



Adding Value to Farm Forests

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Farm Woodland Forum
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Overview

- Farm Forestry Resource
- Farm Forestry Challenges
- Opportunities to Add Value
- Supports Needed to Overcome Barriers



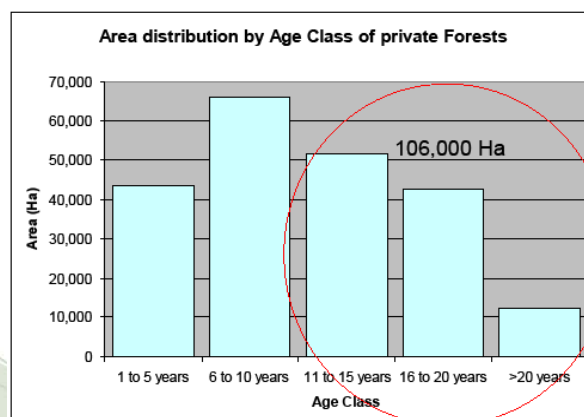
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Farm Forest Resource

- Total private forest area is approx. 350,000 hectares
- This represents 44% of the total forest area
- Over 16,500 farmers have planted forestry
- Average size 9 hectares
- Average Yield Class 20-22
- Predominant species is Sitka Spruce (60%)
- Private sector harvested 200,000 m³ in 2008
- 20% of the farm forestry estate is approaching first thinning

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Thinning Potential



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Source: Teagasc



Production Forecast

- Mobilisation of the private forest sector is a European priority
- Production from private forests forecast to increase to 3 million m³ by 2028
 - This represents a 8-fold increase in timber production from private sector
- Production targets will not be achieved if farmers do not start thinning
- Forest Service estimate that 25,000 hectare is ready for thinning now

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Farm Forestry Challenges

- Small and fragmented forest ownerships
- Lack of infrastructure to access the farm forests
- Network of forest owners' groups only developing
- Insufficient forest management knowledge of forest owners

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Opportunities to Add Value

- Increased forest owner management
- Adopt small-scale harvesting systems suited to Farm Forestry
- Increase forest owner cooperation
- Identify new local markets i.e. Wood Energy
- Forest tourism and recreation



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Forest Owner Management

- Active management by farmer reduces associated costs
 - Forest owners can cut inspection paths
 - Undertake small-scale thinning operations
 - Prune, shaping etc.
- Management increases timber quality as well as health and productivity of forest
- Hands on experience is the best way to learn about your forest
- All forest operations should be undertaken in consultation with your professional forester and objectives of management plan

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Small-scale Harvesting Systems

- Harvesting costs very sensitive to size of forest
- Current harvesting systems more suited to larger forests
 - Typical minimum area 8 hectares
 - Very costly for small-scale forests, reduces return to farmer
- Tractor-based systems are the most common small-scale system
- Tractors may serve as carriers for harvesting heads, loading grapples, skidding winches or forwarding trailers
- Small-scale equipment can have competitive advantage in thinning operations in small forests

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Forest Owner Cooperation



- Activates farmers with small forests
- Facilitates farmer to farmer networking
- Increases transfer of knowledge
- Improves efficiency and viability of forest operations
- Reduces management costs
- Promotes forest related entrepreneurship
- Increase timber supply
- Opens up new markets opportunities
- Facilitates forest certification

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Laois Forestry Group

- Very positive forum to network with other forest owners
- Only open to farmers with forestry in Laois that planted in pre 2002
- Members have very limited forestry knowledge or experience
 - The majority had never attended forestry conference, training day or demonstration
- Initially agreed to establish Discussion Group so that members could:
 - Get to know each other, familiarity is the basis for dynamic cooperation
 - Organise field days for the group to exchange information
- Approval from Leader to undertake feasibility study on the Farm Forestry Resource in Co. Laois

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Laois Forestry Group contd

- Some members have jointly outsourced harvesting contracts to local contractor to reduce harvesting costs
- Farmers have taken control of the selling of the timber themselves
 - Assortments organised to maximised returns

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Wood Energy Market

- EU Renewable Energy Directive set mandatory targets for 2020
 - 16% of total energy requirement must be sourced from renewable energy
- This equates to an annual demand of approx. 4.3 million tonnes of biomass
- It is estimated that over 1 million tonnes will be sourced from the private forestry sector
- This offers enormous opportunities for farmers to supply the local wood energy sector
- Already most of the pulpwood harvested in the private sector is being sold for energy wood

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Forest Energy Suppliers

- New business opportunity for farmers to establish firewood or wood chip supply business
- Add value to thinnings by drying and processing wood on the farm
- Cooperation with other forest owners essential to provide consistent supply of wood and necessary scale for business development
- IFA advise farmers to
 - Start small by hiring equipment, buying used equipment or sharing resources with other farmers
 - Be consistent with quality, delivery and service to foster loyal customer base
 - Do market research to establish links with wood energy companies, fuel merchants, wholesalers etc.

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Forest Tourism & Recreation

- Tourism and recreation are set to play an increasing role in the future of forests and woodlands
- Increased demand for outdoor recreation and tourism offers forest owners potential for extra income
- Studies show that recreation use of forests and trail in Ireland
 - 18 million visits to Irish forests annually
 - Total economic activity by domestic forest users is ~ €268 million
 - Walking tourism by overseas visitors valued at €138 million

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Supports Needed to Overcome Barriers

- Increased farmer focussed training and education initiatives
 - Teagasc training days have been very successful but still the majority of forest owners have not participated
 - Affordable courses on basic forest management, chainsaw use, small tree felling, timber markets, forest owner cooperation etc.
- The main barrier to the mobilisation of the farm forestry resource is the lack of funding for Forest Road Scheme
 - A minimum annual Forest Road Scheme budget of €10 million is needed

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Supports Needed to Overcome Barriers

- Farmers need to be supported to develop biomass supply chains
- Introduction of an integrated Biomass Mobilisation Programme to create confidence in the supply chain
 - Biomass Drying and Storage Scheme
 - Biomass Mechanisation Scheme
 - Bioenergy business & technical training programme
 - Supported on-farm bioenergy business mentoring programme
- Introduce initiative similar to the Walks Scheme to support forest owners to establish forest trails

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Thank you

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