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To: 2025strategy
Subject: 2025 Agri-Food Strategy Public Consultation

I note the public consultation re the above.

The agri-food, including forestry, sector, has been a hugely important part of economic recovery in recent years driving employment and exports.

Given that a new forestry programme has just been finalised there is relatively little to state that would impact on forest policy for the next few years.

That new programme, while very welcome, falls well short of what is required to meet the strategic objectives

contained in “Forest, products and people – Ireland’s forest policy – a renewed vision” launched last July.

I hold the view that land utilisation is crucial to economic development in this indigenous sector; I think most would agree that land use is currently sub-optimal and probably mainly due to the interaction of environmental and economic constraints and schemes. Land utilisation has tended to be considered from segmental perspectives. For instance forestry has been, but should not be, considered in isolation from agricultural, energy and environmental policies and subsidies.

Ireland’s land resource must be used to best competitive advantage for food production where appropriate, for fibre/energy where appropriate and, of course, with reasonable, and reasoned, environmental measures to meet legal requirements.

Land use change is a slow process and it is vital to even now start looking five to thirty years ahead and charting a course for food and fibre/energy production and ensuring that land use will be primarily driven by the capacity for success in markets that deliver jobs and exports rather than being an instrument for drawing what must inevitably be dwindling financial supports – while also recognising that public goods services from land need to be paid for.

Therefore I would welcome recommendations that point towards:

(A) identifying blockages to optimal land use and charting a vision for land use at macro levels for the next thirty years and beyond.

(B) integrating land use policy measures so that Ireland can balance competing land needs – the “trilemma” of food, fibre/energy and environment.

(C) Intensifying production on existing and additional forest land.

This submission is made in a personal capacity although I have drawn on the recently launched Forest Research Ireland FORI Report which I chaired.

The views here are my own.

Regards



Think before you print!

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