

National forestry conference, 2022

NON-WOOD FORESTRY

Who benefits? Who pays?



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Society of Irish Foresters 1942-2022

Johnstown House Hotel, Enfield, Co. Meath, Ireland
National forestry conference, 11 October 2022

Acknowledgement

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Marina Conway
CEO
Western Forestry
Co-operative

Session 1. 09.30 – 12.45

- Chair:** Marina Conway, CEO Western Forestry Co-operative.
- 08.30 – 09.15.** Registration, tea/ coffee.
- 09.15 – 09.20.** Conference introduction by Donal Magner, Forestry Editor, *Irish Farmers Journal*.
- 09.20 – 09.50.** Balancing the multipurpose benefits of forestry – Colm Hayes, Assistant Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.
- 09.50 – 10.20.** Health and wellbeing; access, open forest policy – Eamonn Kenny, Director of Forest Operations, Coillte.
- 10.20 – 11.00.** tea/ coffee
- 11.00 – 11.30.** The role of forest owners in delivering non-wood benefits – Dr. Olive Leavy, Secretary, Irish Forest Owners.
- 11.30 – 12.00.** Ecosystem services: balancing benefits with payments and the role of certification – Donal Whelan, Technical Director, Irish Timber Growers Association.
- 12.00 – 12.30.** Realising the value of forestry through natural capital accounting – Professor Jane Stout, Vice President Biodiversity and Climate Action, Trinity College Dublin.
- 12.30 – 12.45.** Q &A followed by lunch 12.45 – 13.45.

Session 2. 14.00 – 15.45

- Chair:** Matt Dempsey, Chair, Irish Agricultural Trust, *Irish Farmers Journal*.
- 14.00 – 14.30.** Keynote Address: the role of non-wood forestry in the new Forestry Programme for Ireland – Senator Pippa Hackett, Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.
- 14.30 – 15.00.** Water services – protecting water quality, shade provision and flood regulation – Dr. Tom Nisbet, Head Physical Environment Research Group, Forestry Commission.
- 15.00 – 15.30.** Carbon based forestry: acknowledging forest owners for their contribution to net zero – Professor Cathal O'Donoghue, Established Chair of Social and Public Policy, University of Galway.
- 15.25 – 15.45.** Q &A featuring all conference speakers.
- 15.45 – 15.50.** Close of conference by Hugh Cawley, President, Society of Irish Foresters.



Matt Dempsey
Chairperson
Irish Agricultural Trust
Irish Farmers Journal

The right trees in the right places for the right reasons with the right management – supporting a sustainable and thriving economy and society and a healthy environment

By 2050, Ireland's forests and woodlands will be seen as a symbol of the transformational social, economic and environmental changes that were needed to address the climate, biodiversity, housing and health emergencies of the 2020s. A much larger and more diverse forest footprint is being successfully managed to balance and deliver multiple objectives and benefits for climate, nature, water quality, wood production, people, the wider economy and rural communities.

It forms a valuable, compatible element of the farming enterprise and is co-existing in harmony with urban and other landscapes and valued highly by citizens. It is also supporting a thriving and growing forest sector, long term quality employment for a sustainable workforce, ecosystem services and public, educational and recreational amenities.

There is a nationwide awareness and understanding of the multiple benefits of forests. Forestry is at the centre of the circular and green economy with Irish grown timber the material of choice for the substitution of carbon intensive building products for new Irish homes.

Forestry is providing a profitable diversification option for farmers, with people living in rural, urban and suburban communities feeling a sense of connection and pride in their local forests and woodlands, and the many benefits that they provide. Legacy environmental issues associated with past forestry practices are being successfully addressed, building on improvements already made through enhanced sustainable forest management practices.

The Irish landscape now features a rich variety of diverse, resilient and healthy trees, woods and forests, established for multiple purposes and delivering multiple benefits for the environment, economy and society on both public and private land.

A Shared National Vision for Trees and Forests in Ireland until 2050
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine September 2022



Foreword



The role of non-wood forestry in the new Forestry Programme for Ireland

The primary role of forests has been to develop a supply of Irish grown timber for construction, furniture and wood energy, to rely less on wood imports. The current vision and objectives for forests have been transformed, with an increased emphasis on the multiple benefits that forests can provide. Well-planned forestry can deliver a wide range of non-wood products and ecosystem services in addition to timber including carbon sequestration, protection of water quality, biodiversity enhancement and amenity value.

The recently published Shared National Vision for Forestry 2050 calls for 'the right trees, in the right places, for the right reasons and with the right management'.

