

The Development of an Indicative Forest Strategy With Specific Reference to Co. Clare.

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A pilot project to develop an Indicative Forest Strategy (IFS), using Co. Clare as the study area, is being undertaken by the Forestry Research Department of Teagasc. This project is being funded by the Backup Measures of the forestry grants as administered by the Forest Service.

An IFS embodies the idea of putting the right trees in the right places. The aim of this IFS is to provide a scientific basis to assist future policy decisions about potential locations of forestry, considering such factors as tree productivity, environmental resources and socio-economics.

Development of the strategy is Geographic Information System (GIS) based. This method allows input of a large number of varied spatial information types, which are linked to related database information. These can subsequently be displayed, analysed and queried in an interactive fashion, thus providing answers to questions posed – the ‘what if?’ scenario.

The data included and the structure of the strategy are designed to allow different scenarios for both broadleaved and coniferous, private, farm and amenity forestry to be examined.

The following spatial and non spatial information are under consideration for inclusion: soil type, bedrock geology, elevation, aspect, exposure, meteorological data, infrastructure, population distribution, existing land uses, level of available grant aid, land prices, agricultural statistics, tourism, water resources, landscape, ecology, heritage, and potential EC special areas of conservation.

These data and their related database information are subjected to a series of geoprocessing techniques to produce composite *thematic* datasets which include yield class, windthrow hazard class, soil-species suitability, water resource sensitivity and an economic evaluation of potential land uses. The resulting information can then be displayed, manipulated and interrogated in an interactive fashion to answer more complex user defined queries relating to various potential locational scenarios.