

Forestry in the News

Six New Grant Schemes for Forestry

The Minister for Energy, Mr. Bobby Molloy T.D. has announced details of six new grant schemes to encourage expansion of Irish forestry.

The grants will cover the following areas:

- Afforestation;
- Improvement of Woodland;
- Reconstitution of Woodland;
- Forest Roads;
- Forest Harvesting;
- Back-up Measures.

The new grants are provided for in an operational programme for forestry which has now been approved by the European Commission under the Community Support Framework for Ireland.

The Commission has agreed to contribute 70% of the grant-aid paid by the Department under the operational programme. Total FEOGA funding over the period of the programme, which is 1989-1993, will amount to some £50 million.

The forestry operational programme sets out to:

- Exploit and utilise in a commercial manner the extensive area of land suitable for afforestation by doubling tree planting to 30,000 hectares per annum by 1993 as compared with 1988;

- Generate within the period of the plan some 2,000 jobs and additional jobs in the transport and forest processing sectors.

Many of the jobs created will be in rural areas where alternative employment opportunities are scarce;

- Increase the annual supply of wood raw material for industry from 1.5 million cubic metres in 1989 to 2 million cubic metres in 1993;

- Contribute to the diversification of the rural economy;

- Make a positive contribution to the environment;

- Provide farmers with a profitable alternative line of production and thereby improve farm structure;

- Improve land usage by encouraging the transfer to forestry of 95,000 hectares of land, (almost 1½% of the total area of the country) which is of marginal agricultural use but highly productive for forestry.

The benefits of the programme will be dispersed throughout the country, thereby contributing to rural development.

New Grants

The highest afforestation grant available up to now was £800 per hectare under the Western Package Scheme. This grant was, however, confined to

the designated disadvantaged areas. Outside of these, the grants ranged from £500 per hectare for conifers to £800 per hectare for broadleaves (*£850 per hectare in the case of full-time farmers). The new grants have been rationalised, and are available throughout the country and are a substantial improvement on forestry grant-aid previously available. Furthermore, farmers stand to benefit greatly because, not alone will they have improved grants but they also have available to them an annual forestry income for up to 20 years through the forest premium scheme launched earlier this year.

In all of the new planting schemes, farmers will qualify for the highest grant level, 85% of costs. By providing a strong incentive for farmers to diversify into forestry, the new schemes will make a major contribution to the important social aim of maintaining farmers on the land and providing them with an income-generating, alternative farm enterprise. Non-farmer applicants will receive grant-aid towards 70% of their costs. For the first time, these EC-assisted forestry development schemes will be available to Coillte Teo., the State forestry company. However, the company will only be eligible for a lower grant level of 65% of costs.

The six new schemes and the upper grant limits in each case are as follows:

1. Afforestation

The new afforestation grants are designed to encourage forestry development which improves the environment while, at the same time, discouraging less economic afforestation. This is to be achieved through a variation in the rates payable depending on the type of land on which the trees are planted.

The highest grant available will be £1,200 per hectare and this will be provided for the planting of broadleaved trees, which are being favoured for environmental reasons. This grant represents a 50% increase on the grants available for broadleaves up to now.

For conifers, the grant limit will vary depending on the type of land planted. In the case of land which was enclosed for agricultural purposes before being afforested, the maximum grant will be £900 per hectare.

Lands which were never enclosed by man-made boundaries for agricultural use, such as commonages or open mountain tops, are often of poor quality and are not very productive under forest. A lower grant of £800 per hectare will apply where such lands are planted with conifer trees.

2. Improvement of Woodland

This is a new grant scheme which was not previously available. The grants are directed mainly towards broadleaved woodland and are intended to encourage the conversion of neglected woodland to productive forest. The maximum grants are £900 per hectare for conifers and £1,200 per hectare for broadleaves.

3. Reconstitution of Woodland

Again, this is a new scheme which has not been available previously. The grants are designed to encourage the reconstitution of woodland which has suffered damage as a result of fire, storm or other natural causes. The highest grants will be £900 per hectare for conifers and £1,200 per hectare for broadleaves.

4. Forest Roads

Grant-aid for the construction or upgrading of forest roads has largely been confined to the disadvantaged areas up to now. The new forest road grants are a significant advance in that they are extended to all parts of the country. The grant level is 80% of costs for all applicants subject to a limit of £12 per metre.

5. Forest Harvesting

New grants towards forest harvesting machinery represents another major milestone in the development of the forestry sector by the Department. These new grants are designed to improve efficiency and productivity by encouraging investments in machinery and facilities for forest harvesting and extraction of forest produce. The rate of grant will not exceed 45% of approved costs subject to upper limits to be set depending on the merits of each project.

6. Back-up Measures

A number of initiatives, which will act as a back-up for the main scheme, will also be funded. These include aid to associations, studies and pilot projects.