The Vision underlines our commitment to sustainably manage our expanding forest estate and to increase the environmental, economic and social benefits of forests.

The new Forestry Programme, through which this Vision will mainly be delivered, will place a greater emphasis on the delivery of these non-wood benefits, through its interventions and schemes.

The new Programme will provide opportunities to improve Ireland's natural heritage, by investing in afforestation in a way that is sensitive to its landscape and environment, and that allows citizens to benefit from the unique range of public and private goods offered by it.

Pippa Hackett

Senator Pippa Hackett
Minister of State
With responsibility for land
use and biodiversity
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine



Welcome



Hugh Cawley
President,
Society of Irish Foresters

Hugh Cawley's career as a forester spans over 25 years, covering a wide range of forest management roles in the State and private sectors before being appointed Coillte Farm Partnership Manager in 2020. He qualified from UCD with a B.Agr.SC (Forestry) in 1996 and an M.Agr.SC (Forestry) in 2004.

Introduction



Donal Magner
Forestry Editor
Irish Farmers Journal

Donal Magner, editor, forester and forest owner, is environment lead Rotary Ireland and author of *Stopping by Woods: A Guide to the Forests and Woodlands of Ireland*. A recipient of the RDS Forest Service Award for his contribution to Irish forestry, he is project manager, Wood Awards Ireland.

On behalf of the Society of Irish Foresters, I welcome you to the National Forestry Conference 2022 in this historic year when we celebrate the 80th (Oak) Anniversary of the founding of our society.

But today's conference is not a time to reminisce – instead we look unambiguously to the future. This is reflected in the title of this year's conference "Non-Wood Forestry: Who benefits? Who pays?". We assess the evolving and increasingly important role of forestry in the lives and livelihoods of our country and our people; in recreation, wellbeing, biodiversity, carbon sequestration and water management.

The Society of Irish Foresters has long been a strong advocate of multifunctional forestry. In this conference we draw upon the experience of our many professionals to address the benefits and costs of a balanced forestry programme which provides wood and non-wood products and services for all our people.

My thanks to all our speakers and contributors to this conference and to our members and other stakeholders for supporting this and other Society of Irish Forester events. I am fully confident that you will enjoy an interesting and informative conference.

This year's national forestry conference addresses non-wood aspects of forestry including carbon sequestration, recreation, biodiversity and water management. Most of these issues have featured in Irish forestry planning for decades, but the main objective of state and private forestry up to the end of the last century was to maximise timber yield and income as well as achieving wood security.

There were good reasons for this approach as it created a resource worth €2.3 billion annually to the Irish economy and resulted in Ireland making the transition from being a net importer of timber to a net exporter. Along the way, an estimated 12,000 jobs were created in rural Ireland while 23,400 forest owners – mainly farmers – receive an income from forestry. However, forest policy in Ireland has been broadened to include multipurpose forestry objectives as outlined in the "Shared Vision" (Page 5). The Society of Irish Foresters has been an advocate of multifunctional forestry since it was founded in 1942, which is reflected in its events and publications.

This year's conference – "Non-Wood Forestry: Who benefits? Who pays?" – continues this approach. It debates the social, environmental and economic implications and challenges in achieving a balanced sustainable forest management programme for the grower, the industry and society.



Eamonn Kenny
Director of Forest Operations,
Coillte

Eamonn Kenny is Director of Forest Operations, Coillte and is responsible for enhancing and protecting the forest estate, covering 440,000 hectares of primarily forested land. His role also involves maximising timber production, while also providing environmental, ecological, and social benefits. A native of Kilkenny, Eamonn holds a degree in manufacturing engineering from University of Limerick.

Health and wellbeing; access, open forest policy

Since its establishment in 1989, Coillte has enabled the development of a vibrant forestry and wood products sector that supports rural employment throughout Ireland. While sustainability has always been central to the way in which Coillte manages the forest estate, the company believes that the growing climate and biodiversity crises, as well as societal demands for housing, jobs and wellbeing, are driving a need for greater change. Coillte has developed a new forestry strategic vision which aims to sustainably balance and deliver the multiple benefits from Ireland's state forests across four strategic pillars: climate, wood, nature, and people. Under its people pillar, Coillte proposes to:

- Support the creation of 1,200 direct and indirect new jobs in rural communities to enable the just transition to a low carbon economy in Ireland
- Enable the investment of €100 million to create world class visitor destinations by 2030
- Double the number of recreation areas to 500 enhancing local communities and contributing to people's wellbeing.



