

FORESTRY

Complementary farming enterprise

WE CAUGHT up with James Bradshaw, mounding contractor and area representative for SWS Forestry Services in the East Limerick / West Tipperary region.

James and his brothers also operate a farming enterprise and an agricultural contracting business from their base at in Doon, so he is well placed to understand the realities of modern day farming.

We began by asking James what got him into forestry.

"I've had a keen interest in forestry from a young age, particularly as a result of the volume of land that has been converted to forestry in my own area over the past 20 years," he said. "It's amazing to see how quickly the landscape transforms in an area once the land is planted."

"From the day the mounding contractor moves onto the land and prepares the ground for planting, the landscape is transformed. Within a week or two the trees are in the ground and within a few short years, what was once more than likely a wet rushy field or a steep incline is transformed into a vibrant plantation."



James Bradshaw of SWS Forestry Services

James has no reservations about the conversion of such land to Forestry.

"We are more than familiar with the realities of trying to work land that because of modern day practices is just better suited to forestry. Incomes from traditional farming methods on such land cannot compete with the

premiums paid under the forestry scheme."

He can understand the reservations some landowners may have towards forestry. There is no doubt that once the decision is made there is no going back, however James feels that rather than making a decision to convert an entire farm to forestry, for some it is better to initially identify those fields that really aren't suitable for anything else, get them planted and over time a person can decide to plant a bit more if they wish.

"In doing so, incomes are improved and at the same time gone is the hassle of trying to manage unproductive or dangerous land. People tend to forget that the harvest income from the timber provides real serious income down the road, evidenced by the volume of timber harvested around here in recent years."

Some of the best plantations in Western Europe are growing in this area, so when it comes to either selling timber or indeed if wishing to sell land suitable for planting or indeed a semi mature plantation, premium prices will be paid, says James.

James Bradshaw, SWS Forestry Services, is on 087 9491043 or at james.bradshaw@swsforestry.ie

BEEF GRID

Factory specs 'goalposts mounted on wheels'

CHAIRPERSON of Limerick ICMSA, Thomas Blackburn, has said that the ongoing problems farmers are having in certain factories when they sell animals and are being penalised on weight and other limits merely reinforces farmers long-held conviction that certain factories operate their specifications like "goalposts mounted on wheels".

"As soon as you strike the ball at where the posts are currently positioned, or where they were set up originally, then the factories run on to the pitch and wheel them over to a new spot that you have to line yourself up for your shot all over again," said Mr Blackburn.

He said it is getting to the stage where cattle have to be produced to such a strict specification that our system of grass based beef will be of absolutely no advantage to us.

"The meat plants will have

to face the reality that the majority of our beef will come from dairy herd going forward and in this regard, we need to review the beef grid and its associated age, weight and QA restrictions to reflect that reality. In exactly the same way as our milk production, our beef is also based on grass and we simply cannot be expected to mirror the exactness of an indoor, grain-fed, system nor, in ICMSA's opinion, should we strive to do so", said Mr Blackburn, before turning to the "underlying cause of these problems".

"Despite the work of well intentioned intermediaries, we find ourselves back yet again with the same problems and this is due to the failure of a number of parties to deliver on the commitments given at the Beef Forum. It is a matter of record that a commitment was given in November 2014 to review the grid. It never happened."



THE FAMILY FARM ORGANISATION

ICMSA has represented Limerick's farm families at local, national and European level with diligence, integrity and an emphasis on finding solutions to their problems that has been our trademark for over 60 years. We're the specialist family dairy farm organisation with an unrivalled record of sound analysis and a focus on farm incomes. We are organised by - and work for - farmers. And only farmers. We're based in Limerick and know have the insight into Limerick farming that comes with real local knowledge.

Join ICMSA and become part of the solution.

Chairperson of Limerick ICMSA:
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Please also look at our website at www.icmsa.ie

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*Subject to site condition and individual tax status.