

Forestry in a changing policy environment

PROJECT TEAM

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OBJECTIVES

- Compare the relative returns from forestry and a number of different agricultural systems in the light of the introduction of the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) and analyse the impact at the level of the individual farmer and the wider economy;
- Examine the implications of the forestry-related measures to be introduced under the Rural Development Regulation (RDR) in Ireland for both the sector itself (including Coillte) and the wider economy, including, inter alia, the impact of revised payment rates for afforestation and the introduction of more specific 'forest-environment' payments;
- Explore the factors influencing a farmer's decision to plant using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods;
- Determine the impact of these reforms and farmers attitudes on land availability for forestry;
- Identify strategies to encourage afforestation by farmers in the context of the changing policy environment.

PROGRESS

Work on the project commenced in November 2007 when a student was appointed to review past and current forest policy in Ireland.

ACTIVITIES PLANNED

Focus groups will be held with farmers (including farm forest owners and non-farm forest owners). In these groups, farmers will be asked to identify what they think is inhibiting afforestation and to identify what can be done to encourage it. Similar meetings will be held with those working closely with farmers such as Teagasc and forestry contractors. Scenarios will be developed as to the factors influencing whether a farmer opts to afforest or not. A desk-top study of the relative returns from a variety of agricultural systems and forestry systems will be conducted.