



28 December, 2022.

Re: Your approval to plant forestry

Dear Applicant

I am writing to you because in the last 3 years you got a licence from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to plant trees. As far as we can see you haven't planted yet, and usually your next step would be for you to apply for financial approval to go ahead. Your registered forester would send in your application for financial approval to the Department on your behalf. This would allow you to plant and you would then qualify for an establishment grant to plant the trees and to get yearly payments (premiums). **However there have been important changes to this system and that is why I am writing to you.** If you have changed your mind about planting and do not intend to do so in the future there is no need to read any further.

You got your approval to plant under the rules of the Forestry Programme 2014 to 2022. **As this Programme is finishing on 31st December 2022, you can no longer plant under those rules from 1st January 2023.** You now have two choices as below and I would urge you to discuss these with your registered forester.

Option 1:

Keep your current approval, but agree to join a new 'Interim Afforestation Scheme (via General De Minimis)' and to opt-in to the rules of that Scheme. This will allow you to commence planting in January. If you wish to do this, you should arrange with your registered forester to complete 3 documents; the 'opt in' form, the de minimis declaration form and the financial approval application (Form1a). Your registered forester has these forms and they are also available on the Department's website at www.gov.ie/forestry. Your registered forester will send these forms to the Department on your behalf. Once you get a letter from the Department giving you financial approval you may go ahead and plant.

This planting must be carried out in line with the new rules. This could mean some changes to the original plan and these should be explained to you by your registered forester.

Under this Scheme you will be paid increased rates and premiums as per the Scheme document and your premiums will be paid for 20 years instead of 15 years if you qualify as a farmer.

Important to note:

This is a De Minimis Scheme, and therefore special rules about payments apply. Simply put, payments are on a 3 year cycle, and in any consecutive 3 years the maximum payment that you may receive under all De Minimis schemes combined is €200,000. An entire payment from the Department to you could be stopped if you go over the limit in this 3 year period and this cannot be claimed in future years.



You should be aware that you could also be in other schemes which count as De Minimis. Grants from other Government Departments and State Agencies can also be paid through De Minimis.

It will be your responsibility to ensure that you have not exceeded the €200,000 threshold in the 3 years, from all sources, and you will have to sign a declaration stating that you have not exceeded this threshold on each payment application form for the Interim Scheme.

This Interim Scheme could be a good option for you if you want to plant early in the New Year and you are sure that you will not go over €200,000 in the 3 year cycle (noting that there will be consecutive cycles for the 15 or 20 years of the Scheme).

Option 2:

Postpone planting until the launch of the new Forestry Programme 2023 - 2027 and opt-in to the new Programme by agreeing to adhere to any conditions therein. As outlined above, this Programme is not in place yet and it could be some months before you can opt-in, as we can't open it until we have agreement from the European Commission. We expect that the payment rates will be the same as the Interim Scheme, though there could be some changes to the scheme rules.

This could be a good option for you if you do not intend planting in at least the first quarter of 2023, or if you have concerns about breaching the De Minimis threshold.

If you do not wish to opt-in to the Interim Scheme, we will inform you when the new Forestry Programme opens if your approval is still valid.

Summary:

In summary, you cannot commence planting unless you send in a financial approval application and agree to opt-in to Option 1 - the Interim Scheme (now open) or to opt-in to Option 2 - the new Forestry Programme (not yet open).

If you have any questions please contact your registered forester who sent in your application or send us your query at forestryappenq@agriculture.gov.ie or ring us at [\(0\) 53 916 3400](tel:0539163400).

Further information is available in a Frequently Asked Questions document which can be found at 'Forestry Early 2023 Interim Arrangements-FAQs at: www.gov.ie/forestry, see information on Forestry Grants and Schemes.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Adams
Approvals Section