

Afforestation Scheme



Department of
**Agriculture,
Food and the Marine**

An Roinn
**Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara**

Leaflet No. 1

Funded under the Forestry Programme 2014 - 2020

Introduction

Ireland's forests and woodlands cover just over 731,650 ha, or 10.5% of our total land area. This represents the dramatic growth of an essential national asset that accounted for just 2% of land cover at the beginning of the 20th century. The majority of this increase is as a direct result of continued State support for afforestation since the 1980s, in the form of grants and annual premium payments. Despite this increase in the forest area, Ireland is still well below the EU average of 38%. As set out in "*Forest Policy Review – Forests, Products and People*", the national goal regarding afforestation is to reach 18% forest cover by the year 2046.

The Afforestation Scheme will be a major contributor towards reaching this goal, by encouraging landowners to convert their land to forestry. The scheme will provide financial support up to 100% of the cost of establishment as well as an annual premium payment each year for up to 15 years. Under the most popular planting category, the premium rate is €510 /ha.

The Afforestation Scheme is 100% funded by the National Exchequer and is approved by the European Union as part of the Forestry Programme 2014-2020.



Scheme Outline

The Afforestation Scheme provides a fixed establishment grant up to 100% of total costs and will be available to private land owners for projects approved by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Grants will be paid in two instalments. The first instalment, representing about 75% of the total available grant, will be payable immediately after completion of establishment works (including site preparation, planting and fencing), based on a payment application and subsequent assessment by the Forest Service. The second instalment (25%) will be payable not sooner than four years after planting, again after Forest Service assessment.

Premiums will be paid each year for 15 years, unlike previous afforestation schemes, the same rate applies for both farmers and non-farmers. Premium rates vary depending on the species planted, higher premiums are paid for broadleaves.



Overall Objectives

The overall objectives of the Afforestation Scheme include the following:

- To increase Ireland's forest cover to 18%
- To ensure that at least 30% of the area afforested comprises broadleaves, including native woodland
- To develop a forest-based biomass resource and generally encourage its use in domestic markets
- To increase levels of carbon sequestration contributing towards climate change mitigation
- Encourage forest management practices that restore, preserve and enhance forest biodiversity
- To provide a resource that will contribute to long-term sustainable development in the rural economy.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility criteria under the Scheme include the following:

- Applicants must be over 18 years of age and hold a Personal Public Service Number (PPSN). Companies must provide their company registration details (CRO number)
- All afforestation projects must obtain prior written 'Technical Approval' from the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine. A separate 'Financial Approval' is also required for grant-aided projects, before work can commence
- Applicants for Technical Approval must be the owner, the leaseholder or the joint manager of the land at the time of the application. Exceptions apply only where the owner is deceased or where the owner consents in writing
- Land must remain under forest cover and therefore is subject to a replanting obligation for all grant categories.

Grant and Premium Rates

The overall Afforestation Scheme comprises various Grant & Premium Categories (GPCs), each with its own level of grant and premiums. Some GPCs refer to specific species, while others refer to particular land types or forestry systems – see below. Fencing allowances also apply.

Grant and Premium Category (GPC) – Grant Rates	1st Grant €/ha	2nd Grant €/ha	Total €/ha	Additional Fencing Allocation €/ha	Alternative Fencing Allocation €/ha	Total Available Funding €/ha
				IS436 (120m/ha cap)	Non IS436 (100m/ha cap)	
GPC 1 – Unenclosed	1575	525	2100	500	350	2600
GPC 2 – Sitka Spruce / Lodgepole Pine	2310	735	3045	500	350	3545
GPC 3 – 10% Diverse Conifer / Broadleaf	2360	790	3150	500	350	3650
GPC 4 – Diverse Conifer	2625	840	3465	500	350	3965
GPC 5 – Broadleaf	3780	1155	4935	500	450	5435
GPC 6 – Oak	3990	1260	5250	500	450	5750
GPC 7 – Beech	3990	1260	5250	500	450	5750
GPC 8 – Alder	2520	840	3360	500	450	3860
GPC 9 – Native Woodland Establishment (Scenarios 1-3)	3990	1260	5250	500	450	5750
GPC 10 – Native Woodland Establishment (Scenario 4)	3780	1155	4935	500	450	5435
GPC 11 – Agro-forestry	2960	990	3950	500	450	4450
GPC 12a – Forestry-for-Fibre	1460	490	1950	500	450	2450
GPC 12b – Forestry-for-Fibre	1245	420	1665	500	450	2165

Annual premium payments are as follows. Note, the same rate applies for both Farmers and Non-Farmers.

