



Press Release

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Urgent action needed to deliver change in forestry sector – Climate Change Advisory Council

The Climate Change Advisory Council has said that urgent action and strengthened policy levers are required to incentivise increased tree planting to ensure Ireland's forestry sector does not become a source of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Council, which today published its Annual Review of the Agriculture and Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector, has said that the current afforestation policy is inadequate to meet our future needs as tree planting rates remain well below the target of 8,000 hectares per year.

Agriculture remains Ireland's largest source of emissions. The Council has highlighted a range of areas that must be addressed to reduce emissions from the sector. This includes the deployment of methane-reducing manure additives, and greater use of protected urea fertilisers. Increasing diversification in the sector is also critical, particularly in relation to the National Biomethane Strategy, which the Council has described as 'piecemeal' and lacking joined-up thinking.

Commenting on the need for improved performance from the forestry sector, Marie Donnelly, Chair of the Climate Change Advisory Council said, "What we have seen in the sector is a failure of policy, with schemes to incentivise more planting not delivering the results required. This has been exacerbated by the damage to forests during the winter with Storms Darragh and Éowyn which resulted in over 26,000 hectares damaged by windthrow.

"We need a policy from Government that will actively encourage afforestation in the areas most suited to planting. The Council is concerned about plans to plant on deep peatlands, with all evidence suggesting that this leads to significant carbon losses over time. Therefore, it is essential that the current constraints on afforestation on deep peat remain unchanged and are rigorously enforced."

The Council also highlighted the opportunity for the forestry sector to deliver for Ireland modern methods of construction with the expansion of timber frame construction providing the potential for a strong domestic market for locally produced timber.

With emissions from the agriculture sector having decreased by just 1.7% in 2024 relative to 2023 and by 4.6% relative to 2018, the Council has said that accelerated rollout of proven on farm measures such as introducing methane reducing manure additives and protected urea fertilisers will be key to reducing emissions.

"It is essential that the farming community take action to accelerate the rollout of proven measures on farms that can reduce emissions. This includes the deployment of methane-reducing manure additives and the replacement of CAN fertilisers with protected urea as

soon as possible. Government too must play its part and use all available instruments including taxation, regulation and incentives to ensure that farmers are supported to make the necessary changes to on-farm practices.”

Concluding, Marie Donnelly said, “Diversification is vital for the long-term sustainability of the sector, and the government should set annual targets for the rollout of diversification options including bioenergy, organic productions systems, expanded tillage and agroforestry with policies to support this.”

ENDS

NOTES

- The forestry sector contributes €2.1 billion to the Irish economyⁱ
- Employing over 9,400 peopleⁱ
- 1 cubic meter of timber replacing concrete and steel in construction saves 0.77t CO₂ emissionsⁱ
- Yet only 24% of building construction in Ireland is timber compared to over 80% in places like Finland, Scotland and Swedenⁱⁱ
- Building with timber is approximately at cost parity with conventional construction systemsⁱⁱⁱ

If you have any questions or are seeking further comment, please do not hesitate to contact:

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This year, the Climate Change Advisory Council will publish Sectoral Reviews throughout the year. The publication schedule below is subject to change and indicative only:

Chapter	Timeline for Publication
Our Changing Climate	Published 19 th March 2025
Electricity	Published 30 th April
Transport	Published 18 th June
Agriculture, Forestry and Land Use (AFOLU)	Published 16 th July
Heat/ Enterprise and Waste	Early September

Adaptation and Resilience	Late September
Biodiversity	Mid October
Cross Sectoral	Mid November
Irish Translation of Summary document	Mid November

ⁱ <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/irelands-forest-strategy-2023-2030.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/buildingandconstruction/newdwellingcompletions/>

ⁱⁱⁱ [Wood-in-Construction-in-the-UK-An-Analysis-of-Carbon-Abatement-Potential-BioComposites-Centre.pdf](#)