

FORESTRY

October 2021

Survey on small woodlands on dairy and drystock farms

Edited by
Frances McHugh
Forestry Development
Officer

Forests account for 12% of the land area in Ireland, which is substantially lower than the European average of 37%. The Government target is that forests will cover 18% of the land area by 2046. Increasing tree cover on Irish farms has been identified as a means to achieve this target, while continuing to produce high quantities of food. Increasing tree cover on farms has also been identified as a climate change mitigation and adaptation strategy. Within agricultural landscapes, trees can act as important sources of shelter for livestock, while increasing nutrient recycling and providing a supplementary fodder source. As such, they can provide both direct and indirect benefits to all farmers, but especially dairy and drystock farmers.

A potential initiative of the post-2020 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is that every EU farm should have 1ha of forest as either small



Scan this QR code and take part in the survey now.

woodlands, linear hedgerows, windbreaks, or individual trees. However, many previous CAP measures and schemes aimed at increasing tree cover on Irish farms failed due to a slow and limited uptake, even when profitable financial incentives were in place. This highlights that

farmer decision-making regarding the adoption of agri-environmental measures does not follow the assumed economic rationality.

To better understand the factors that influence farmer decision-making with respect to tree planting on farms, the main attitudes, influencers, barriers and intentions of the farmers must be identified. To facilitate this, a survey has been set up by Rachel Irwin as part of an MSc research project with Teagasc and

University College Dublin (UCD) to analyse farmers' perceptions of, attitudes towards, and willingness to plant, trees on farms. The results of this survey will be used to aid policy and help create guidelines for policymakers.

We would like to invite dairy and drystock farmers to anonymously participate in this survey by scanning the QR code on page one with their smartphone or by visiting: <https://tinyurl.com/teagascsmallwoodlands>.

Thinning conifers event

Keep an eye out on our website for details of a conifer thinning event on October 21, 2021. This will be a field event

with registration required as numbers will be limited. Further information will be uploaded to: www.teagasc.ie/forestry.

Keep in touch

Advice

Eight Teagasc Forestry Development officers across the country are available to support you when you are considering establishing a forest or have a question on how to better manage your forest. Full contact details can be found at: www.teagasc.ie/forestrystaff.

Website

The forestry section of the Teagasc website (www.teagasc.ie/forestry) is packed with useful information such as technical advice, detailed information on forestry grants, research project updates, staff contact details and more.

Teagasc Forestry eNews

Thousands of people receive Teagasc's forestry e-newsletter free of charge directly into their email inbox, keeping them informed of the latest Irish forestry news, forestry grants, valuable forest management tips, and upcoming

events. Subscribing is very easy at: www.teagasc.ie/forestrynews.

YouTube

The Teagasc Forestry YouTube channel has loads of useful videos. Technical how-to videos show how to cut inspection paths in a conifer plantation or how to identify quality trees in a broadleaf woodland. Other videos explain the Forestry Act, how to apply for a forest establishment grant, and discuss various forms of taxation. Many of our webinars are recorded and uploaded to our channel so they can be viewed later. Visit our YouTube channel at: www.youtube.com/teagascforestryvideos.

Social media

Our various social media platforms are a great way to keep in touch. You can follow us on:

- ▶ Facebook www.facebook.com/forestry.teagasc;
 - ▶ Instagram www.instagram.com/teagasc_forestry; and,
 - ▶ Twitter www.twitter.com/teagascforestry.
-

Hardwood Focus webinar

Firewood production from thinning broadleaves

Teagasc Forestry Development Department will run an online event on Thursday, October 7 at 7.00pm focusing on firewood production from hardwood thinnings. This event will include a series of short informative videos, a live presentation and a live studio panel to discuss participants' questions. Videos will show a recent second thinning operation in Limerick and commercial firewood processing by a local Wood Fuel Quality Assurance (WFQA)-certified firewood business. This will be followed by a presentation by Noel Gavigan of the Irish BioEnergy Association (IrBEA) discussing firewood as a renewable energy source. The live Q&A session allows participants to ask questions of the expert panel. Registration is required and participants can book a place by following this link: www.teagasc.ie/hardwoodfocus. This event will be recorded and available to view on: www.teagasc.ie/forestry.

