

Why now is the ideal time to plant a farm forest

The new €308m Afforestation Scheme is offering farmers grants of up to €8,555/ha for farm forests

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The 2023-2027 Afforestation Scheme presents farmers with fantastic incentives to consider planting forestry and further drive their farm sustainability and climate action ambitions.

Applications for the scheme, administered by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), will open in the next few weeks.

A critical element in the €1.3 billion National Forestry Programme, the Afforestation Scheme is designed to deliver across a range of objectives from farm incomes and biodiversity to the production of high quality timber.

In addition to planting grants, farmers participating in the scheme are guaranteed annual premiums for up to 20 years with payments up to 66% higher than in previous forestry programme.

Main features of the new Afforestation Scheme

- 12 Forest Type options including a new Forests for Water option
- Afforestation grants for farm forests up to €8,555 per hectare
- Up to 20 year annual premiums for farmers* (NB 10 year annual premium for Agroforestry)
- Premiums up to €1,142 per hectare per year
- All grant and premium earnings are highly tax efficient

**Payment of the farmer premium will be determined by meeting scheme eligibility criteria.*

How does the Afforestation Scheme work?

The Afforestation Scheme provides establishment grants and annual premiums to plant and establish forests on suitable 'green field' sites. To plant a new forest a farmer must engage a registered forester to make their afforestation application. Afforestation grants

usually cover the cost for site preparation, fencing, trees and tree planting. They are paid in two instalments:

- 1st instalment (75% of the total grant) following satisfactory planting works
- 2nd instalment or maintenance grant (remaining 25%) is paid after four years subject to the satisfactory establishment of the forest.

Annual premiums

Forestry applicants will also receive an annual forestry premium. Farmers will receive annual premiums for up to 20 years and non-farmer applicants for up to 15 years. The rate of afforestation grant and premium is determined by the particular Forest Type (FT) option planted (see table).

Which forest suits your farm?

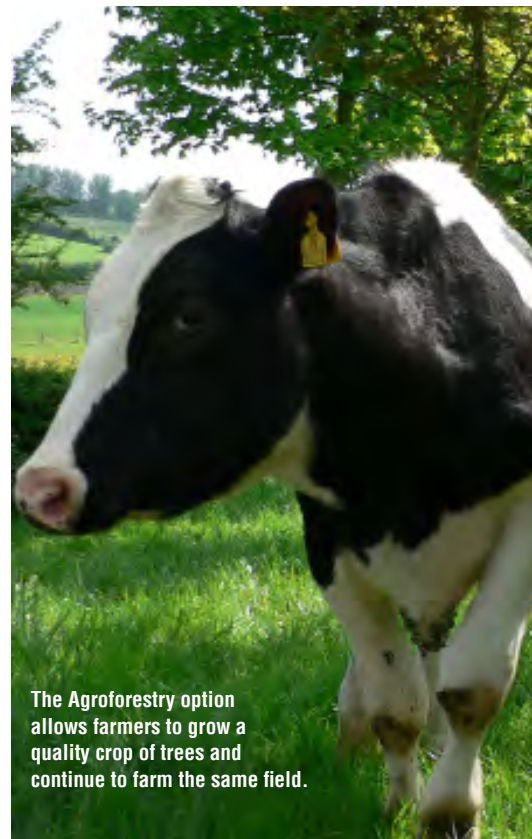
There is a forest to suit every farm. The new Afforestation Scheme supports the planting of 11 different Forest Types, each with their own specific silvicultural, environmental and practical objectives. It is important that you choose a forest type or types that best reflects your own objectives.

Forest Types

The following is a sample of the scheme's Forest Types

● **FT 1 – Native Forests** This category supports the establishment of new native woodlands. Its focus is on planting native trees such as oak, cherry and birch with minimal site disturbance and long-term 'close to nature' management. Afforestation grant €6,744 per ha (excl. fencing); Annual premium €1,103 per ha.

