



Irish Timber Growers Association

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Irish Timber Growers Association submission on the Draft Policy Vision on Deer Management in Ireland

The Irish Timber Growers Association (ITGA) was established in 1977 and is the national representative body of private woodland owners in Ireland. The membership of the Association mirrors the wide range of different timber growers in the country and current membership includes farm forest owners, forestry co-operative members, private woodland estates, forestry investors and forestry pension funds. This wide range of membership allows the Association take a broad view of the industry and issues facing the sector.

The Association welcomes the opportunity to make this submission in relation to the Draft Policy Vision on Deer Management in Ireland.

This is a very important and timely initiative and given the economic important of our Irish forest estate it is imperative that the proposed integrated policy framework for sustainable wild deer management is prioritised.

The Association would be of the view that to be successful, in addition to deer management measures being integrated with existing policy and practice across the range of land use sectors, these measures must further develop and improve on existing practices in the sector. In particular, the Association would propose that the following be considered in this regard:

1. That Coillte, private timber growers and other owners of sporting rights ensure that appropriate Deer Management Plans are devised for their areas and adhered to by all licensees to ensure that deer numbers, especially females, are brought to and maintained at sustainable levels. This could be implemented by qualified stalkers, who wish to lease an area, proposing a sustainable deer population for that area, and estimating the actual population, and also stating how the balance is to be achieved through a cull of a stated number of males and females. Failure to bring the population under control within a couple of seasons could then result in the lease being forfeit. The cost of the lease should be based on the area of the forest and not on the number of deer to be culled to promote more active culling and accurate reporting of cull numbers.
2. That where the above measures do not suffice then a professionally managed cull be undertaken in appropriate areas to reduce deer numbers. In Britain, professional rangers are employed by the Forestry Commission to cull in areas where there are too few private stalkers. This could be undertaken here, either employing qualified deer stalkers, or possibly offering free deer stalking opportunities in such areas to appropriately qualified deer stalkers who can make themselves available for such culling.
3. It would be more humane in our opinion to start the season for the shooting of females from the 1st of October instead of the 1st of November as mature females, for the most part, will be carrying calves at the end of the shooting season.
4. Currently, the venison market in the UK is short of product due to very successful promotion of venison as a healthy food; prices for carcasses have risen markedly with no sign of the shortfall of product being made good for the present. There is a clear case for the same effort to made in Ireland.

5. A combination of increased harvesting of deer, chiefly females, with promotion of venison as a product could provide a balanced solution to deer numbers.

The Irish Timber Growers Association agree with the proposal that any deer management policy development and implementation would be best progressed within an external partnership arrangement comprised of representatives of sectoral interests and stakeholders concerned. The Irish Timber Growers Association as a stakeholder representing private woodland owners would be happy to be part of this initiative.

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For Irish Timber Growers Association
28th November 2011