In addition, publicity campaigns will be held by the Department to promote the programme.

Special Attention to the Environment

There is a growing awareness of the interaction between forestry and the environment. The harmony between the two, which must be maintained, is reflected in the particular duties placed on Coillte Teo., in the Forestry Act, 1988 to have due regard to the environmental and amenity consequences of its operations. It is also reflected in the operational programme which I am launching. This programme is committed to the development of forestry in harmony with environmental protection.

There are two special initiatives included in the programme for environmental reasons. Firstly, the planting of broadleaves is strongly favoured as these trees will enhance the environment, provide habitats for flora and fauna and also provide much needed quality hardwood timber. The grant level of £1,200 per hectare should encourage a substantial increase in the proportion of broadleaves planted.

Secondly, the grant rates for afforestation are designed to avoid pressure on unenclosed areas which can often have environmental value. Any unenclosed area which are approved for afforestation, following full investigation of and consultation on the environmental aspects, will only qualify for the lowest grants available.

This is a special feature of the programme designed to divert planting from such sites.

In addition, the Operational Programme contains strict guidelines for protecting the environment and the Government is committed to further strengthening these guidelines. Procedures have been instituted to protect Areas of Scientific Interest and other environmentally important sites. Furthermore, the Department will provide advice on environmental issues so that those afforesting land under the operational programme have the necessary knowledge to ensure that their work has a positive impact on the environment.

*Leitrim Observer,
5th September 1990.*

New Forestry Grant Welcomed with Caution by ICMSA

"The new forestry grant schemes announced by the Minister for Energy, Bobby Molloy, T.D., will provide much-needed income for farmers, both inside and outside the Disadvantaged Areas", said Mr. Dan McCarthy, chairman of the ICMSA Family Farm Committee.

Mr. McCarthy said that the operational programme for forestry is a lifeline which will help to maintain farming communities over the next twenty years.

"The forestry premium scheme means that farmers can plant marginal land and receive a realistic premium rate, which in addition to another enterprise will provide a continuity of income for the next two decades. This and the resulting jobs which will

be created in the transport and forest processing sectors is good news for family farmers," said Mr. McCarthy.

However, he cautioned that the extension of the forestry scheme may have social repercussions if care is not taken by Coillte Teo to ensure that strict criteria is applied to planting so that rural dwellers are not planted out of existence.

*Mayo Post,
30th August 1990.*

Carrigallen Firm Links Up with Coillte Teo.

Crann, which was set up in 1986 to promote the planting of trees throughout Ireland and is based in Carrigallen, Co. Leitrim, has been invited by Coillte Teo. to assist in the planting of 110,000 oak trees in Co. Wicklow, next month. It is the first time that the two bodies have joined forces on such a venture. In all 65 acres will be planted over a fifteen month period.

When completed, it will be the biggest oak planting undertaking in the country for many years.

Mr. Kieran McGinley of Crann said that they were delighted to be involved in the project. In fact, it was Crann who brought the proposal to Coillte initially who encouraged them and Crann took it from there. They first began working on the idea fourteen months ago.

According to Kieran it is a major undertaking for his organisation but they are confident of doing a good job. Coillte has provided he 65 acres at Glenree, just outside Enniskerry, and they hope to complete the job by the end of 1991. If the project is a success they will be looking at other places in the coun-

Christmas Comes Early for Kilcommon and Rearcross

Minister Michael Smith, T.D., has announced that Kilcommon and Rearcross have been selected for the growth of Christmas Trees on specially selected farms. The Minister said he is hopeful that these farms, as the trees mature in 5 to 6 years, will produce an opportunity for a native industry with very considerable employment potential on a seasonal basis. The project is being undertaken by Coillte and it reflects the significant potential for the sale of high quality non-shedding Christmas trees in Ireland and abroad.

Nenagh Guardian, 8th September 1990.

try like Connemara, Cork and Monaghan to carry out similar work.

The whole project is being sponsored by The Body Shop Group.

*Anglo Celt,
30th August 1990.*



Strict Controls on Forests

Tough guidelines on planting forests are being drawn up by the Department of Energy to ensure that the environmental impact of thousands of extra trees is kept to a minimum.

Strict rules will govern preparation of the ground, use of fertilisers, planting methods, making of roads, timber extraction and other aspects which could harm water quality.

Similar rules covering issues such as archaeology and land-

scape are also in the pipeline, Minister for Energy Robert Molloy said when he opened a conference in the RDS on forestry and the environment yesterday.

*Irish Independent,
18th October 1990.*

Major Irish/Swedish Joint Venture

Coillte, the State forestry company, is to link up with Stora, Sweden, Europe's largest forest products company in a major joint venture. This involves the establishment of a joint forestry company to acquire land and establish new forests and also the setting up of a new £150m pulp industry.

