

Submission from Mr Geoffrey H T Fitzjohn in relation to the Forests, Products and People,  
Ireland's forest policy – a renewed vision

14<sup>th</sup> February 2017

Dear Sir

I refer to your invitation for submissions in today's Irish Independent.

I live in Connemara, on a sea trout and salmon fishery. Besides being an avid angler, I have a long career in land management, including forestry.

Many of the Connemara sea trout and salmon fisheries have monoculture coniferous plantations, principally owned by Coillte, planted in their catchments and headwaters in particular. Drainage was run off into the rivers and lakes, clogging spawning beds and changing the Ph and mineral/chemical balance of the water.

Having visited then lived in this area over the last 50 years, I am of the view that these plantings have had a significant negative environmental impact on water quality and aquatic life and must not be replicated either through expansion and/or retention when clear felled.

In any case the trees are of very poor quality generally and difficult to access and it is madness to re-stock these areas with conifers, which appears to be happening, presumably to retain 'forest area' regardless of quality.

In other jurisdictions, these areas would be either left unplanted or planted with native hardwoods and remedial works carried out for the benefit of water quality.

The planting of these areas in the 1950's and 1960's in particular is a classic example of misplaced forest policy, subsequently extended to private foresters availing of tax reliefs.

**If you want good trees, you must plant them on good land, look after them and compete with other land uses where and if necessary.**

A very simple policy rather than looking for corners of the Island that land can be obtained at the lowest possible price and not wanting to upset other land users!

If you do not come up with a policy that ensures woodlands are planted on quality land, any vision, renewed or otherwise will be just a waste of time and achieve nothing.

Yours sincerely

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