

**Teagasc Forestry Development Department**

**Factors affecting the decision to plant- a survey of non-activated approvals**

A study conducted by Howley *et al* (2011) used a nationally representative panel dataset collected annually between 1995 and 2009 to model both farm and farmer related characteristics affecting the probability of farmers planting land. The results show that larger farms and those in less intensive farm systems are more likely to have planted land over the study period.

In October 2012, the Teagasc Forestry Development Department (FDD), at the behest of the Forest Service, carried out a nationwide telephone survey relating to non- activated approvals. The survey consisted of 254 individuals who had received afforestation approval in 2011- 2012, but who had not to date activated the approval. The total area involved was 3,059 ha, while the mean approved area was 12 ha. The current use of the land considered for forestry in the survey in Figure 1 below closely corresponds with NFS results on existing forestry plantations.

**Figure 1: Current land use of land being considered for forestry, Oct. 2012**



Source: Teagasc FDD telephone survey, 2012

Considering the gross margin per hectare (€/ha) produced by the various farming enterprises in recent years outlined in Figure 2 below, it is unsurprising that cattle and sheep enterprises are heavily represented in lands being considered for afforestation.

**Figure 2: Gross margin (€) per hectare by farming enterprise, 2010- 2011**



Source: Teagasc NFS (various years)

Almost 47% of those surveyed have deferred or are undecided. Approval issues such as site conditions in 2012, delays due to “bureaucracy”, not happy with company, not happy with species choices and unenclosed area designation are cited as the largest reasons for deferrals (35%). A combination of strong cattle prices and uncertainty due to CAP reform is given as the 2nd largest reason for deferral (34%), as shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Reasons for deferral**



Source: Teagasc FDD telephone survey, 2012

Of the 254 landowners contacted in the Oct. 2012 survey, 45% have decided not to plant. Land ownership issues influences 29% of those not going ahead with planting, following by the current level of premia (23%), as illustrated in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Reasons for not planting**



Source: Teagasc FDD telephone survey, 2012

**Conclusions**

* Of all non- activated approvals totalling 3,059 ha & 254 landowners, 45% of those contacted have decided not to plant
* Land ownership issues influences 29% of those not going ahead with planting
* Almost 47% of those surveyed have deferred or are undecided
* Approval issues- incl. site conditions in 2012, delay due to “bureaucracy”, not happy with company, not happy with spp. choices, unenclosed areas, TCC is cited as the largest reason for deferrals (35%)
* A combination of strong cattle prices and uncertainty due to CAP reform is given as the 2nd largest reason for deferral (34%)

While the survey was small and not representative, it is indicative of why some landowners are not going ahead with planting at the moment.