GPC - Premium Rates	Rate/Ha	Duration (years)
GPC 1 – Unenclosed	€185	15
GPC 2 – Sitka Spruce / Lodgepole Pine	€440	15
GPC 3 – 10% Diverse Conifer / Broadleaf	€510	15
GPC 4 – Diverse Conifer	€560	15
GPC 5 – Broadleaf	€575	15
GPC 6 – Oak	€615	15
GPC 7 – Beech	€615	15
GPC 8 – Alder	€575	15
GPC 9 – Native Woodland Establishment (Scenarios 1-3)	€635	15
GPC 10 – Native Woodland Establishment (Scenario 4)	€635	15
GPC 11 – Agro-forestry	€260	5
GPC 12 – Forestry-for-Fibre	€180	10

The following gives a brief overview of the various grant & premium categories (full details are set out in relevant scheme documentation and in the *Forestry Standards & Procedures Manual*).

GPC 1 – Unenclosed Land:

Typically comprises upland areas with more marginal agricultural type soils which are silviculturally and environmentally suitable for afforestation.

GPC 2 – Sitka Spruce / Lodgepole Pine:

Does not comply with scheme requirements in isolation and can only be approved as a component of a larger project comprising of other GPCs.

GPC 3 – 10% Diverse Conifer / Broadleaf:

Comprises of a mix of Sitka spruce / lodgepole pine together with at least 10% diverse conifer (approved conifer other than SS / LP). Broadleaves adjacent to roads and watercourses may also form part of this 10%.

GPC 4 – Diverse Conifer:

Acceptable conifer species, other than Sitka spruce and lodgepole pine. Species can include Norway spruce, Scots pine and Douglas fir.

GPC 5 – Broadleaf:

Acceptable broadleaf species other than oak and beech. Species can include sycamore.

GPC 6 – Oak:

Pure oak (however, nurse species may be planted where additional shelter is required).

GPC 7 – Beech:

Pure beech (however, nurse species may be planted where additional shelter is required).

GPC 8 – Alder:

Pure alder (however, up to 10% can comprise other species for diversity).

GPC 9 and GPC 10 – Native Woodland Establishment:

These GPCs support the establishment of new native woodlands on 'green field' sites. The focus is on minimal site disturbance, biodiversity, water protection and other environmental benefits. Future wood production is encouraged, where compatible. GPC 9 and GPC 10 together present opportunities for planting in environmentally-sensitive areas regarding nature conservation, water and landscape.

GPC 11 – Agro-forestry:

This GPC supports the development of silvopastoral agro-forestry, a combination of both forestry and pasture. Stocking rates of 400 - 1,000 trees /ha apply, equally spaced with a minimum plot size of 0.5 ha and tree-to-tree width of 20m. Acceptable species include oak, sycamore and cherry (other species may be approved, on application). 80% of costs covered. Trees must be protected and tree shelters checked regularly. Tree shelters can then be replaced with plastic mesh and larger stock can be introduced. Silage and hay production is also permitted.

GPC 12 (a&b) – Forestry-for-Fibre:

This GPC supports the growing of productive tree species to produce wood biomass yields in the region of 150-300m³ /ha over 10-15 years. Eligible species are: Italian alder, hybrid aspen, eucalyptus and poplar (preference for improved genetic material). Trees are planted at a minimum of 2,000 plants /ha (a reduced grant rate applies for aspen, which is planted at 1,400 trees /ha). This scheme does not fund short rotation coppice or Christmas trees.

Application Procedure

Applications for afforestation approval must be made through a registered forester to the Approvals Section of the Department's Forest Service in Johnstown Castle, Co.Wexford.

Please note that work may only commence following written approval.

Where To Go For Further Information

This leaflet provides an outline of the scheme and must be read in conjunction with the scheme documents. Application forms and further information are available from the:

Approvals Section,
Forest Service,
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine,
Johnstown Castle Estate,
Co. Wexford.

Telephone 053 916 3400 or 1890 200 509 or see
www.agriculture.gov.ie/forests-service/grants-and-premiums-schemes-2015



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