

IFA Submission to the Forest Service consultation on Forest Reproductive Material

14th September 2015

IFA welcomes the opportunity to submit comments to the review of the accepted tree species on the grant aid list. It recognises the need to continue to maintain and enhance productivity and wood quality in the forest sector.

Farmers know the importance of selecting the right seed source when establishing a crop and its implication on productivity and quality. The genetic quality of reproductive material is key to the success of a forest stand as it is major influence in determining its adaptability, growth, wood quality and resistance to disease.

Sitka spruce continues to be the predominant specie in Irish forest sector and the specie of choice for farmers. It has a proven track record for being the most productive conifer in Irish conditions and is the backbone of the processing sector.

IFA would have serious concerns of the Forest Service proposal to withdraw improved and unproved QCI material from the from the accepted seed origins/provenances planting season 2017/2018. In the introduction to the consultation it states that “accepted tree species for grant aid list is being reviewed.....to maintain and enhance the productivity.....”.

It is IFA’s position that removing QCI material would limit the existing range of provenances available under the scheme and curtail farmers from choosing a seed that might be best suited to the site. The Forestry Programme 2015 – 2020 aims to increase afforestation programme to 10,000 hectare per annum it would appear counterproductive to achieving these targets to limit Sitka spruce seed availability.