

Forestry

Lack of detail in forestry targets

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Forestry stakeholders broadly welcomed the Climate Action Plan but were highly critical of its lack of detail in providing viable annual afforestation programmes to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

While the target is to reach 8,000ha/year by 2030, there are no short-term targets specified. The *Irish Farmers Journal* understands there is to be a review of the planting programme.

Mark McAuley, director of Ibec's Forest Industries Ireland said while the plan is positive on the need to increase afforestation and utilise much more timber in construction, it is "completely aspirational".

"Right now we are planting only 10% of what is needed and this year we will plant little more than 2,000ha, when it needs to be 15,000 to 20,000ha per annum to get to net zero

by 2050. We need to translate aspiration into reality. The current afforestation programme is not fit for purpose and needs a complete overhaul," McAuley said.

Donal Whelan of the Irish Timber Growers Association said the plan "has the potential to help ensure that planting trees can be made more attractive by reimbursing farmers for capturing carbon in trees and enhancing our national biodiversity.

Geraldine O'Sullivan of the IFA described the goal of increasing afforestation beyond the current target of 8,000ha per annum as "beyond aspirational, considering the planting programme is in freefall", adding that the regulatory system must be reformed to reflect the scale and size of forestry on farms.

Pat O'Sullivan, the Society of Irish Foresters welcomed the prospect of a land use review "although it is late in the day".