

IRISH FORESTRY SERVICES NEWSLETTER



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Forestry Fund Operations 2007

In 2007 The Irish Forestry Funds continued investing in the infrastructure of its plantations with the construction of 4,850 metres of forest roads. On top of this, The Irish Forestry Funds also harvested 4,550 m³ of timber from five plantations.

So what do these operations mean?

In relation to forest road building, this operation is vital in order to facilitate the extraction of timber from forests. It is usually carried out 1-2 years prior to thinning to allow the road to settle. The road built is capable of carrying a fully laden truck up to 40 tonnes and must last to the end of the forest rotation.



Completed harvest road for 5FIP site at Brosna, Co. Kerry

It is therefore important that forest roads are well designed and constructed to the highest possible standard. This is the goal of The Irish Forestry Funds.

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The Fifth Forestry Growth Plan Plc is open for subscription to Irish residents only.

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*Providing you with continuous
innovation in Irish forestry investment*



Beech (*Fagus sylvatica* L.)



Distribution & Provenance

Beech is a European species with a natural range extending from southern Norway to northern Spain and from the south of England to the Black Sea. In much of this area it is the most common of broadleaved species.

The species has become naturalised in Ireland having been introduced on numerous occasions since the 1500's. In Ireland, recommended beech provenances are Belgian, north west European or registered Irish stock.

Silviculture & Management in Ireland

Beech grows well under a wide range of soil conditions but does best where topsoil has a neutral or slightly acid pH (pH 6.0 – 7.5). For optimal growth it requires moist, free-draining soils of moderate depth but will grow nevertheless on a range of site types. It is intolerant of late spring frosts and although tolerant of exposure, prefers a sheltered site where it can grow straight and tall. Beech is one of the most shade tolerant species and as a result is successful at establishing itself as an under-storey and growing on to become the climax woodland species. In Ireland, pure beech stands are currently established at a stocking rate of 6,600 stems per hectare (1.0 metre x 1.5 metre spacing). However, it is more common to plant beech in mixture with a coniferous species such as Scots pine or European larch at a lower rate of stocking. It also grows well with group mixtures of sycamore. Beech does not compete well with grass and other vegetation and weed control is essential as long as competition persists. This is followed by a period of formative shaping and removal of aggressive "wolves" and forked and deformed stems. This continues until the stems are up to eight metres in height, at which time approximately 1,000 good potential final crop trees, representing one third of all stems, should remain. At a top height of between 12 and 15 metres a heavy crown thinning is carried out reducing the stocking to 1,500 stems per hectare, 150 of which are selected to grow on as final crop trees. These 150 are favoured in all further crown thinnings until they reach a diameter at breast height of between 40 and 60 centimetres, at which time they can be

considered for final felling.

Next to sycamore, beech is most susceptible to grey squirrel damage which can be very serious in areas where the grey squirrel population is high. Young trees are also subject to damage from deer browsing and stripping. Late spring and early autumn frost damage can cause forking.

Non Timber Benefits

Beech is one of the best known and prominent broadleaved species in the Irish landscape. Its annual leaf litter is high in tannins and is consequently slow to decay and produces a distinctive covering of the woodland floor. In early summer, mature beech stands can be transformed into bluebell woods. Its shade tolerance makes beech a common species to be found as a regenerating under storey in both broadleaved and mixed woodland. Its regenerative ability contributes greatly to the biodiversity value of woodlands.

Position in Irish Forestry

Following its introduction to Ireland in the late 16th century, beech became a popular species on estates, both aesthetically and commercially. Many old estates are still characterised today by mature beech, found marking field boundaries and old avenues and also in woodlands. State planting of beech occurred in the 1930's, 40's and 50's and Coillte, the Irish Forestry Board, now manage over 4,000 hectares of beech woods. Most beech planting is now carried out by the private sector and currently there are approximately 100 hectares planted with beech annually. Irish nurseries produce and sell approximately 500,000 beech transplants annually.

Uses & Markets

Beech timber is the most common of European hardwoods. When radically cut it is easily recognisable with its short wide rays appearing as flecks throughout the wood. It has a light brown colour with no clear distinct ion between heartwood and sapwood. The timber is not naturally durable and as a result it is generally used indoors. It is an easily worked timber and finishes excellently with most hand and machine tools. Beech is used in a wide range of products such as furniture, particularly chairs, cabinets, toys and flooring e.g. parquet. High quality blemish free logs can be peeled to produce beech veneer which is used in facing plywood and medium density fibreboard (MDF). Beech, when steam treated, can be used in the manufacture of bentwood furniture. In central Europe, beech thinnings, branches and tops are used extensively for firewood and charcoal production.

Source: Forest Service, Department of Agriculture Fisheries & Food

Well designed and constructed roads also require less maintenance, enhance the value of a plantation and maximise the potential income from timber sales.

The 4,850 metres of roads built in 2007 were grant aided by the Forest Service. The total grants received amounted to €187,500, which contributed significantly to the cost of construction.