According to Coillte Chief Executive, Martin D. Lowery, the joint forestry company will begin operations immediately in order to build up a secure long-term raw material base for the pulpmill. It is envisaged that the company will plant up to 2,000 ha. annually over the next 15 years.

The pulpmill is expected to be in operation by 1995. In its first phase the pulpmill will produce 100,000 tonnes of wood pulp annually. This pulp will be used in the manufacture of tissue and other absorbent hygiene products, liquid packaging and printing and writing paper. From the beginning, the industry will purchase timber chips from Irish sawmills and pulpwood from Irish forests – Coillte and private.

Announcing the project, Mr. Lowery said that the £150m investment will lead directly to

500-600 jobs – 150 in the pulpmill and 350-450 in timber harvesting, transport and ancillary activities. He also said that no decision has yet been taken on the location of the industry. "A feasibility study will be carried out beginning later this year and discussions will take place with the IDA, with the ESB in regard

to electricity supply and the sawmills in regard to the availability of raw material, before any decision is taken in regard to location."

The Minister for Energy, Mr. Robert Molloy, T.D., welcomed the announcement by Coillte and stated that he had authorised Coillte to seek out a partner with technical capabilities and market outlets for pulpwood from Irish forests and residues from Irish sawmills.

*Anglo Celt,
13th September 1990.*

Society Warns of 'Destruction' of Rare Trees

Many rare and irreplaceable trees some unique to Ireland, face destruction due to the failure to catalogue them and enforce tree preservation orders. Speaking in Dublin this week, the chairman of the newly-launched Irish Tree Society, Thomas Pakenham, criticised the lack of public or private effort to preserve this "threatened heritage" of specimen trees.

"Ireland still has an amazing number of huge and ancient trees inherited from previous centuries. Probably the oldest

and largest ash tree in Europe is somewhere in the Irish countryside. No-one knows, because on-one has bothered to look,

We may have the largest beech tree in the world. Again, no-one knows," said Mr. Pakenham.

The state-sponsored body for the promotion of forestry and protection of woodland, Coillte Teoranta, has no responsibility for the preservation of individual, free-standing trees. There has never been a body to catalogue specimen trees in Ireland and seek preservation orders for the most important. This has led to situations as at Shillelagh wood, Coolatin, County Wicklow, once

the largest eighteenth century oak plantation in Ireland, where many tall, broad oaks were cut down before they could be measured.

These "specimen" trees are defined as "outstanding" both in isolation and in age, beauty, size or rarity of type. Among these are the two large Oregon Maples dominating Library Square in Trinity College Dublin, which were brought to Ireland in 1825. The largest of these is nearly 12 feet in circumference, and is

growing at a rate of half an inch per year.

However, few trees have a lifespan of more than two hundred years, and most die or are destroyed in less than one hundred. The Irish Tree Society, while seeking new members and undertaking a comprehensive inventory of specimen trees, also intends to encourage people to plant trees to replace those being lost.

*Sunday Tribune,
14th October 1990.*

Call to Alter Forestry Plan

A major report, "Forestry in Ireland – Policy and Practice," was published yesterday by the environmental awareness group, An Taisce. The trust points out that an area the size of Co. Louth will be afforested every three years if the projected targets are achieved, making forestry the major agent of land-use change in the Irish countryside.

"Instead of the benefits that are claimed to accrue from forestry, large areas of the most acclaimed biotopes and landscapes in Europe risk being drained, ploughed and planted for industrial timber production by commercial interests", says the report, which was compiled by An Taisce's environmental officer, Mr. David Hickie.

"Our natural heritage is in retreat and other sectors of the economy which depend on a high quality environment for their viability, such as tourism and fisheries, are threatened", it declares, adding that the Government and the EC – which are providing substantial grants for afforestation – bear a "heavy responsibility" to ensure

"sustainable development".

At yesterday's launch, Professor Frank Convery, director of the Environmental Institute at UCD, said the core concept running through An Taisce's report was that much environmental damage – especially on sites of low wood productivity but high environmental value – arose "because the Government, through its grant and tax incentives, stimulates the destruction".

The first priority, he declared, was to remove these "destructive incentives" by ensuring that commercial forestry is encouraged on cutaway bogs and "grass-rush sites", but discouraged on undisturbed peatland and the upper reaches of riv-

ers supporting salmon and trout because of the risks of "acidification".

An Taisce strongly recommends that an economic evaluation of this policy should be undertaken, including the wider costs and benefits, to provide policy-makers with comprehensive information to make "correct decisions". If it was not reviewed urgently, afforestation would continue to consume unsuitable land in the short-term, "with serious environmental consequences".

An Taisce commends the Forestry Service of the Department of Energy for introducing more generous incentives for the planting of traditional broad-leaved trees, suggesting that an opportunity now exists to develop an extensive broadleaved forest in the Midlands. It also welcomes the emphasis in "farm forestry", using marginal land.

