Generations planting towards continuous cover

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There’s rarely a year goes by that Bryan Hennessy doesn’t plant a tree. In addition to his mixed woodlands, many individual or small groups of trees are dotted around his farm near New Ross in County Wexford.

His interest in trees extends beyond basic timber production and he has planted native but also many unusual species such as Southern beech, Coastal Redwood, Spanish Chestnuts among others.

It’s 65 years since planting began in Ballymacarr. Bryan’s late father, Denis Hennessy planted a hill field with Larch and Scots Pine when planting by farmers was almost unheard of.

Thus began a lifetime of tree planting by farmers which continues to this day. Bryan remembers his father’s love of trees that continues to this day.

Learning to manage farm woodlands

Bryan says landowners have a responsibility to manage farms with an eye on the future: “I believe in a whole farm approach which increases and maximises income but also improves environmental sustainability.”

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Knowledge and interest in trees

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Armed with this knowledge, Bryan worked with the Irish Wood Producer Group to help harvest and market his thinnings. Conifers were thinned to produce some pallet wood and the rest went for pulp wood. This pulp was stacked on site to dry and then chipped and delivered to local energy users in Wexford.

Bryan stresses the importance of supervising timber harvesting and sales. “No farmer would allow any other product off their farm without being clear on how much there is and what it’s worth; why should timber be any different?”

The Future

Bryan is proud of the value he has added to his farm through planting. This value comes in many forms: the timber produced now and into the future, the added value to the land scape with the many hedgerow and parkland trees along with improved habitats that exist alongside the day to day farming.

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Three new schemes to support sustainable forest management

1 Continuous Cover Forestry Scheme

This scheme supports the production of commercial timber while retaining forest cover at all times. Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) is an alternative forest management approach where the forest canopy is maintained at one or more levels without clear-felling. Natural regeneration is encouraged but natural regeneration can be supplemented by planting if required.

The scheme comprises of a CCF Transformation Management Plan that runs for a period of 12 years with three installments of €750/ha occurring at intervals throughout a 12-year period.

2 Second thinning intervention for broadleaves

This scheme provides financial support to forest owners towards the cost of a second intervention to the broadleaf forests (€500/ha). This is in addition to the already existing first thinning grant under the Woodland Improvement Scheme (€750/ha). Thinning operations supported under this scheme must have the potential to improve the quality of the crop and be carried out at least four years after the completion of works for the first intervention and before the crop reaches 16m top height.

3 Deer Tree Shelters and Deer/Hare Fencing Scheme

This scheme provides financial assistance to landowners growing broadleaf trees where there is a risk of deer/hare damage. Deer and hares are capable of inflicting serious damage to trees (in particular broadleaves). For instance: browsing damage, bark stripping, fraying damage as well as damage to the drainage system. Support for deer tree shelters is available under this scheme for both new and existing woodlands. Support for enclosure with a deer fence is available when deer damage has occurred after establishment. Support may also be available for a hare fence where hare damage has occurred after establishment.

See www.agriculture.gov.ie or www.teagasc.ie/forestry for further details.