

CCF Practice in Irish Private Forests



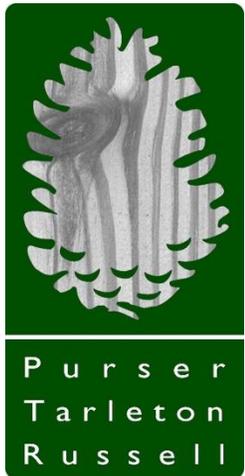
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Introduction & Outline

- Will largely be restricting my presentation to consideration of the private sector
- Estimation of the current private forest areas being managed under CCF in Ireland
- Provide a profile of the different kinds of CCF private forest owners and their varied motivations
- Look at some case studies of CCF practice in private forests in Ireland



Mixed Oak and Beech, Curraghmore, Co. Waterford

Looking Back

- While we are celebrating 25 years of ProSilva Ireland, it is important to recognise the massive effort made by many generations since the turn of the 20th century in establishing new forests and the re-development of a forest products sector
- There is a convenient (and largely true) narrative that this was done with a singular focus on timber production with less regard for the other functions of forests
- However, there are no end of examples of foresters and forest owners who, during this time, envisaged a different and more diverse future for Irish forestry – a couple of examples:

1898 Quote from Lady Gregory of Coole Park, Co Galway

“When choosing the sort of tree to plant it is wise to look round and note what does best in the neighbourhood, for trees are capricious as to soil. Ash is easily come by and easily moved, and its timber is useful in a hundred ways...Oak strikes deep, and its roots find their nutriment below the region of grass and crops...Sycamore will stand wind where nothing else will. If evergreen is wanted there is the [Norway] spruce, hardy, substantial, handsome...Scotch fir (pine) is hardy and brave... Its red stem lights up a landscape when the sun shines on it. And when the sun is hidden and all is grey the gleam of the silver fir [Abies alba] like the silver lining to a cloud, keeps depression away. But the silver fir is gentle and likes shade and safety; it is with the Scotch, the sycamore, the elm we must hold the heights.”

1956 Quote from Stanley Pfeiffer in the Forest Management Objectives at Grove Estate, Fethard, Co. Tipperary

“To establish a hardwood forest and screens which will maintain themselves by natural regeneration. Standing trees will constitute the capital value of the forest with income derived from individual selection.”



Planting Date Stone, Curraghmore, Co. Waterford

What area of Private Forest is managed as CCF?

- “The Practice of Continuous Cover Forestry in Ireland” (Vitkova *et al*, 2013) estimated:
 - Approx. **2,311 ha.** of private forests under CCF management
 - A mean forest area of 64 ha.
- In 2025:
 - Based on personal knowledge and applying a conservative multiplier for private estates (1.25) and small forest owners (2.0), it is estimated that there are approximately **6,536 ha.** of private forests under active CCF management
 - Mean forest area per CCF TFL is 21 ha.
 - This excludes:
 - forests < 10 years old that may have been planted diversely / broadleaves / native with CCF in mind
 - Private native woodlands which will may or may not be actively managed but are unlikely to be clearfelled



