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To: forestryprogram2014-2020

Subject: submission

Submission on the 2014 Forestry programme, on behalf of the Limerick & Tipperary Woodland Owners Ltd.

We have a paid up membership of over 100 with another approx 100 who attend various events/courses. The extent of members plantations would total about 4,000 acres, over the counties of Limerick and Tipperary.

It is our view that well organised producer groups are the ideal vehicle to enable knowledge transfer to a wide variety of growers. The structure of our type of group is based on members needs and is built from the bottom up. Unlike private concerns, our objectives are not built around profit making. We already have an accredited full time Forester on board who provides independent advice and we currently have 2 harvesters working on spruce plantations with up to 12 months work in front of them.

The main issue for the future is to get landowners interested in learning how to manage a new, long term crop by improving their practical and management skills. The scale of the problem is far outside the present resources of Teagasc.

#### The Solution

An incentive scheme, similar to that which exists in the Dairy and Beef sectors, which incentivises owners to partake in educational classes and complete practical tasks. A scheme could be devised to run over 2 years, and requiring the owner to belong to a producer group, complete a comprehensive management plan drawn up by a qualified Independent forester, who would visit each owners site to personalise their plan. Tasks that could be required to qualify would include a selection from the following:

- (a) applying for felling license
- (b) putting in a roadway
- (c) cutting brash paths
- (d) making measurement plots
- (e) creating and implementing a fire plan
- (f) getting quotes for thinning
- (g) making their site secure against theft
- (h) looking at co-ordinating with neighbours to reduce costs
- (i) participating in local or on-line inventory and analysis

- (j) looking at joint ownership of small scale harvesting machinery

The actual decision to thin would be taken by the owner following comprehensive professional advice, as some sites, due to elevation, soil type, aspect etc may not be suited to thinning. These and other tasks would be facilitated by expertise from within the group, including support from Teagasc and other bodies if necessary.

A grant of 1,250 euros would be payable to the land owner on successful completion of the course. The management plan, drawn up by the group, would probably cost about 250.00 euros, paid by the owner to the group. This would include the foresters fee, and all expenses incurred by the group over 2 years to provide Local training facilities, insurance, refreshments etc. One of the many spin-off benefits would be the ability of the group to market a large quantity of wood on a consistent basis, which doesn't presently exist.

Other issues that require consideration are

- (1) A grant Scheme, similar to the UK, for woodland owners to purchase small scale forest harvesting and extraction machinery. This is currently set at 40% aid in Britain. This could be available to both private owners for their own use or Producer Groups to hire out to members. Many growers find it difficult to get contractors onto a small softwood site and for owners of small hardwood sites who use chainsaws for felling, find it difficult to get contractors to come and extract.
- (2) A National Scheme, to promote the use of Wood energy to Industry, semi state, Hospitals, Schools and domestic users.
- (3) A Pilot scheme, to trial district heating, in selected suitable towns, using locally grown timber, dried and chipped. The Local Authority would build, own and lease out over 20 years the pipeline, to a management company, who would install, operate and maintain the boiler. This company could be the Producer Group or a partnership with the group.
- (4) The development of markets for maturing hardwoods. Currently, the only market is firewood.
- (5) A shortage of qualified harvester operators.

Regards

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Chairman

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