

From: marina@westernforestrycoop.ie
Sent: Thursday 7 February 2019 17:15
To: rses
Subject: Submission on Draft Regional Spatial Economic Strategy

To Whom it concerns,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our comments and observations on the Draft Regional Spatial Economic Strategy. I would like to commend you on the document and the amount of work that has resulted in capturing the vast potential within the region. I would like to specifically make a submission regarding Section 5.9 Forestry and Woodlands (page 219).

Background to Western Forestry Co-op

Western Forestry Co-op has 33 years experience in advising farmers on forestry and is the longest established forestry Co-op in Ireland. The Co-op was established in 1985 by the Dairy & livestock Co-operatives in Western Counties in response to a need for support services for farmers to afforest the marginal areas of their farms rather than selling their land. The Co-op believes that forestry can complement farming rather than replace it by providing an alternative income for unproductive agricultural land. The Co-op objective is to improve farm income and assist in creating employment in rural areas. The needs of forest owners and the advantages of forestry in rural communities are the foundation of the Western Forestry Co-op along with the Co-op ethos of transparency, trust and openness. Western Forestry Co-op has offices in Sligo, Leitrim and Mayo. The Co-op provides a comprehensive forest management service from initial planting to the harvesting and sale of timber and replanting for the forest cycle again. We aim to foster both indigenous forest ownership and a generational forest culture so that the benefits associated with forestry stay in the local communities.

I would like to highlight some information about farm forestry specifically and some facts and figures on forestry in general and in the region.

Farm Forestry in the region

Farm forestry is an indigenous success story. We have the natural resources, soils and climate that favour tree growth on land that is marginal for some types of farming. We have world class manufacturing that uses wood such as Masonite and Merenda in Leitrim and world class Irish owned sawmills such as Crowes in Leitrim, McHales in Sligo, Balcas in Enniskillen, ECC and Murrays in Galway and McHughes in Cavan and wood fuel suppliers McCauley's and McMorrows in Leitrim, the capacity of which has all increased in recent years both protecting and creating important jobs in these rural locations. There are 100s of locally owned farm forests supplying these local and international outlets. Gerry McMorrows, MD of McMorrows Harvesting and Haulage, farmer and forest owner "*started hauling timber in 1993 and now has 22 trucks and employs 40 people in a small town in a rural part of Leitrim*". Wood Fuel markets are growing and indigenous supply of local wood is important to the region, Kenny McCauley, farmer and forest owner, of McCauley Wood Fuels "*with regard to the future and the regions ability to provide sustainable biomass resources as a means to displace imported fossil fuels, last year with pulpwood supplied from Western Forestry Co-op forest owners in the region, we produced enough wood chip and firewood to displace the equivalent of approx. 1 million litres of imported home heating oil and it's something that we're growing each year. With biomass, we can turn approx. 90% of revenue leaving the local economy due to imports into 90% staying from local indigenous produce.*"

Forests have a 30 year tradition of complementing farming in rural Ireland where landowners have grown trees on their farms and used the premiums and harvest income to invest in their beef, dairy or sheep enterprise or as security for buying land or renting land, college fees and a valuable source of annual family income. The manual workforce in forestry are mostly part time farmers, indeed our own foresters and forest workers are part time farmers. Our subcontractors such as machine operators, planters, fencers, hauliers etc. are part time farmers. Forests complement the seasonality of farm work and provide vital additional income all year round in rural areas. The importance of this indigenous industry is vital to the rural economy.

Farm forestry is an important indigenous industry in rural Ireland. It is a way to keep many farmers on their land, of sustaining jobs in industries and of creating more jobs in manufacturing, tourism, Bio economy and renewable energy. Co-operative forestry stands for indigenous forest and land ownership. On the continent forests are handed from generation to generation as an investment for their future and selling the land diminishes this for future generations. Forests in the West of Ireland can be a way of keeping land for future generations of the same family. In farming we have generational handover of land and we need the same in forests. Some young people who have inherited land aren't in a position to go in to farming full-time but tree farming is an option for them. Western Forestry

Co-op wants to see the farm forest industry to continue to prosper and have a sustainable forest and timber industry that continues to support jobs in this region. We would also like to see the incentives for forestry be weighted in favour of indigenous forest ownership.

Opportunity of Forestry (Facts & Figures)

- Ireland’s forestry industry contributes €2.3 billion to the national economy while at the same time providing important biodiversity and ecosystem services and recreational resources (FII).
- The forest sector supports 12,000 rural jobs that are spread throughout every region of the country and makes an important contribution to regional development (FII, Think Forests, 2018) A 2010 a study showed that for every 100 jobs in the forestry sector an extra 70 fulltime equivalent jobs are provided in other sectors of the economy.
- There are 4,210 people working in forestry in the Northern and Western Regional Assembly area, the majority of which are in rural locations. Cavan 380, Donegal 545, Leitrim 565, Galway 950, Mayo 700, Monaghan 120, Roscommon 505, Sligo 445. Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- 4,081 farmers in the NWRA area received €18,518,420 in forest premium payments in 2017. Source: Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine.
- By 2035, the annual roundwood harvest from the Irish forestry estate is forecast to double to 7.9 million cubic metres – the industry is to double in size. All of this increase is to come from the private sector, mostly farmers. (COFORD Roundwood Production Forecast)
- 78% of timber processed in Ireland is exported to the UK
- There are 40,000 international truck deliveries of Irish timber products to the UK per year
- There are 21,000 private forest owners in Ireland, the majority of these are farmers.
- Presently forests planted since 1990 absorbs 2.7 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent each year, this currently offsets 20% of GHG emissions in the agriculture sector.

Thanking you for the opportunity to make a submission and if you require anything further please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,
Marina

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