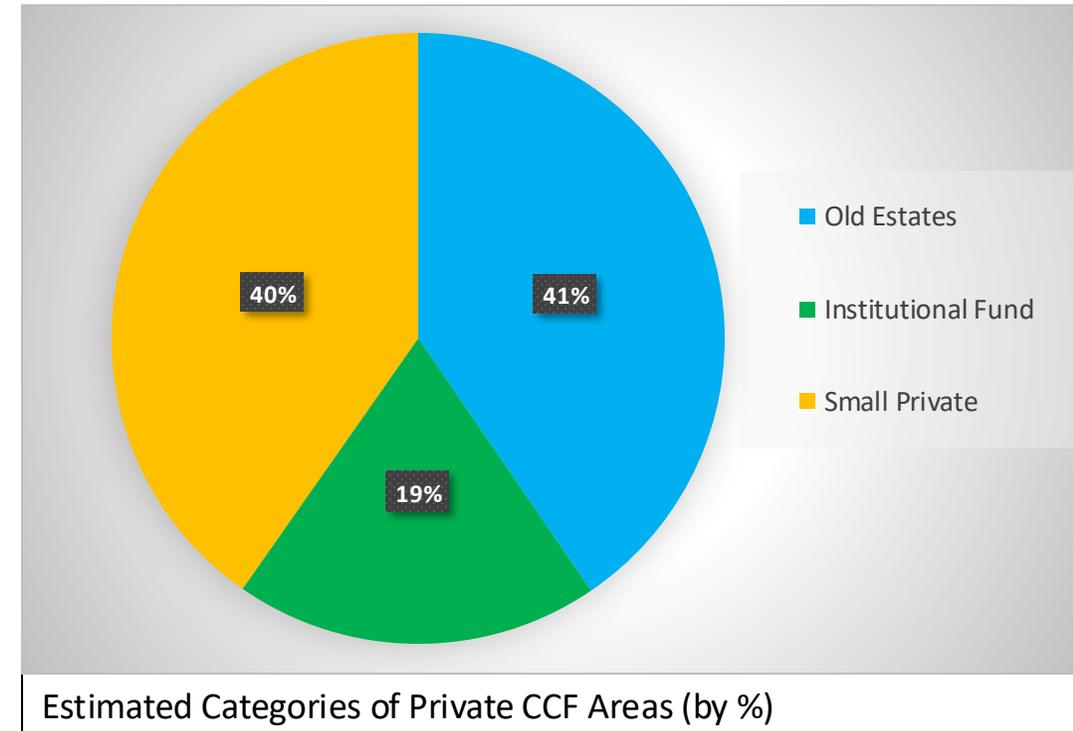
Mixed Spruce and Broadleaves, Cloncracken, Co. Tipperary

Forest Service Data:

- CCF area in private TFL's: **5,045 ha.** (236 licences)
- WIS CCF area: **1,223 ha.** (135 contracts)
- Afforestation FT10 (CCF) approved: **314 ha.** (72 ha. at Form 2 stage)

Profile of Private Owners Pioneering CCF Practice

- Unlike in many European countries, it is the private sector that has been pioneering CCF practice in Ireland
- The movement towards CCF has been led and empowered by forest owners
 - With significant mentoring and guidance from our European colleagues
- Forest owner profiles range from:
 - Old Estates
 - Small Forests
 - Traditional Farm Forest Owners (who planted and manage)
 - New “Non-Farming” Owners who want to make an impact
 - Purchase land to plant in a diverse manner
 - Purchase forests to transform
 - Institutional investors



All share a common desire to move away from the conventional approach to forest management and want their forests to be permanent and multifunctional

Case Study 1: Knockrath, Co. Wicklow Compt. 19 & 20

- Originally planted (P1954-66) with DF, JL, SS and some NS – in transition since 2005
- Influence of Boundary Beech and Some WH, Neighbouring Native Oak Woodland (Clara Vale)
- AFI Inventory Established in 2012 and repeated in 2017, 2022
- Basal Area and Thinning Timeline
 - 2005 62m³ / ha. Thinned
 - 2012 BA = 29.8 m² / ha.
 - 2013 60m³ / ha. Thinned (€2,216 / ha.)
 - 2017 BA = 26.1 m² / ha.
 - 2022 BA = 30.1 m² / ha.
 - 2024 70m³ / ha. thinned (€3,905 / ha.)
 - 2025 BA = 25 m² / ha. (est)
- Current Standing Volume est. 220 m³ / ha.
- Current Standing Value est. €20,000 / ha.
- Receives PES of €150 / ha. / annum under WIS CCF Scheme
- So currently earning c. €400 / ha. annualised