Broadleaf woodlands

Irish broadleaf forests account for approximately 30% of all Irish forests, with many broadleaf farm forests still young and at a developing stage. Reasons for planting a broadleaf forest on a farm are diverse, such as biodiversity, water protection, landscape, and timber production. In many cases, a mix of different objectives is adopted by owners, with timber production often being a central driver. If timber production is an



The Hardwood Focus webinar is on October 7.

important objective, then timely selective management is a must.

Firewood produced from hardwoods

This event will focus on the efficient production of firewood from young broadleaf woodlands. Timely first and second thinnings are essential in order to provide the better trees with sufficient space for vigorous growth, allowing for the production of more valuable hardwood sawlog. The wood produced from early thinning operations is a by-product of management. The firewood market, together with support from Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) thinning grants, is a very important enabler to broadleaf management and allows forest owners the chance of some additional early income.

Topics covered during the webinar will include:

- ▶ thinning operations best practice;
- ▶ management grants available to owners;
- ▶ commercial firewood production; and,
- ▶ firewood as a green renewable energy source.

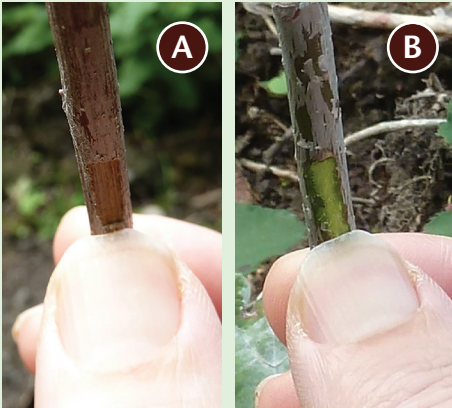


FIGURE 1: (A) Dead stem. (B) Alive stem.

Autumn management tips

Teagasc has a vast range of leaflets, on all forest management issues, available at: www.teagasc.ie/forestry. Alternatively, contact your local Teagasc Forestry Officer for free and independent advice. Autumn is an ideal time of year to assess how your trees are progressing and to plan for management interventions over the winter and into spring. Here are some tips.

1. Checking young trees

A well-stocked forest results in high-quality trees and is a requirement for payment of the second instalment grant and the continuation of premium payments. Trees per hectare can be assessed using 8m radius circular plots. 100% stocking will have 50 trees for conifers and 66 trees for broadleaves within a circular plot. If there is doubt whether a young tree is alive or dead,

the tree stem can be 'scraped' to reveal green (live) material or brown (dead) material beneath bark (Figure 1).

2. Drainage system

Trees cannot tolerate being submerged in water for long periods of time, while wet areas in more mature forests can contribute to instability. Although drains may not be very active during summer, this can change very quickly. Drains should be checked to ensure water can flow freely from the site.

3. Firebreaks

Firebreaks can quickly become overgrown and therefore completely ineffective. Springtime can be a very risky time for fire on upland sites, so maintenance work on firebreaks over the autumn/winter period can ensure forests are prepared for the possibility of fire pressure from adjacent land.

4. Check fence lines

Browsing animals can cause significant damage to young forests. Sheep, cattle, deer, goats, horses, hares or rabbits can all affect stocking and tree quality if allowed to access your woodland. An excellent fence is worthless with only one weak point, so walking fence lines is an exercise well worth doing regularly.

5. Preparing for harvest

Forest owners are often surprised how quickly years pass and thinning is due in their forest. Obtaining a felling licence, installing roading and organising the harvest can take a significant amount of time. Preparing for harvesting should start up to two years out from the actual harvest.