● **FT 2 – Forests for Water** Supports the targeted planting of native forests to protect a range of identified vulnerable and/or ecologically important waterbodies to intercept overland flow and "break the pathway" from the source to the receiving waters. Afforestation grant €6,744 per ha (excl. fencing); Annual premium



The Agroforestry option allows farmers to grow a quality crop of trees and continue to farm the same field.

€1,142 per ha.

● **FT 8 – Agroforestry** Enables farmers to establish a quality crop of trees and continue growing grass, grazing livestock or producing food in the same field. Afforestation grant €6,000 per ha to €8,555 per ha (excl. fencing); Annual premium €829 per ha to €975 per ha. Organic farmers may also receive an Organic Farm Scheme payment on the agroforestry area.

● **FT12 – Mixed High Forests** Mainly spruce with 20% broadleaves: This category supports the establishment of Sitka spruce and 20% broadleaf species with the primary objective of creating a timber production forest. Afforestation grant €3,858 per ha (excl. fencing); Annual premium €746 per ha.

● **Native Tree Area Scheme (NTA1 and NTA2)** may be of particular interest to farmers considering planting smaller areas. NTA supports planting up to one hectare of native trees without the need to first obtain an afforestation licence. Annual premiums will be paid over 10 years rather than 20 at a rate of €2,206 per hectare annually for NTA1 and €2,284 per hectare annually for NTA2.

For information on other Forest Types available please see <https://www.teagasc.ie/crops/forestry/grants/>

Taking the first steps

Forestry is new to most farmers and like all new enterprises can raise many questions, so what are the first steps?

- Talk to your agricultural advisor or Teagasc forestry advisor about forestry in the context of your farm and family. Forestry is a permanent land use change and may have an impact on other farm schemes.

- Inform yourself – forestry is new to most farmers. Talk to neighbours who have planted and attend information meetings or forest walks in your area.

- Contact a registered forester. To plant a new forest you must engage a registered forester to make the afforestation application on your behalf. After approval is received, you have the option to employ that forester for the planting or you can organise the work yourself.

Teagasc is planning a nationwide series of online and in person public information meetings on the new Afforestation Scheme over the coming weeks. For updates please check our website www.teagasc.ie/forestry

Forestry and BISS

Planting a forest does not affect your entitlements under CAP and you can continue to claim the Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS) Scheme on your forested land, subject to the terms and conditions of the BISS Scheme. Your forest may also be entitled to receive CRIS and Eco-scheme payments subject to scheme T&Cs.

Table 1 New Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 Grant and Premium Rates

	Forest Type	Grant Rates (excluding fencing) €/ha	Annual Premium Payments €/ha	Number of Premiums for Non-Farmers	Number of Premiums for Farmers
FT1	Native Forests	€6,744	€1,103	15	20
FT2	Forests for Water	€6,744	€1,142	15	20
FT3	Forests on Public Lands	€10,544	€1,103	15	n/a
FT4	Neighbour Woods	€10,200	€1,142	15	20
FT5	Emergent Forests	€2,500	€350	15	20
FT6	Pure Broadleaves, mainly oak or beech	€6,744	€1,037	15	20
FT7	Other Broadleaves	€4,314	€973	15	20
FT8	Agroforestry - silvoarable	€6,000	€829	10	10
FT8	Agroforestry - silvopastoral	€8,555	€975	10	10
FT8	Agroforestry - forest gardening	€6,000	€829	10	10
FT9	Seed Orchards	€10,000	€1,142	15	20
FT10	Continuous Cover Forestry	€5,421	€912	15	20
FT11	Mixed High Forests: conifer, 20% broadleaves	€4,452	€863	15	20
FT12	Mixed High Forests: spruce, 20% broadleaves	€3,858	€746	15	20
NTA 1	Small native forests	€6,744	€2,206	n/a	10
NTA 2	Small native forests for water protection	€6,744	€2,284	n/a	10

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