Timber Harvest, Compt. 19&20, Knockrath, Co. Wicklow

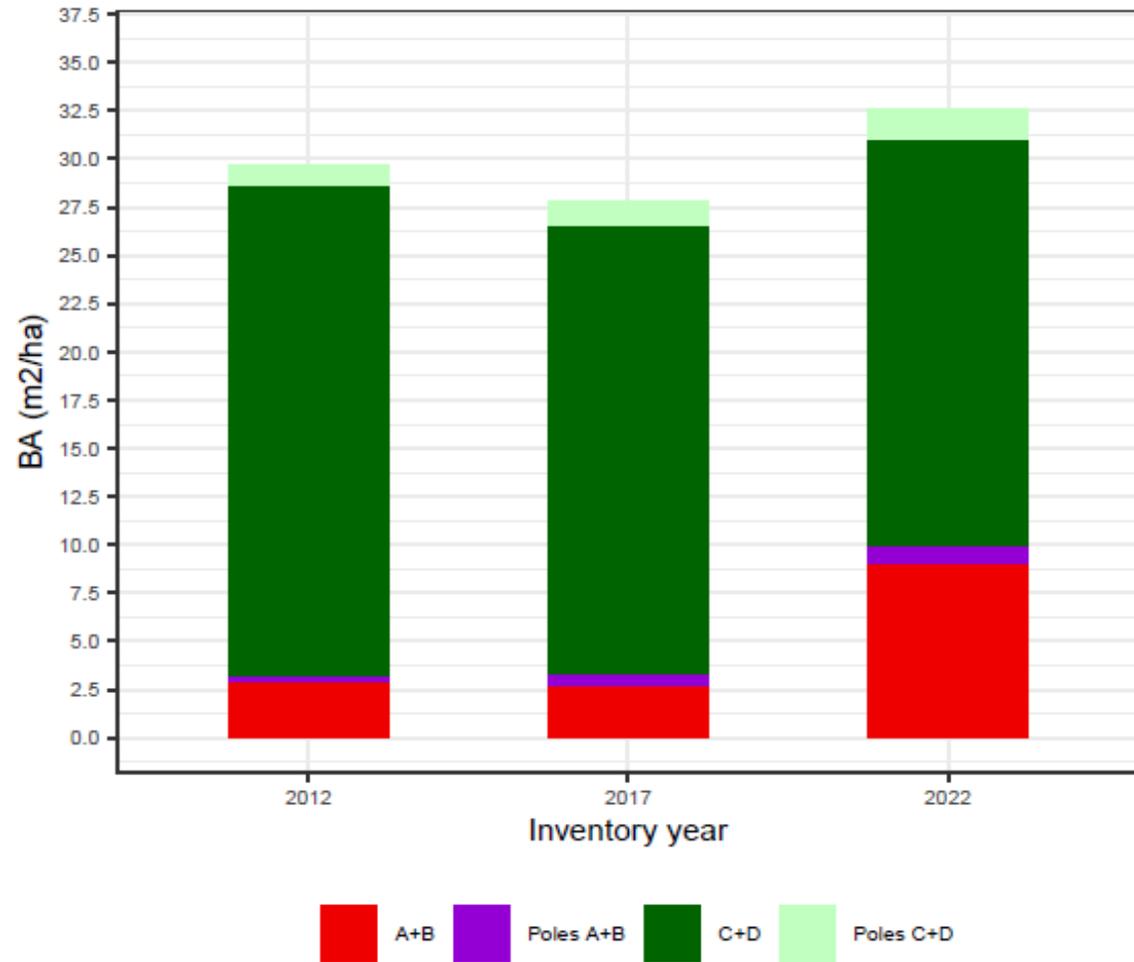


Chart 2.1.2 – Monitoring of the quality distribution by basal area