Thinning is a vital operation that promotes the development of a well-formed final crop through the removal of badly formed stems in early thinning. This allows higher quality and thus higher value timber to be produced in later thinnings and in the clearfell at the end of the rotation thus maximising the return to the investor. Again as with forest roads, it is vital that the operation is carried out professionally and to a high standard. To this end, the managers have been planning the thinning operations for some time, the goal being to maximise return while maintaining the productivity of the plantations and protecting the environment.

In 2007 five plantations belonging to the Third, Fifth and Tenth Forestry Investment Plans were thinned for the first time. The total volume produced was 4,550 m³. This operation was



Timber stacked at roadside of 10FIP site at Reacaslugh, Co. Kerry

carried out successfully and it is anticipated that second thinning will be carried out in 3-5 years.

In conclusion, 2007 marks a time when The Irish Forestry Funds started to become a significant timber producer. In the years to come, many more kilometres of roads will be constructed enabling the production of many thousands of cubic metres of timber from thinnings. The income produced will fund ongoing management while the investment in high quality infrastructure will enhance the value of the plantations at the end of the investment period.

World Forestry Facts

More than a decade of discussions on how to protect the world's forests has resulted in substantial changes in the way forests are managed. Policies and programs to help promote sustainable forest management have been devised and have taken hold in many countries. Nevertheless, deforestation is continuing at a rapid rate, particularly in the tropical forests of Africa and South America.

Forest loss is caused by a complex set of social and economic pressures. Among the major factors contributing to deforestation and forest degradation are conversion of forests to farmland and poor forest management, including over-logging, forest fires, and increased harvesting of wood fuels and other forest products for household use.

- Forests cover about 30 per cent of the world's total land area.
- The world's forest cover amounts to 3.9 billion hectares.
- 47 percent of the world's forests are in the tropics.
- The 94 million hectares of forest lost over the ten-year period, represented about 2 per cent of the world's total forest cover, or an area larger than Venezuela.
- Two thirds of the world's forests are located in ten countries: the Russian Federation, Brazil, Canada, the United States, China, Australia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Angola and Peru.
- Most deforestation occurred in natural tropical forests, which lost 14.2 million hectares a year over the last decade. Africa and South America have suffered the most deforestation.
- Africa, which lost 5.3 million hectares of forest per year in the 1990s, was the region with the highest deforestation in the world.
- Forests are a major factor in the climate change issue. Forest ecosystems contain more than half of all terrestrial carbon,

and account for about 80 per cent of the exchange of carbon between terrestrial ecosystems and the atmosphere.

Deforestation in the 1980s may have accounted for a quarter of all human-induced carbon emissions, the second greatest emitter after fossil fuels.

- Forest plantations comprise 5 percent of the world's forests. Asia has the largest area of plantations, accounting for 62 per cent of the world total. China accounts for 24 percent of that total and India, 18 per cent. Plantations supply about 35 percent of the world's roundwood.
- The area of forest plantations increased by an average of 3 million hectares per year during the 1990s. Half of this increase was the result of afforestation on land previously under non-forest land use, whereas the other half resulted from conversion of natural forest.
- It is estimated that 12 percent of the world's forests, or about 480 million hectares, are in protected areas.
- According to the United Nations Environment Programme's Global Biodiversity Outlook, about 60 percent, and possibly closer to 90 percent, of all species are found in tropical forests.
- Wood is the primary source of fuel in the majority of developing countries. Up to 81 per cent of the wood harvested in the developing world is used for fuelwood. In developed countries, fuelwood accounts for less than 10 percent of total fuel consumption.
- About 2 percent of the world's forests, or 81 million hectares, are certified as being managed in a sustainable manner, with about 92 percent of these forests lying in temperate, industrialized countries.

Sources: FAO's Global Forest Resources Assessment 2000

SCOTTISH TIMBER INDUSTRY ON A HIGH

Unprecedented levels of new investment and the ability of wood processors to fight off fierce global competition is a "major success story" for the timber industry in Scotland says Environment Minister Michael Russell.

In the last two years alone, investment in new wood processing projects has amounted to £250 million which is helping to develop a number of new sawmills and major biomass energy projects around the country.

Over 40,000 jobs are now supported by the forestry sector in Scotland and the industry generates around £760 million each year to the economy.

Mr Russell said that the unprecedented levels of investment in the processing and wood utilisation sector can only be described as a major success story. Scottish forests currently produce some 6.6 million cubic metres of softwood round timber each year and this is set to rise to nearly 9 million cubic metres by 2016.

The Scottish Government is providing strong support for the sector with £269 million being allocated to forestry measures

through the Scottish Rural Development Programme. This funding will act as a catalyst for new planting, enabling the sector to plant around 10,000 hectares each year with the target of achieving 25% Scottish forest cover by the end of this century.

The emergence of the bioenergy sector also represents a huge opportunity for Scotland's forests and woodlands. The Scottish Biomass Support Scheme has been well subscribed, and 67 new projects worth £17 million will come on stream this year, assisted by £7.5 million of Scottish Government funding.

The Environment Minister Michael Russell also stated that "forestry is an integral part of sustainable rural development. It creates employment, makes great use of a natural renewable resource, contributes to the local and national economy and supports community cohesion. This is why the Scottish Government is committed to helping this sector realise its full potential."

Source: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/>

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