

From: Kestrel Forestry [info@kestrelforestry.ie]

Sent: 09 October 2014 16:55

To: Coggins, Karl

Cc: Dunne, Seamus; Moore, Fergus

Subject: Douglas Fir under New Programme

Hi Karl,

I have some serious concerns about the future of Douglas Fir afforestation in its traditional areas of Wicklow/ Wexford and the South East if the current proposal regarding deer fencing is implemented as outlined in the Draft. The same concerns would apply to Scots Pine and to a lesser extent Sitka spruce in the same regions and indeed to any "new" species being introduced to replace Japanese Larch e.g Western Red Cedar, Western Hemlock etc.

If the requirement to have 70% of the area planted with GPC 5,6,7 inside an approved deer fence then it will effectively finish off Douglas Fir as a real option for foresters at worst, or lead to such small areas being planted with the species that its future as a commercial species will be substantially compromised due to smaller future quantities of its timber coming on the market. Sawmills and buyers who were always prepared to pay a premium for quality DF logs will lose interest because of the major reduction in supply down the road.

As a forester, if a 10ha. site becomes available that is suitable for DF then under the new proposal I will only be able to plant 15% or 1.5 ha. after the 70% BL and BioD obligation have been fulfilled, I certainly would not bother planting such a marginal area and this would apply even more so for smaller sites i.e. 4 – 6 ha.

I believe that DF is not as popular as it was because SS is an easier option for the the big companies and/or many of the younger foresters have no experience of planting or managing the species. In addition the extra €250 per hectare to plant DF as a GPC 4 species is not attractive enough and provides no incentive to select the species. The grant for DF should be at least €500 per hectare higher than SS.

Douglas Fir is a highly rated timber and has offered and will to continue to offer higher revenue potential for growers not just from the sawmill sector, but also the lucrative transmission pole market. There is a great tradition of growing DF on the east coast and further afield, and some fantastic stands were established and harvested down through the years. One only has to drive from Rathdrum to Laragh to witness the sheer quality of the stands of Douglas which were planted back in the 1930's to see what is possible with this species on the right site and with proper management. We have a responsibility in my view to maintaining this tradition, and to actively promote the increased afforestation of Douglas Fir over the period of this programme, and subsequent programmes.

I see no logic is prioritising oak, beech and sycamore in favour of DF where deer fencing is concerned. If we have to erect expensive deer fencing then it should be for a crop that offers serious commercial possibilities over an acceptable rotation length as opposed to broadleaves which offer no real commercial potential, and in addition requires 70- 130 year rotations.

Deer populations are at such serious levels in Wicklow and North Wexford now that it is impossible to establish even a Sitka spruce plantation without deer fencing.

I hope this correspondence will be read and given serious consideration before the programme is finalised.

Regards

Seán J. Lenihan M.Sc. Agr (For.)