**SIF Policy on Sustainable Forest Management**

**Issue:**
Ireland is committed to the practice of Sustainable Forest Management, which, under the Helsinki and Lisbon Agreements, is understood to mean:

“The stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way and at a rate that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regenerative capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions as local, national and global levels and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems”

Globally, Sustainable Forest Management is being implemented through the development of national forestry standards.

Forest management has been based on the principle of sustained yield management for generations. However, society today demands more of the forest than a sustained supply of wood and wood products. Foresters today should recognise the socio-economic role of forests, their contribution to the environment, the quality of life and their role in carbon sequestration and enhancing biodiversity. Sustainable Forest Management seeks a balance between the economic, environmental and social functions of forests.

Sustainable Forest Management as defined, involves the management of the whole ecosystem, and a greater level of scientifically based management. The interaction of the forest and the wider environment is understood more keenly than ever before. As our knowledge of ecosystem processes develops, forest management skills are being improved.

***The Society of Irish Foresters’ Position:***

* The Society of Irish Foresters supports the Government’s Strategic Plan for Forestry “Growing for the Future”. The objective of this plan is “to develop forestry to a scale and in a manner which maximises its contribution to national economic and social well-being on a sustainable basis and which is compatible with the protection of the environment”. This objective can be best realised through the adoption and implementation of a sustainable forest management policy, underpinned by scientific knowledge, a vigorous programme of research and supported by an appropriate national forestry standard, codes of practice and financial incentives.
* The Society of Irish Foresters supports the need for a national land-use policy to ensure that the benefits of forestry and other land-uses are maximised. This policy should be based, inter alia, on a national Indicative Forest Strategy.
* The Society of Irish Foresters supports the implementation of the national forest standard.
* The Society of Irish Foresters supports the use of independent certification of sustainable forest management as a means of ensuring the highest forest management standards and of building consumer confidence in Irish forest products.
* For generations, forest management in Ireland has been based on the principle of achieving long-term, sustained productivity from forests. The challenge facing foresters today is to continue to establish a vigorous forest industry that can contribute to socio-economic well-being.
* The Society of Irish Foresters recognises that the consultative process has an important role in sustainable forest management. Such communication serves to inform foresters of local issues of importance and concern and to educate rural communities and special interest groups of the operational issues involved in sustainable forest management. In many cases, a multi-disciplined approach to forestry development will best serve the objectives of the community as a whole.
* The Society of Irish Foresters endorses the implementation of the Forest Service Code of Best Forest practice and Forest Service guidelines on Forestry and the Landscape, Archaeology, Harvesting, Water Quality and Biodiversity.