

ESTABLISHING AND GROWING FORESTS

Establishing and growing forests are core activities of forest management. Central to these activities is the concept of sustainability which is changing the way in which we live our lives today. Sustainability in forestry finds its expression in sustainable forest management (SFM) which is the underlying principle by which forest management is being practiced in many countries throughout the world. Since the concept as first introduced in 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio, SFM has revolutionised the way in which we manage forests and has been a key driver in forest research and development programmes for the last two decades. SFM has required us to re-examine the value of forests and the goods and services they provide; also to rebalance the economic, environmental and social aspects of forest management for a more sustainable future.

The projects outlined in this section are concerned with making forest management more sustainable in Ireland. For example:

- rebalancing the species composition of the forest estate towards broadleaves and mixed species stands to create greater diversity in both timber products and enhancement of biodiversity;
- having a better understanding of the timber yields from private forests so that sustained yield can be achieved;
- sustaining an experimental infrastructure from which we derive much of our scientific knowledge that underpins policy and management decisions;
- developing new technologies for multi-resource inventories;
- developing planning tools for redesigning forest plantations established on environmentally sensitive sites to make them more sustainable;
- Seeking new methods to reduce chemical usage in forest establishment thereby sustaining the health of the forest ecosystem.

These outputs will provide us with the necessary guidance and methodologies which will ensure that practices are appropriate for the sustainability of forests and to ensure that they are in harmony with other land uses and the wider landscape.

