



Submission to Forestry Development Programme

2014 - 2020

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Measures 7, 8 & 11

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Introduction

Irish Wood Producers Limited started as a discussion group in 2011, adopted a constitution in 2012 and was then supported by Wexford Local Development as a not for profit producer group in 2013. The Vulcan project provided the stimulus to further develop the group to supply woodchip for the Danone biomass boiler in Wexford. In 2014, Timber Kilkenny Cooperative Society and Laois Farm Forestry Group amalgamated with Wexford Wood under the Wexford company's structure as the Irish Wood Producers Limited. The new organisation has undertaken to support more than 400 members across the region with events, newsletters, standardisation of procedures, mobilisation of timber and coordination of services to all members.

Irish Wood Producers Ltd welcomes the support for forest owners and the development of producer groups and would like to submit the following comments on the draft forestry development programme.

MEASURE 7 Knowledge Transfer Groups

1. Irish Wood Producers proposes that a register of approved producer groups be developed to facilitate the delivery of the Knowledge Transfer Groups (KTGs), with qualifying criteria for the register such as:
 - a. A formal constitution with a functioning board
 - b. Over 75 subscribed members, each with a minimum of 1 hectare of forestry
2. Producer groups would cluster the membership into KTGs based on forestry needs
3. The producer group would provide the facilitators (each of whom must attend FETAC accredited training*)
4. Facilitators should visit each KTG member's site once during the two year period

**As many core members of existing producer groups understand the sector very well and communicate more effectively with private owners, it is highly recommended that facilitators can come from the membership as long as the group commit to make a forester available to the KTG as part of the process.*

Targeted Training

5. It is suggested that an introduction to forestry training (from afforestation to clearfell) be a prerequisite for drawdown of any afforestation grant scheme to encourage owners to learn about their forestry and to deliver good forest management practices throughout the lifetime of the plantation.
6. Producer groups have delivered safety information days in cooperation with Teagasc, the Health and Safety Authority, FBD and training organisations, which although have not been accredited have attracted many members and raised awareness of risks and necessary precautions across the membership. It is suggested that producer groups be supported to deliver similar through the KTGs.
7. A system for accredited training and licensing for harvester and forwarder operators needs to be developed in Ireland as there is a lack of qualified and experienced operators in the country.



Advisory Services

8. Irish Wood Producers proposes that the existing producer groups be used as resources for the delivery of some advisory services, as they are already delivering: ~ 16 field days and 5 training courses a year in addition to workshops and seminars. Producer groups also build the capacity of owners by providing them with health and safety templates, contract templates, develop owners understanding of their plantation and the emerging timber products and the value of their final crop.

MEASURE 8 Setting up of producer groups

9. Irish Wood Producers proposes that this measure not only support the development of new groups but also supports the amalgamation and establishment of existing groups. As the Irish Wood Producers has discovered, there are many advantages to local and county groups coming together to share best practice, to develop economy of scale, to better serve the membership and to share resources to become sustainable. Suppliers, contractors and buyers do not want to work with individual forest owners or many small producer groups so it is suggested that forest owners are encouraged to consolidate local groupings to form regional collaboratives, which have proven successful in many European countries.
Should this measure only refer to new start ups, it would be counterproductive to the existing producer group network. The definition of start up would need to include the existing groups which are clearly not yet sustainable.

MEASURE 11 Forest Management Plans

10. It is suggested that the management plan template be made accessible and user friendly to forest owners to encourage their engagement with their forestry and be aware of all aspects of responsible forest management.