an appropriate ongoing ratio between hectares of state aided woodland conservation and total afforestation, on an annual basis, given the availability of resources

Neighbourhood Scheme sites are likely to contain compartments where Best Practise would advise use of Native Woodland Scheme. These tend to be in more urban areas, which are often on more alkaline soils, where Coppice Silviculture may be an appropriate part of that Best Practise

While Coillte have estimated the amenity and biodiversity worth of state owned forests in their care, there are lesser well known monetary values of the by-products of semi-natural woodland management in terms of local economy, ecology, social and cultural activities in NPWS and the privately owned sectors.

The Forest Service must start treating the scheme as a 'normal' part of the programme, instead of an optional extra, in order to comply with Rural Development Regulations on State Aid.

In addition, given that c.33,000ha of existing semi-natural woodland is now compromised by Rhodendron ponticum and Laurel infestation (ref John Cross), which is increasingly diminishing its' regenerative capacity and the spread of invasive species outside of tree covered habitats is continuing apace – it may be time for an all island invasive species control and eradication programme, partly funded by private donations and voluntary effort but perhaps co-ordinated by Civil Defence or similar agencies

### **Specific Recommendations for NWS Measure 1:**

The targets set out in the SEA of 360ha per annum can be exceeded within the overall budget of the proposed Forestry Programme by the following means:

1. Maintain original formula from the launch of the Scheme in 2001, of one third of funding for private sector and one third each for NPWS and Coillte
2. Apply half rate of grant and no premium to public bodies e.g Coillte and NPWS (therefore each 100ha of funding yields 166ha of area into Scheme)
3. Transfer 100ha / annum from the NWS afforestation to NWS Conservation
4. Transfer 100ha per annum of ordinary afforestation to NWS Conservation

5. Expect that c.40% of Neighbourwood applications will be compartments that best practise would determine should be in NWS Conservation

6. Allow an annual amount of Emerging Semi natural Woodland (Scrub) to be taken into to NWS Conservation at about half of grant rate on average.

This would yield around 2,400ha for the 6 year period to be spread across the priority areas, for example:

Freshwater Pearl Mussel sites	300ha
Oak acid sites	900ha
Emerging semi;natural	600ha
Other more alkaline	300ha
Neighbourwood	300ha

#### **4.7.1.1 Knowledge Transfer Groups (KTG)**

Ensure that KTGs reflects the need to actively manage and conserve the 23% of Forest Resources that are Semi-natural woodland

#### **4.7.1.2 Continuous Professional Development**

Ensure that CPD reflects the need to actively manage and conserve the 23% of Forest Resources that are Semi-natural woodland

#### **4.7.1.4 Advisory Services**

Ensure that Advisory Services reflect the need to actively manage and conserve the 23% of Forest Resources that are Semi-natural woodland

#### **4.7.1.3 Targeted Training**

##### **Example: Local Woodland Management Skills Training**

Muintir na Coille Co-operative Society Ltd are proposing the development of a Diverse Species Woodland Management and Skills Training Programme at FETAC levels 4-6

The Focus of the training programme would be on Semi-natural woodland, Broadleaf and Broadleaf / Conifer species plantations and 'Hedgerow and Other Woodland' categories, which when combined now make up over 40% of the total tree cover in the National Forest Inventory (NFI 2013, p.8).

**Time scales involved:** The process of building a certificate/advanced cert. with a seasonally related programme of modules will take at least 2 to 3 years to complete. In the meantime we will continue to run our 3 current modules periodically and pilot new ones, once they are prepared.

**Content to be developed in partnership with Teagasc (T), Woodlands of Ireland (W), Forest Service (F), NPWS (N), Coillte (C), Hedgelaying Association of Ireland (H), Contractors and Other (O)**

Tree Identification – form, bud, bark, leaf and seed (W, O)

Seed collection and storage –all common species for Irish nursery industry (W,F,C,O)

Woodland classification and management options (W,N,F)

Traditional Silviculture – (1) Coppice (2) High Forest (W,F)

Traditional woodland crafts

Native Woodland Scheme practical (1) Conservation (2) Establishment (W,F,O)

Woodland Improvement Scheme (1) General (Neighbourwood Enhancement) (2) Thinning (W, F, T)

Neighbourwood Scheme (1) Amenity criteria (2) Access, signage, outdoor woodworking

Forest Safety (F)

Communication (T)

NPTC City and Guilds Chainsaw Safety (small tree) – compulsory (O, T)

NPTC City and Guilds Hedgelaying –optional (H)

Occupational First Aid –optional (O)

ATV operation – optional (T,O)

Herbicide application – optional (T,O)

Fencing – compulsory (T,O)

#### **4.8 Measure 8: Setting up of Producer Groups**

Ensure that Producer Groups include those that actively manage and conserve the 23% of Forest Resources that are Semi-natural woodland

#### **4.9 Measure 9: Investments in Forestry Technology**

Ensure that Investment in Forestry Technology reflects the need to actively manage the 23% of Forest Resources that are Semi-natural woodland

#### **4.10 Measure 10: Forest Environment and Climate Services: - Forest Genetic Reproductive Material**

We have recommended that there should be specific competence based training on seed collection/ storage, seed orchards and associated diseases and regulations.

All nursery stock on the island of Ireland should be supplied with provenance certificates at point of sale, to indicate whether it is indigenous genetic stock or from other identified sources. This should apply to all state aided grant schemes that involve woody species including GLAS and any other RDP related scheme, to assist in preventing, tracking, and monitoring disease outbreaks.



