

## CHAPTER 13

# Interaction of Afforestation Scheme with Agriculture Schemes

### 13.1 REPS (Rural Environment Protection Scheme)

A REPS participant is free to plant land without incurring any REPS penalties. However he/she will not receive REPS payments on the planted lands but will be entitled to the afforestation grants and premiums. A change in land use to forestry during the period of the REPS plan will necessitate plan revision. Where an existing REPS participant wishes to plant some land, it may be more advantageous to have the REPS plan revised at the end of the REPS planning year before proceeding with the afforestation proposal. REPS participants who farm more than the maximum REPS area of 40 hectares can plant the excess land without loss of REPS payment.

#### 13.1.1 Application for approval of sites containing REPS habitats

If the site proposed for afforestation contains a REPS habitat (Question 2.3 on page 3 of Form 1 is ticked 'yes') the approved forester must provide the following information:

- State type of habitat and provide a copy of the REPS Plan map
- Indicate whether the area is in REPS 1 or REPS 2000
- In the case of REPS 1 sites, provide an Ecologist's Report Prepared by an Ecologist listed as approved by DoEHLG

The overall target for broadleaf species planted on REPS farms will be 35%, with a minimum of 20% on individual farms. On farms where demonstrably broadleaf species cannot grow, there should be a higher diversity of coniferous planting.

It will be the responsibility of the REPS applicant to notify the Forest Service of the areas identified in his/her REPS plan as those most suited to forestry and this only occurs if the REPS applicant is interested in availing of the forestry measure of the Rural Development Plan under regulation 1257/1999.

### 13.2 Farm Retirement Scheme

A transferee who already has forest land planted before retiring from farming and is entitled to a forestry premium may retain that land and continue to receive the premium. If this forest land is transferred with the holding the transferee who obtains it can apply for the premium.

Retiring farmers who want to retain some of the farm for forestry but have not yet planted should plant the ground prior to retirement and transfer of the remaining land. In this way they can avail of the forestry premium payments on the land (and are allowed to work in the forested area) and the retirement pension on the remainder of the farm. This is particularly attractive for farmers intending to participate in the farm retirement scheme who have over 24 hectares. This group could significantly enhance their income by planting land prior to retiring from farming and by holding on to it post farm retirement to benefit from annual forestry premium payments. However it is crucial to retain enough land in farming to satisfy the farming income conditions of the EU early retirement from farming scheme.

A farming transferee may use the land for forestry provided that he/she meets the viability threshold of at least 50 Income Units of which 20 Income Units shall be derived from farming owned or leased

land with an un-expired term of years that covers the period of the pension. (1 income unit = €254) (See sections 7.8 and 7.9 of Early Retirement (ERS2) 2000 scheme document – revised 7th May 2002).

### **13.3 Set-aside of land by Tillage Farmers**

Where eligible land is planted with trees under the afforestation measures covered by Regulation (EEC) No. 2080/92, and provided that an application to participate in these measures was made on or after 22 June 1995, the land in question may be counted towards the obligatory set aside (but not voluntary set aside). In that case the afforestation premium will be paid and not the set aside payment.