

Letters to the Editor

The Editor
Irish Forestry

Dear Sir

Over the past 15 years there has been a very large area of the country afforested – mainly with Sitka spruce on highly fertile sites.

We now face a problem – THINNING- which is essential to:

1. improve the quality of the crop;
2. stabilise the crop against windthrow.

This is not being done on time because 'it is uneconomic to do so'. We are thus left with two options:

1. thin at a later date, with the threat of serious wind damage resulting in the easy option of premature clearfelling and less than 50% of potential sawlog;
2. carry out a 'NO THIN' regime. This should be unacceptable to any forester.

To overcome these problems in the future I would suggest planting at 3 x 3 m spacing superior provenance stock with fine, less frequent branching, good form and vigour; thus delaying the need for thinning until more profitable stems are produced.

This wider spacing is practised in other countries, even at 4 x 4 m in New Zealand. We must not base our future policies on practices developed in the past using unproven stock taken from the wild.

Yours etc.,

Robert Tottenham

(Editor's note: Letters to the Editor on all aspects of forestry, both current and historical, will be welcomed for publication in future issues of Irish Forestry.)