A	What are the main issues affecting the availability of land for afforestation Within the context of land availability for afforestation a broad understanding and acceptance of the following is needed. A. Land available, but not suitable. (e.g. Environmentally sensitive &/or unproductive). B. Land suitable, but not available. (e.g. High quality land in Ag production/Planted). C. Land available and suitable. (e.g. Opportunities within "grazing land"). There may be some scope for afforestation within A & B which could arise with clearer analysis, definition and identification and expansion of appropriate types of afforestation. What is at issue in **A** is a constraint arising out of the requirement to properly address the environmental sensitivity of certain types of land to afforestation. , e.g. unenclosed and historically unimproved upland and blanket peat areas. This necessary constraint is perceived by some as having a disproportionate effect on afforestation in certain areas within regions generally classified as 'most severely disadvantaged'. Consideration should be given to potential appropriate afforestation within these areas. The focus of future afforestation will in large occur away from Category **B** as productive agriculture will remain the primary preferred use for that land. However, consideration should be given to potential appropriate afforestation within these areas to compliment and mitigate / offset determined negative impacts from agricultural production, especially where there is a planned increase in the intensity or scale of that production. Examples include planting for carbon sequestration/balancing, shelter, riparian woodland establishment, forest-based ecological focus areas, and agro-forestry options. The greatest potential and the proper focus of the land availability group lies with land in category **C** (95%+ of current afforestation occurs on this land type). Efforts need to be re-focused within land in category C, with a view to identifying the extent of the available resource and to set-out strategies to bring a proportion of this suitable land into forestry. Secondly, forestry will not thrive if perceived as a threat to agriculture – integration and synergies must be demonstrated. The case for the increased afforestation of these lands would be supported by detailed analysis and a forensic case and complete a sensitivity analysis of the implications of the afforestation of a targeted proportion of this land **(WEAG Report is an excellent model)**. **The efforts of the CCLAWG should now be focused within this category where there is greatest scope**. ***Main Issues (in no order)*** 1. The continuing availability of attractive funding grants and premiums and support schemes continues to drive the flow of land into the afforestation programme. Statistics show that for 2011 6,387 ha of enclosed land was planted and 266 ha of unenclosed. How many new afforestation projects does this represent? (700-1,100 completed projects?). The trend is such that there should be a sufficient number of successful applications for grant aid this year (even with a 50% take-up rate) to expend the funding available from the national exchequer. 2. The positive market conditions for timber, needs to be emphasised with increased demand generating good prices. Demand is likely to exceed supply in medium-term. 3. The beneficial effects of carbon sequestration and other ecosystem services from appropriate forestry needs to be a) supported by research and b) promoted, with the opportunities created for mitigating and off-setting the negative impacts from agricultural production (especially where there is a planned increase in the intensity or scale of that production) at individual farm level developed. 4. The capacity of carefully planned and appropriately located forestry to deliver a wide range of public goods needs further development and promotion. There is already a positive association

between trees and forests and a clean environment. Forests and woodlands, by in large, are seen as a "good thing."

5. The absence of a strategic approach to land management, i.e. no overarching and binding National Land Use / Land Categorisation Policy, means that in comparison with demand for support for productive agriculture (and related issues) forestry is a secondary consideration in the allocation public monies and policy choices. Where lie the opportunities for future afforestation?
6. Other agricultural support schemes and requirements (such as Nitrates Directive land/stocking rate ratios), however unintentionally, can be seen to create artificial competition for forestry as a land use and to disproportionately push the focus for future afforestation onto the least productive but most environmentally sensitive land.
   Work is needed to remedy these non-market distortions and to create a more realistic, economically and environmentally-grounded sustainable framework within which choices as to optimal land uses at individual farm, regional, and national levels, and the allocation of publically-funded financial supports for agriculture at farm, regional, national, and EU levels are made.
7. Lack of awareness of how and where forestry can best compliment and synergise with productive agricultural enterprises. Need to couple with sensitivity analysis.
8. Need to "start from scratch" every year c. 900 new afforestation projects on 2011 figures. Is there a diminishing pool of willing landowners? How to tap into previously disinterested / unengaged landowner groups? (I.e. draw in using targeted schemes or those who are thinning now and seeing a return Is there an interest in more afforestation among this sector.) E.g. scheme to develop shelterbelts for livestock, to stabilise river banks, and to address other issues that would assist farmers.
9. Group Think - Lack of awareness of wider afforestation and management possibilities – beyond the standard/conventional approach with associated benefits, such as;
   a. Native Woodland expansion , e.g. reinforcing existing native woodland, restoration of riparian woodland corridors, consolidating existing clusters of native woodland, and introducing appropriate native woodland into other habitat types. Sector should engage with NPWS on ways in which afforestation can be targeted to support this area.
   b. Planting for water quality and catchment management. , with relevance to EPA, IFI, Local Authorities and OPW. Again, sector should engage with NPWS on ways in which afforestation can be targeted to support this area. E.g. UK's Woodlands for Water doc.
   c. Opportunities within urban / per-urban areas (afforestation as a planning tool, reinforcement of green belts / buffers, consolidate transport corridors, creation of woodland amenities, restoration of brown field sites, former landfills, etc.) – lots of examples from UK of Forestry Commission / forest sector involvement in this area, e.g. Community Forests initiative in late 90s, consolidating large areas of urban / peri-urban forest landscapes.
   d. Agroforestry (including woodfuel systems)
   e. Planting of bracken areas (less sensitive land types).
   f. Opportunities within the CAP
   g. Planting of non-agricultural land – e.g. brown-field sites or industrial/commercial land (e.g. opportunities for companies to show their environmental credentials!), and former landfills (possible commercial potential on land with few other commercial opportunities?)