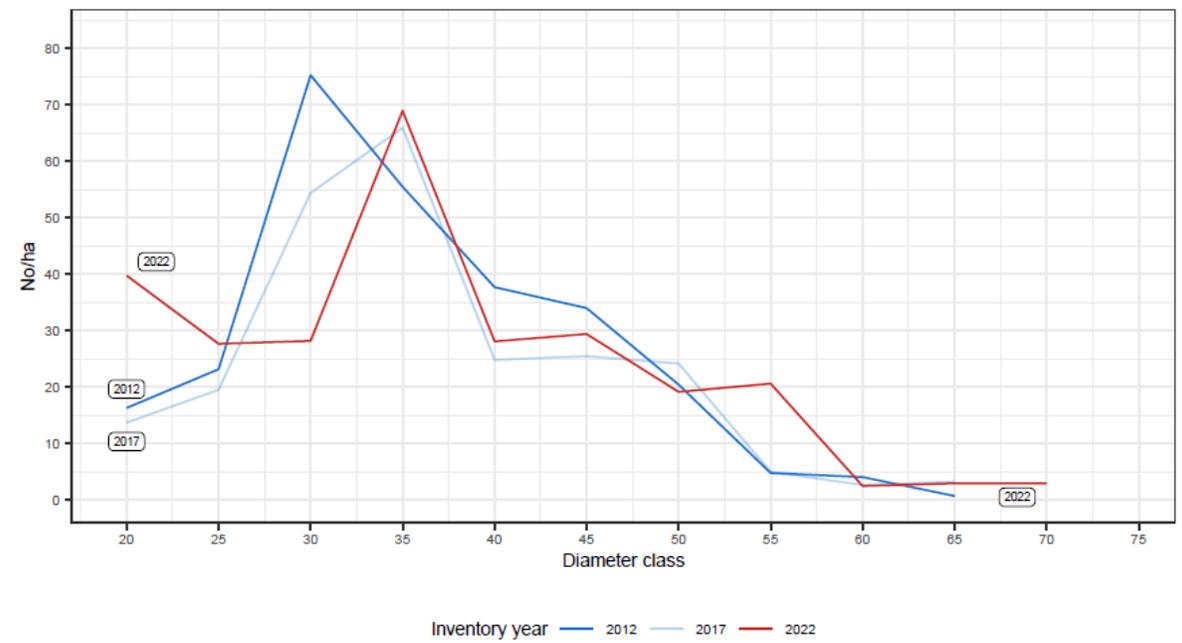


Chart 2.1.3 – Number of inventoried trees per hectare

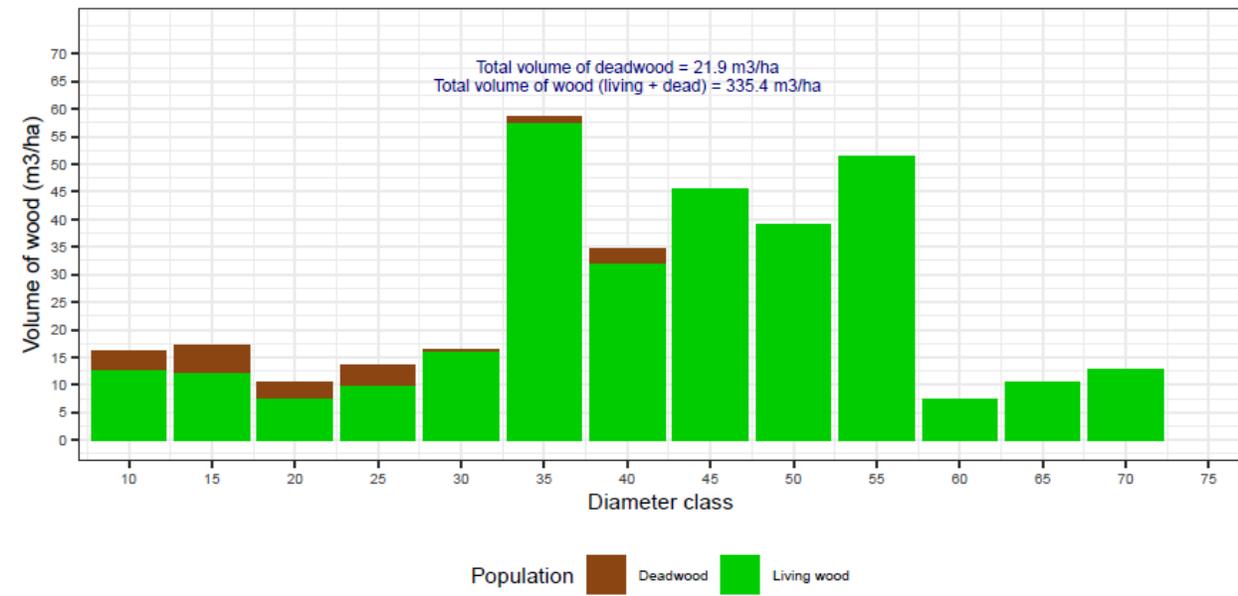
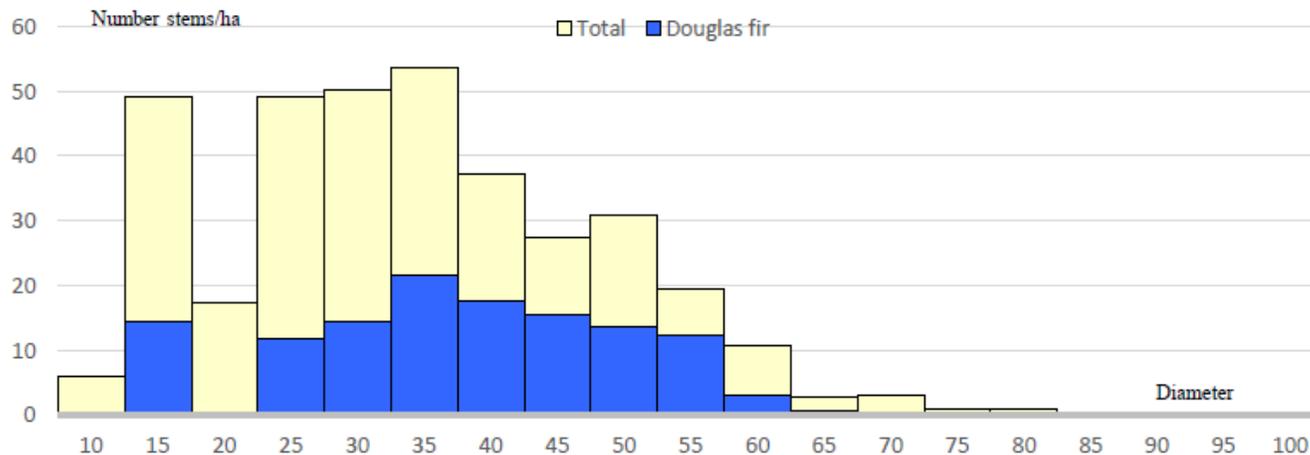