Colm Hayes
Assistant Secretary General
Department of Agriculture, Food
and the Marine

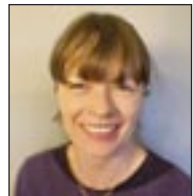
Colm Hayes is Assistant Secretary General in DAFM since 2017. His remit covers forestry, agri-environment schemes, on-farm investments and market supports. Prior to that he was Head of Unit in the Department with responsibility for meat and dairy policy and has also worked in the Department's Economics Division.

Balancing the multipurpose benefits of forestry

The Government is currently developing a new National Forestry Strategy and Programme. As with all similar land-use policies, successive Forestry Programmes have evolved over time in response to emerging needs, from an environmental, economic and social point of view but also in response to emerging public expectations.

The presentation will focus on these changing trends and their potential impact on current and future policy making. It will also look at how other policy drivers at EU and national level are likely to impact on forestry policy.

These include the EU Green Deal and Fit for 55, and national climate, biodiversity and economic development policies. Fit for 55 refers to the EU's commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030.



Dr. Olive Leavy
Secretary/National coordinator
Irish Forest Owners

After completing her PhD in immunology in Trinity College, Olive worked for 11 years as a scientific editor with Springer Nature, London before taking over her farm forest in Co. Westmeath which she manages according to the principles of continuous cover forestry. Apart from her executive role in the IFO, she is part-time administrator of Pro Silva Ireland.

The role of forest owners in delivering non-wood benefits

Almost half of the national forestry estate in Ireland is privately owned and the responsibility for these forests and how they are managed lies in the hands of forest owners. Two examples of the significance of their role illustrate this point.

- The decision taken by a farmer/landowner to transform some or all of their agricultural land into a carbon sink through afforestation or silvicultural management change is one of the most important steps that can be taken for climate change mitigation.
- There is a biodiversity crisis. A lot of great work is also being done by many forest owners in promoting and protecting biodiversity, although most of this work is not being measured or quantified.

Forest owners recognise that more can and should be done to deliver these and other non-wood benefits of forestry. To achieve this, we need to place forest owners at the centre of the national conversation, develop a robust programme of engagement, support and education, and provide them with an economically viable model of forestry that supports its benefits to society.



Donal Whelan
Technical Director
Irish Timber Growers
Association

Donal Whelan is a UCD forestry graduate, Technical Director of the Irish timber Growers Association (ITGA) and principal of Commercial Forestry Services Ltd. (CFS). He has worked on various industry initiatives including the current Forest Strategy Working Group and is a member of the COFORD Council. With a consortium, he has delivered the first successful Forest Owners Group certification initiative in Ireland.

Ecosystem services: balancing benefits with payments and the role of certification

This presentation will focus on the new EU Forestry Strategy and the prominence given to ecosystem services, also the role of certification and future implementation structures. The EU Forestry Strategy places a particularly strong emphasis on ecosystem services. It states: "The strategy seeks to develop, among other things, financial incentives, in particular for private forest owners and managers, for the provision of these ecosystem services."

Critical for Ireland and our next Forestry Programme, it acknowledges that "forest owners and managers need drivers and financial incentives to be able to provide, in addition to wood and non-wood materials and products, also ecosystem services through forest protection and restoration". The presentation will feature the potential of Voluntary Carbon Markets and how Ireland should look to position itself with an Irish Forest Carbon Code. The potential role of certification in assessing ecosystem services and non-wood forest products and their verification will be outlined. Consideration of future structures required to address challenging forest certification procedures and how these can be implemented to ensure economies of scale and best practice will also be highlighted.



Professor Jane Stout
Vice President
Biodiversity and Climate
Action, Trinity College Dublin

Prof. Jane Stout is an ecologist focusing on understanding the complexities of natural ecosystems and the interactions between nature and people. She has worked in TCD for over 20 years, where she is now Vice President for Biodiversity and Climate Action. She leads a large research team, and co-founded Natural Capital Ireland.

Realising the value of forestry through natural capital accounting

“Natural Capital” is an economic metaphor for nature, a term used so that nature and its values can be brought into decision-making. The natural capital approach involves identifying impacts and dependencies on natural resources, through quantifying “stocks” of natural capital and “flows” of ecosystem goods and services.

Natural capital accounting is a tool for applying the natural capital approach and involves creation of accounts that detail the extent and condition of natural capital stocks (including biodiversity) and the flow of services and benefits, and enable tracking of each over time. This approach will be illustrated via two research projects currently underway: the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine funded For-ES project, and the philanthropically funded FOREST project. Both focus on the multiple benefits of forests for our society, economy and environment.