B	What are the main constraints to achieving afforestation goals The objective of the Forest Service is to "*develop forestry to a scale and in a manner which maximises its contribution to the national economic and social wellbeing on a sustainable basis and which is compatible with the protection of the environment*". 1. Evidence from past planting and on-going management of sensitive sites supports the position that inappropriate afforestation of environmentally sensitive and unproductive land, can be counter productive to the achievement of afforestation goals. 2. Lack of appreciation of wider benefits of forestry – e.g. biodiversity, water quality, aesthetics, amenity, income from timber, wood fuel, farm income diversification, animal welfare, indigenous raw material, carbon sequestration etc 3. Poor integration and understanding of sectoral interests, concerns and opportunities. Limited vision need to find synergies with other industries (agriculture/carbon/water). 4. Farmer reluctance to plant (perception of "failure" as a farmer – perhaps not as significant as previously but still an issue, particularly with older farmers!) 5. Land – natural / market-driven and artificial competition for a finite resource (food production, energy crops, biodiversity, housing, Nitrate Directive/ stock rate ratios etc.). 6. Upward trend in agricultural land prices, with non-forested land still by and large valued and sold at a rates higher than that for forested land. 7. Food production – FH2020 targets likely to increase area under traditional agriculture (e.g. projected 28% increase in the national dairy herd). Upward price trends for milk, beef, pigmeat, poultry and cereals in 2010 and 2011. 8. Negative attitude to forestry, due to, for example, inappropriate planting and forestry practices in the past. 9. Replanting obligation may put some farmers off. May be primarily an issue to those who plant solely for the premium (Question: would recent increases in timber demand and prices not encourage replanting????) 10. Long term nature of forestry - 35+ years.
C	What incentives would support the achievement of these goals **1. Development of a strategic approach to the question. Evidence and understanding of alternative approaches & scenarios, which might include inter alia** • Definition of land classes and target areas for future afforestation. • Definition of appropriate forestry for appropriate places. Land specific afforestation schemes (Development of new schemes (Agroforestry/Forests for Water/NWS etc). • Need to focus on where opportunities lie – within agriculture/designated areas etc. • Development of synergies with other industries to demonstrate compatibility rather than competition. • Promote a greater understanding of the benefits of forestry (in the right place) – biodiversity, water quality, aesthetics, amenity, income from timber, farm income diversification, indigenous raw material, carbon sequestration etc. etc.

	2. Continuing availability <u>and awareness among potential participants</u> of afforestation programme including supports underpinned by A. <u>Full implementation of environmental considerations – Uphold legal requirements and scheme rules (guidelines)</u> The Forest Service is required to place significant emphasis on a careful evaluation of the environmental implications of each afforestation proposal. Cases which give rise to particular environmental concerns must be dealt with through the sub-threshold EIA screening process, the Appropriate Assessment Procedure where relevant, and public notification and statutory body consultation processes. At development planning stage (Form 1 stage) all determinable environmental considerations must be identified with development plans/ proposals drawn up, in the first instance by the consultant forester, with these in mind. Where approved work on each and every development proposal must be carried out as detailed in the application and/or in accordance with any conditions or amendments subsequently attached. This is to ensure environmental best practice through the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, guidelines. It is Forest Service policy to streamline procedures and systems so as to allow for the full implementation of national and EU legislative requirements whilst at the same time ensuring the application procedures are for landowners are as simple as practically possibly. Applications are dealt with as expeditiously as staff resources, S.O.P.s , internal financial audit procedures, and external body referral and public notification processes allow. Forest sector representative groups and other stakeholder interests are routinely consulted on new procedures, rule changes, and legislative requirements, with their views and input pro-actively sought and given due consideration. B. <u>Full implementation of Land Productivity Threshold</u> The land must be capable of producing yield class 4 for oak or beech or at least yield class 14 for Sitka spruce using normal forestry practices. The use of Sitka spruce as an indicator recognises that other conifers may not achieve this production on the same site. **3. Demonstration and promotion of potential of new markets and improved prices for timber and other services** • Demand for material is high at home and abroad. • Encourage supply chain efficiencies in private sector (e.g. woodland owner groups) • Mobilise private sector timber (e.g. encourage/promote thinning) • Carbon – drawing in industries with a role or interest in carbon accounting. **4. A multi-risk evaluation of potential implications of inappropriate afforestation including** • Risk of potential range of environmental damage over the short and long term of inappropriate afforestation and the future management of sensitive sites • Reputational risk at EU, national and local level of inappropriate afforestation • Risk of poor growth and development and inappropriate spend of taxpayers money. • Risk of future litigation at EU (CJEU) and local level (poor performance)