Chart 3.1.5 – Relative importance of deadwood by diameter class

Case Study 2: Cloragh, Co. Wicklow

- Originally planted (P1965-72) with SS, DF, NS, NF with some veteran SP – in transition since 2004
- Long thinning history
- ISN Inventory Established in 2021 and repeated in 2024
- Standing Volume is 393 m³ / ha.
- Stocking 380 stems / ha.
- Basal Area is 37 m² / ha.
 - 88% (32.4 m² / ha.) of BA falls into quality classes A & B
- Annual Increment of 15.5 m³ / ha.
- Annual Value Increment of €761 / ha.

Stems per ha by diameter class



Timber Harvest, Cloragh, Co. Wicklow (Liam Byrne)

Regeneration

	N/ha				Total	% Browsing	
	% Cover	Class1	Class 2	Class 3		Class1	Class2
Sitka spruce	3,644	1,801	429		2,229	13%	
Douglas fir	986	900	386		1,286	10%	25%
Other conifer	1,072	1,372	1,843	257	3,215	13%	5%
Broadleaves	386	429	43		472	60%	
Total	6,088	4,501	2,701	257	13,547	17%	7%

(1) C1.1 : seedlings with height greater than 50cm and below 1.5m

(2) C1.2 : saplings with height greater than 1.5m and diameter below 2.5cm

(3) C1.3 : saplings with diameter greater than 2.5cm and below 7.5cm (displays total only)



CCF Management Includes Deer Management



CCF Workshop, Cloragh, Co. Wicklow

Case Study 3: Kilteel, Co. Kildare

- Originally planted in 1995 by Noel Kiernan with
 - 7.6 ha. Sitka spruce
 - 8.7 ha. Oak
 - 1.3 ha. of Sycamore / larch / Other broadleaves
- Road Built in 2016
- 1st Thinning 2017
 - Oak thinned with use of Woodland Improvement Scheme (1st thin grant)
 - Sitka spruce thinned (53m³ / ha.)
- Approved for WIS CCF Scheme 2019 (1 of the 135 FS Contracts)
 - Marking of thinnings
 - Inventory
 - Deer Management
 - Enrichment Planting
- TFL Received 2021
- Conifers Thinned 2022 – following professional marking
 - (71m³ / ha.)
- 3rd Thinning of Spruce due in 2025 along with 2nd thinning in Oak
- Site has been developed for use as a ProSilva Ireland Tree Marker Training Forest



Tree Marker Training, Kilteel, Co. Kildare (Ted Wilson)

Concluding Remarks

- CCF Development in Ireland is built on much of the pioneering forestry development work over the last century
- It is part of the natural maturation of the forestry sector as a whole and is also being driven by changes in society and a more wholistic view of the role of forests in society
- The private sector have been pioneering its development
- CCF is very much aligned with the policy direction being taken at EU and National levels
- In this regard, supports for CCF have been developed under the Forestry Programme and it is only going to grow as a management choice
- Despite significant challenges there has been steady progress and there are some fine case studies of prolonged practice and experience, and many more in the pipeline
- Apart from all the economic, social and ecological benefits of CCF, it also engages and inspires both forest owners and foresters in an intangible way that I can highly recommend!!



Marking trees amongst natural regeneration, Knockrath, Co. Wicklow

A photograph of a forest with tall trees and a young pine tree in the foreground. The text is overlaid on the image.

Thank You

Questions and Discussion

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