

# Payments to farmers for forestry public goods

EU strategy to reward forest owners for non-wood forestry including carbon sequestration, writes Donal Whelan, technical director, Irish Timber Growers Association

The new EU Forest Strategy places a particularly strong emphasis on forest ecosystem services. It seeks to “develop, among other things, financial incentives, in particular for private forest owners and managers, for the provision of these ecosystem services”.

Ecosystem services include important benefits to the wider population, such as carbon sequestering and storing, improving biodiversity of flora and fauna, improving water and air quality and even the health benefits that forests can bestow.

The strategy acknowledges that forest owners and managers need drivers and financial incentives to provide “ecosystem services through forest protection and restoration” in addition to wood and non-wood materials and products.

According to the latest *State of the Voluntary Carbon Markets (VCM)* report from the Ecosystem Marketplace, the non-wood market grew in value approaching \$2bn in 2021. This represents a quadrupling of the market value over 2020.

The Irish Timber Growers Association has long made the case that woodland creation and sustainable forest management should have the potential to be a future source of income for growers, particularly through



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their carbon storage capability. This is a reality in the UK, through the Woodland Carbon Code, which provides reassurance about the carbon savings that companies can achieve by being associated with woodland projects.

A similar Forest Carbon Code (FCC) could be established in Ireland. This would provide a quality assurance standard for planting projects, ensuring they are verifiable, additional and permanent, so as to generate independently verified carbon units.

Such units could then be sold to companies and others who wish to show that they are mitigating their carbon emissions through Voluntary Carbon Offsets.

Providing such assurances would involve a formal auditing process with an agreed procedure, certifying the carbon storage and any other ecosystem claims made.

There are established forest certification procedures for the certification of timber, and these schemes can often accommodate other ecosystem claims within the certification audit.

While the importance of certifying timber products and the potential for group certification is well acknowledged, other non-wood forest products can also be certified.

Examples of such non-wood forest products that have been certified internationally include, honey, forest fruits, venison, mushrooms, cinnamon, maple syrup, tea, natural gums, cork and even beer.

## Talking timber in Roscrea

After two years of virtual Talking Timber events, Teagasc is returning to live in-person demonstrations and talks. “We are delighted to be back live and we invite growers, foresters, companies and timber processors to our next conifer timber marketing day in Racket Hall Country House Hotel, Roscrea, Co Tipperary, on October 25,” said Liam Kelly, Teagasc.

“The focus this year will be on producing sustainable timber products and, as we are holding an in-person event, there will be excellent opportunities for forest owners to engage with timber buyers, harvesting contractors and foresters.”

Liam said the event will include;

- A log and timber products display, presented by Forest Industries Ireland (FII).

- Short and informative presentations on selling and supplying timber and what the market requires.

- Networking opportunities for forest owners with a range of industry stands.

This event is free and all are welcome to attend, but registration is required on [www.teagasc.ie/talking-timber](http://www.teagasc.ie/talking-timber). The programme begins at 9.30am and ends at 2.30pm. The event is worth 30 CPD points to those registered on the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Programme.

