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

The European Green Deal

Integrate Webinar 24 June 2020

What is in it for forests and forestry in times of COVID and Greta

Minister of State for Forestry

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

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Ireland

Irish Forestry
&
The Green Deal

Forest Cover
11%

50% Public
71:29% Conifer/Broadleaves

€ 2.3 Billion
GDP

12,000
Employment

Afforestation
1989 – 2020
300,000 ha

Annual Harvest
~3.7 million m3

Recreation
~30 Million Day
Visits per Year

3.8 MT Yr^{-1}

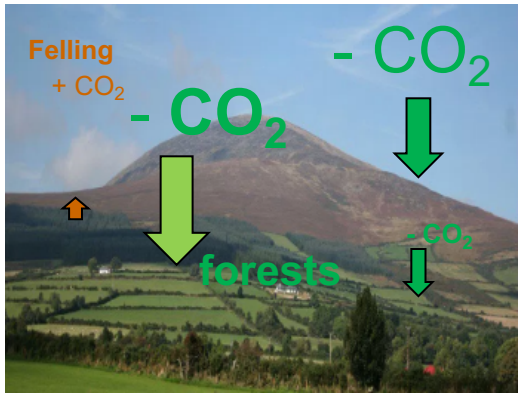
Forest Owners
23,000

The Green Deal and the Role of Forests

- It is clear that forests will play a significant role in achieving the ambitious challenges set out in the Green Deal
- EU and member states will need to actively engage to ensure its success
- The Deal identifies a number of high level actions where forests will step up to those challenges but we need to ensure actions are aligned
- The new EU Forestry Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy and Circular Economy Action Plan will strengthen integration of the principles of sustainable forest management
- The development of the bioeconomy will be essential if we are to increase the role of forests in decarbonising our economies across Europe and realise the true potential of our forests
- The next CAP strategic plan must ensure that forests continue to play a central role and complement agri-environmental measures that strengthen the competitiveness of the forest sector

- We need to continue to create new forests

The key issues for Forests



Afforestation, managing existing forest resources, carbon sinks and stores

Harvested wood products and the Bioeconomy

Climate Change

- Forests need to be resilient and we need to manage and adapt to the impacts of climate change
- Incidence and extremes of natural events will increase, creating many challenges for forests and forest owners
- Research and programmes that continue to build knowledge and skills will be required to meet those challenges now and in the future
- Forests are part of the solution and will play an important role in
  - carbon sequestration
  - storing carbon in harvested wood products and
  - substituting fossil fuels and energy intensive materials

Bioeconomy

- We need to ensure that the bioeconomy plays an increasing role in the pathway to developing low carbon economies
- Nearly everything that can be made from fossil fuels can be made from wood

The key issues for Forests

Water and habitat protection

Public access and protecting biodiversity

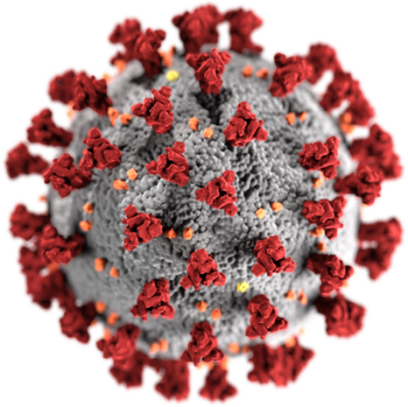
Biodiversity

- We need to protect the biodiversity in our forests and to continue to manage our forests sustainably
- Loss of biodiversity across all land uses will reduce our capacity to tackle climate change
- We need to support our forest owners, they are the custodians of our forests and have managed our natural resources for generations
- Delivering public goods and ecosystem services is about managing forests sustainably and planting "*the right tree in the right place*"

Societal Expectations and Integrated Forest Management

- We need to improve on communication and ensure that the benefits of forests are more widely understood
- Integrating sustainable forest management needs to strike the right balance between the social, economic and environmental objectives of forest resources.

Impact of COVID on the Green Deal



COVID 19

- COVID 19 will undoubtedly have a significant impact on all economies across the EU
- Significant disruption along supply chains from the forest, to the sawmills, to the markets have been severely impacted. Demand for timber has reduced due to EU wide lockdowns with demand slowly increasing as restrictions ease.
- The proposed EU stimulus package provides significant funding and access to low cost finance to Member States which must be targeted to ensure economies recover to pre-COVID levels
- Forest owners and markets are resilient and supply and demand for wood products will recover as economies rebuild.

Green Deal, next steps?

- Embrace the Green Deal and unlock the potential of our forests
- We need to ensure that the revised EU Forest and Biodiversity Strategies reflect the principles of sustainable forest management
- We need to continue to listen to the experiences and knowledge of foresters and landowners and learn from past experiences
- We need to ensure that the financial supports in the next CAP recognise the important contribution of forests in delivering on the ambition in the Green Deal
- Forests, the forest industry and the growing of the bioeconomy will provide wide ranging employment opportunities as forest industries develop and recover existing and new markets

Closing remarks

The Green Deal is ambitious, it is challenging, it does change the direction of travel, but more importantly it sets us on a sustainable course towards carbon neutrality.

We now need to embrace the Green Deal across all sectors of our economy, in all member states and release the true potential of our forests.

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Thank you