

FII Submission document in relation to the draft Bill Amending the Agriculture Appeals Act, 2001

Received from

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Purpose of FII members and forestry industry:

- To provide rural jobs;
- Forestry has the potential to contribute to Ireland's obligations to mitigate climate change;
- Forestry can play an important role across so many of the objectives laid out in the Programme for Government.

Sets out current crisis;

- Impacts of new forestry licensing procedures;
- Administrative inadequacies and procedural barriers that do not exist elsewhere in Europe;
- Felling licences are at 20% of required rate, starving timber supplies;
- Severe impact of lack of timber supply on sawmills – threatens jobs;
- FAC – backlogs, rate of clearance of appeals, greater rate of appeals received;
- Appeals received in one day against felling licences that would supply timber for 5,000 homes;
- Vast majority of appeals lodged by a small number of individuals targeting policy rather than specific projects.

Comments on Draft Head;

Generally, agree with provisions of Bill.

- Annual report of FAC welcome; ensure resources in place to enable delivery of decisions on appeals by the FAC within 60 days of receipt;
- Deputy chairperson, meeting in divisions [of FAC]; membership and resource provisions all welcome;
- Provisions for fees; oral hearings and Ministerial directives all welcome;
- Importance of forestry industry has been recognised by successive governments and must be supported by the FAC;
- Appeals without sufficient grounds should be rejected by the FAC;
- Appeals should relate the site specifics and not to national forest policy;
- Chair should be able to set precedence to avoid hearing repeated appeals that are generic and raise no new issues;
- Appellant should be required to state their specific interest in the licence that they are appealing.