

# Forestry 2030

Ireland possesses the climate and soils to grow forests at a faster rate than most of the developed world. Yet the rate of planting of new forests has, over the past five years, fallen below the sustainable level of 15,000 ha per annum. A combination of funding and policy measures has contributed to the decline. This series of papers, *Forestry 2030*, addresses key issues and charts a way forward. What these papers show is that the national afforestation programme is good value for money for the state and private sectors.

Afforestation – the planting of new forests - has been a part of government policy since the foundation of the state. It has delivered a thriving wood processing sector that employs many thousands in rural Ireland and in towns and cities. Output in 2008 was estimated at €1.89 bn or just under 1% of GDP. Without the contribution of new forests, Ireland’s climate change targets will be very difficult to achieve. Renewable biomass will be needed in greatly increased amounts in the future. Most of the step-up in supply will come from young forests planted over the past two decades. However, to sustain supply and climate change benefits, increased afforestation over the next two decades is a must.

Forestry investment is unique in the level and breadth of green goods and services it provides to the economy and society. Nowadays, as well as jobs, forests are delivering on restoring biodiversity to our countryside, and play an important role in water quality. As an industry we take our environmental credentials very seriously, and have made huge strides in recent years in how we plan and manage our forests.

Forests are central to our future green economy. They provide employment, biodiversity and recreation, and are also a carbon fixing and renewable energy resource. We need to expand forest cover to maintain and grow these benefits. Creating new forests is a long term business requiring clear policies and sustained investment by both the state and private sectors. *Forestry 2030* sets a goal to afforest 300,000 ha over the next two decades – to achieve a national forest area of 1 million ha by 2030 – based on clearly defined economic, social and environmental grounds. It is an achievable target, and a green investment that will deliver enormous benefits to society.

*The COFORD Council, October 2009*

## Papers enclosed

- Irish forestry and the economy
- Climate change and Irish forestry
- Irish forestry and renewable wood energy
- Afforestation – enhancing biodiversity in the Irish countryside
- Recreational value of Irish forests
- Irish forestry and the environment – a catchment-based approach

*These papers are based on published work and reports compiled on behalf of COFORD by Dr Áine Ní Dhubháin (UCD), Dr Kevin Black (FERS Ltd), Dr Eugene Hendrick (COFORD), Dr Sandra Irwin (UCC), Michael Cregan (consultant) and Prof. Ted Farrell (UCD), with input from the COFORD Council.*