*Irish Times,
2nd October 1990.*

Coillte Wins Woodlands Award

Coillte Teoranta has won the Royal Dublin Society's 1990 Irish Woodlands Award for Ravensdale Wood, Dundalk Forest. The prizewinning Woodland consists of 32 hectares of mixed conifers and hardwood from 25 to 60 years of age. Coillte are delighted to win the top award this year having received the Very Highly Commended Certificate last year for the same property. The award – an original piece of wood and silver sculpture by Eric Springbrunn, one of Ireland's top silversmiths, was presented to Tim McCarthy, Forester-in-Charge, Dundalk Forest by Ms. Mary Harney T.D., Minister for the Environment at a reception at the Royal Dublin Society on Friday October 19. Also present was the Chief Executive of Coillte Teoranta – Martin Lowery and Terry O'Reilly, Dundalk Forest.

The High Commendation Award went to Gerard Lalor, Fahy, Rhode, Co. Offaly.

The Award Scheme, sponsored by Irish Woodland Management Ltd. and the Irish Farmers' Journal in association with the Royal Dublin Society was designed to focus public attention on the Forestry Industry, recognise management achievements in timber production, encourage owners to consider landscape, conservation, recreation, public access and integration with other land use.

*Coillte Teo. News Release,
19th October 1990.*

Stora to Defer £150m Irish Pulp Paper Mill

The giant Swedish industrial group, Stora Kopparberg, is to defer a proposal to build a £150 million pulp paper mill in Ireland in conjunction with the State-owned forestry company, Coillte Teo. The chief executive of Coillte, Mr. Martin Lowery, said that the proposal had not been abandoned but that they would have to consider other partners besides Stora to build a paper mill in Ireland.

Stora announced yesterday that it would not proceed for the time being with a feasibility study on the Irish mill, which was due to be completed late in 1991. Stora earlier this year paid over £1 billion for the German company, Feldmuehle Nobel. Mr. Lowery said Stora needed more time to digest the high financing costs associated with

that acquisition.

However an associated joint forestry venture with Stora – with the much more modest capital commitment of £5m – was not necessarily affected. That would provide a further 350 to 450 jobs in forestry, harvesting and transport.

*The Irish Times,
13th December 1990.*

Coillte Land Policy Attacked

Coillte, the State forestry company, has been accused of being totally inflexible in its dealings with small farmers who wish to either buy land from, or swap land with the company in a bid to consolidate their holdings.

The accusation was made this week by Pdraig Divilly, chairman of the IFA's western and less favoured areas committee. He pointed out that last year Coillte purchased almost 16,800 acres for forestry, some of which would be of agricultural use, but neighbouring farmers who had sought exchange or purchase agreements with the company in an attempt to bring disjointed farmland into a single manageable unit were turned down. He added that approaches made by the IFA at regional and national level had evoked a similar response.

Pdraig Divilly appealed to the Minister for Energy, Bobby Molloy to intervene with Coillte to ensure that small farmers could have access to the fractions of land involved to help bring them up to an acceptable level of viability.

*Farmers' Journal,
17th November 1990.*



Loan for Forestry Development

Expansion of Ireland's forests is being supported by the European Investment Bank with a **48m ECU** (37 million Irish pounds) loan. The loan will be used to fund activities undertaken by Coillte Teoranta (Irish Forestry Board) and the Forestry Service of the Department of Energy for the private sector, including the planting of 32,000 ha, reforestation of 4,900 ha and construction of 360km of forestry roads. The EIB will aid regional development and economic activity in areas of high unemployment and provide support for local wood-based industries.

*Agence Europe,
17th December 1990.*

£10 Million for Forestry

As part of an overall package of rural development measures proposed by the EEC £10m has been approved for forestry.

Minister for Energy, Robert Molloy T.D., said the money would go towards planned recreational forestry which will be geared towards attracting tourism, improving the environment and expanding wood production in rural areas:

- Co-operative farm forestry

which will make available to farmers the necessary facilities for jointly investing in afforestation;

- Demonstration farm forests which will be established in association with Teagasc to give a practical educational experience of forestry to farmers;

- Farm business consultations and planning to ensure that farmers have the best available advice on all aspects of forestry investments;

- Investments in forest nurseries;

- Training programmes which will be run in association with Teagasc and Coillte Teo., the State Forestry Company to prepare people to take up jobs in forest establishment and harvesting and to ensure that all forestry operations are carried out safely and efficiently.

The Minister said that the Commission's approval of his proposals underlines the recognition which is now being given to the very important role which forestry plays in the balanced development of the rural economy, the diversification of farm enterprises and the improvement of the environment.

*Galway Advertiser,
27th December 1990.*