Dr. T. R. Nisbet
Head of Physical Environment
Research, Forestry Commission

Dr. Tom Nisbet is Head of Physical Environment Research within Forest Research, the Research Agency of the Forestry Commission. He is a forest hydrologist with over 30 years experience studying the interaction between forests and water, with results directly informing forest policy and practice. His team is evaluating forest water services including developing a Woodland Water Code.

Water services – protecting water quality, shade provision and flood regulation

As a result of the success of sustainable forest management in protecting the water environment, attention is increasingly turning to the water benefits provided by trees, woodlands and forests. These include the ability of a tree cover to preserve water quality, help protect aquatic habitats and species from climate warming, and reduce the risk of downstream flooding.

The presentation will consider the evidence underpinning each of these benefits, the magnitude of the potential contribution, plus key controlling variables.

The paper will describe the important role of spatial mapping in targeting water pressures and efforts to quantify the economic value of the forest flood regulation service. Consideration will also be given to potential forest water disbenefits and how forest design and management can minimise these.

The presentation will conclude by describing planned work to develop a Woodland Water Code to encourage greater private investment in tree planting to improve the water environment.



Prof. Cathal O'Donoghue
Established Chair of Social
and Public Policy
University of Galway

Cathal O'Donoghue has been the Established Chair of Social and Public Policy, located in the Discipline of Geography at University of Galway since 2016. He also has an affiliation to the Discipline of Economics. From 2016-2020, he was the Dean of Arts and Social Sciences. Prior to this he was Head of Teagasc's Rural Economy and Development Programme. He has served on a number of COFORD working groups.

Carbon based forestry: acknowledging forest owners for their contribution to net zero

This paper reports the outcome of a major national report which highlights the opportunities and challenges of delivering national forestry goals to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

Although the national afforestation policy has been a success over the past century, planting 690,000 hectares (11% of the land area) there has been a substantial decline recently with only about 2,000 hectares planted in 2021 - only 8% of peak planting in 1995.

The report highlights that the cost in terms of the State carbon price of missing afforestation targets by 6,000 hectares is more than €400m at a €100 carbon price per ton over a 40-year forest rotation and €1bn relative to what is needed. The report highlights that beef and dairy targets of Food Harvest 2020 were met early, but the forestry target was never achieved. Only once in 2010 was even 50% of the forestry target met. The study finds that if the afforestation target had been met, it would have allowed for carbon neutral dairy expansion.

Given the existing fall off in afforestation levels over the past two decades, the forest estate will move from being a carbon sink to a carbon source. However, the more we can plant in the immediate term, the less deep the impact will be. Delaying planting decisions as a result has a major impact on the capacity to reach carbon neutrality by 2050.

The report highlights the opportunity to enhance the financial incentives for afforestation and to overcome some of the challenges in relation to replanting. It provides a comprehensive economic and cost benefit analysis of such incentives. The report also details the need for the development of a Forestry Development Agency and a review of the best department location for forestry in achieving national carbon neutrality goals. The report makes 14 key cost-effective recommendations which can help achieve the planting targets required for carbon neutrality.



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

A SHARED NATIONAL VISION FOR TREES, WOODS AND FORESTS IN IRELAND BY 2050



By **2050**, Ireland's forests and woodlands will be seen as a symbol of the **transformational social, economic and environmental changes** that were needed to address the climate, biodiversity, housing and health emergencies of the 2020s.

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CO₂

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Forestry is providing a profitable diversification option for farmers, with people living in rural, urban and suburban communities feeling a **sense of connection and pride** in their local forests and woodlands and the many benefits that they provide.

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Society of Irish Foresters 1942-2022

The Society of Irish Foresters 1942-2022

The Society of Irish Foresters is an all-Ireland organisation which was founded in September 1942. Its main aims are to spread knowledge of forestry and to improve professional standards in the Irish forest industry. To that end the Society publishes an annual scientific journal and policy position papers. It also organises field days, conferences, international study tours and two annual public lectures commemorating honorary Society member Sean McBride, Nobel Peace Laureate and Augustine Henry, internationally acclaimed botanist and forester.

The Society regularly makes submissions to government on policy initiatives which are likely to impact on the forestry industry and it is represented on several interdepartmental working parties. Our Continuous Professional Development (CDP) programme provides an opportunity for members to engage in the lifelong acquisition of knowledge and skills. The Society currently has approximately 800 members, mostly professional foresters who work across the whole spectrum of Ireland's forest industry. There are five categories of membership: technical, retired technical, associate, student and honorary members who have made a major contribution to Irish forestry.

Further information

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