

Non-wood Products

Non-wood forest products in the Irish context mainly comprise foliage, hunting and recreational use of forests. While hunting can be seen as an end in itself, foliage is directly comparable with roundwood production and comprises procurement, harvesting, processing and marketing. Recreational use of forests is a developing area – with specialised facilities for activities such as bicycling being provided by Coillte. Opportunities exist to expand such activities and to extend them to privately owned forests.

Other non-wood forests products, principally fruits and fungi, are well established sectors in developed and developing countries with high levels forest cover. Many Nordic countries, for example, have well developed forest fungi collection and processing sectors.

Ireland's forests are predominantly plantations, mainly grown for wood; however, they are also providers of the many other goods and services now associated with forests and as the country becomes more urbanised, the need for these services is likely to continue to grow. Furthermore, as the wealth of the country increases, the demand for natural products from forests for decorating homes and workplaces continues to expand. With the growth of farm forestry, there is a need to develop the potential of non-wood products from forests to provide a sustainable and regular income stream for the owner.

In 2004 COFORD commissioned a report *Review of the market potential for non-wood forest products in Ireland* that explored the possibility of creating markets for some of these non-wood goods and services and examined their potential in an Irish context. Since the report the non-wood sector has continued to expand its level of activity, particularly in the foliage area, and in recreation provision by Coillte.

The projects in this thematic area are:

- **FARMFUNGI:** Production of edible fungi in the farm forest.
- **FORESTFUNGI:** Assessment of wild edible fungal production in selected Irish forest sites and an evaluation of the commercial potential of harvesting.
- **WILDFUNGI:** Wild fungi of Ireland.
- **FORESTFOLIAGE:** Management, screening and evaluation of a range of forest trees and associated ornamental species for suitability as cut foliage.