



## Sitka Spruce Supply Shortage

2012-06-07

Many farmer foresters currently completing their afforestation will be aware that there is a shortage in the supply of Sitka spruce plants to complete their planting programme. This year has seen an unprecedented demand for Sitka spruce plants for afforestation, especially those sourced from cold storage.

The demand for this species has increased significantly on a national level since 2009. None so Hardy have seen an increase in demand for Sitka spruce from 29% (3.7m plants) of the overall planting demand in 2008-2009 to 46% (6.9m plants) during the 2011-2012 season. The requirement for spruce has also increased since the *Phytophthora ramorum* outbreak which led to the removal of Japanese larch from the approved species list. The diverse species component in the Grant Premium Category (GPC) 3 was subsequently reduced to 10% from a previous 20%. The Sitka spruce component of these sites has increased as a result to the amount of 1 million trees for the past two seasons.

The forest service has responded to the situation in a circular released last week. They recommend that if "you experience difficulties with sourcing such plants that prevent you from completing planting within the expiry period indicated on your financial approval, you should contact the approvals section immediately requesting an extension of the completion period."

Extensions of current planting deadlines and postponements until the autumn planting season will be issued by the Forest Service where it is deemed necessary. Some plants are available to complete the afforestation of Sitka spruce during the summer months but it is not an ideal time for planting.

Each of the extension applications will be assessed on an individual basis and must be accompanied by documentary evidence of your efforts to source the plants. If an extension is granted, you must submit a Form 2 with relevant documents for payment, "within two weeks of the expiry of the extended completion date".