



Pro Silva Ireland Policy (Draft – January 2010)

1. Forests should be permanent and managed in concert rather than in conflict with nature. Forest owners and managers should be encouraged to adopt Close-to-Nature management systems which, using an ecosystem management approach, seek to increase the economic, ecological and social value of forests without clearfelling. Over the last century, the Republic of Ireland's forestry sector has been successful in restoring forests from 1% to 10% of land cover using plantation silviculture. Now is the optimum time to seek to transform these new plantations to permanent continuous-cover forests through Close-to-Nature management. In so doing, it is possible to optimise the maintenance, conservation and utilisation of forest ecosystems in such a way that the ecological and socio-economic functions are sustainable and consequently profitable.
2. A broader base of silvicultural systems, including Close-to-Nature systems, should be available to and utilised by Irish foresters and forest owners. These should be adapted and practiced in an Irish context, backed up by ongoing action based research and demonstration forests. The systems should be taught through our 3rd level colleges and made accessible to the forestry profession and forest owners through advisory and professional organisations such as Teagasc and the Northern Ireland Forest Service. Both the research and the teaching should be informed by the expert knowledge gained over centuries by our European partners in conjunction with Irish researchers and practitioners. There is also a need for greater recognition of the important role that forests play in our society and economy in primary and secondary education.
3. New forests are necessary for many reasons including:
 - carbon sequestration,
 - climate and soil regulation,
 - further development of a national renewable energy resource and energy security,
 - further development of domestic timber consumption and substitution of un-renewable products and timber imports
 - maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity

- ecological restoration
- provision of recreational areas where people and communities can exercise healthily while learning about and enjoying the beauty and magnificence of forests

New forests should be designed in such a way as to facilitate transformation, using Close-to-Nature silvicultural systems, from even aged plantations to permanent forests of mixed species and diverse structure that fit in the landscape.

4. Native woodland areas should be strategically protected and restored with strategic new linkages. Indicative forest strategies should be used to identify the most suitable areas for expansion of native woodlands and these areas should be prioritised.
5. The role of forests in carbon sequestration is already recognised and management systems should be refined to optimise this important function. This role can be further enhanced through
 - the increased use of wood in fossil fuel substitution in the domestic, public, community and commercial sectors whereby local markets are encouraged and supported
 - the promotion of timber in long life products, such as used in construction, joinery and furnishing.
6. The capacity for forests to produce timber, a sustainable natural resource, is of great importance and creates employment while sustaining a wide range of industries, from craft to industrial, across rural Ireland. It is unwise in our high cost economy to attempt to compete at the lower end of the forest products market. Foresters and forest owners should be encouraged to adopt management practices, including Close-to-Nature silvicultural systems, that improve timber quality and that produce a greater range of log size categories. This will facilitate a greater range of local industries at the higher, added value end of the market, making our forest industries more resilient to the pressures of global commodity markets.
7. An all Ireland deer management policy should be developed which leads to sustainable deer numbers and profitable stalking and venison sectors. The deer management policy should be implemented locally through a bottom up approach using deer management groups organised between state and private forest & land owners, wildlife & environment agencies and hunting interests. National strategies for the development of stalking tourism and venison markets, including a venison quality assurance scheme, are required.
8. Sustainable forest management is dependent on adequate forest access for timber harvesting, extraction, other management and recreation. The

continuation of funding through the Republic of Ireland's Forest Road Grant Scheme for the development of access in private forests is essential if private forestry is to develop sustainably in Ireland. Similar assistance should be provided in Northern Ireland.

9. Both governments, north and south, should adopt a certified forest products procurement policy whereby all paper, timber and other forest products purchased by or for government and government agencies is certified. This is particularly important with regard the import of tropical timbers.