



# Mid Western Forestry Thinning your Plantation

**Thinning** — Without a proper thinning programme (where appropriate) your forest will not achieve its full production potential and will therefore result in a financial loss to its owner, you. Thinning is the removal of part of the crop in order to concentrate future volume growth on fewer and better quality stems and is the most powerful tool the owner possesses to manipulate the development of the plantation and the log size of the final crop.

Thinning will increase overall timber revenue by increasing the volume of sawlog produced. This is due to the fact that larger trees attract significantly higher prices (fig 1), and are less expensive to harvest (on a €/m<sup>3</sup> basis) and yield more valuable end products.

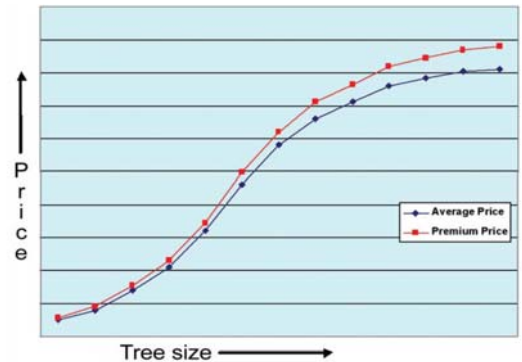
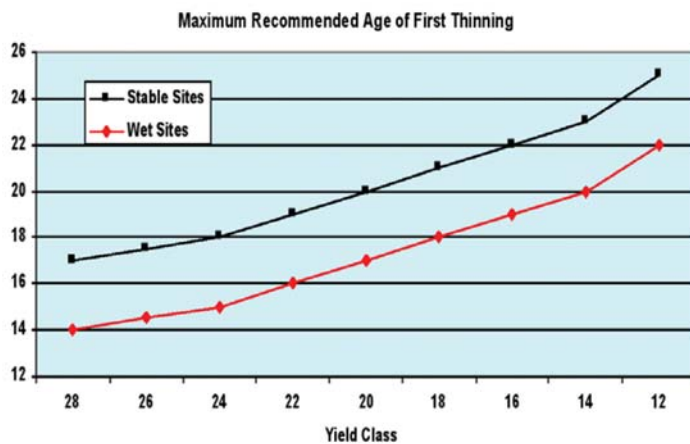


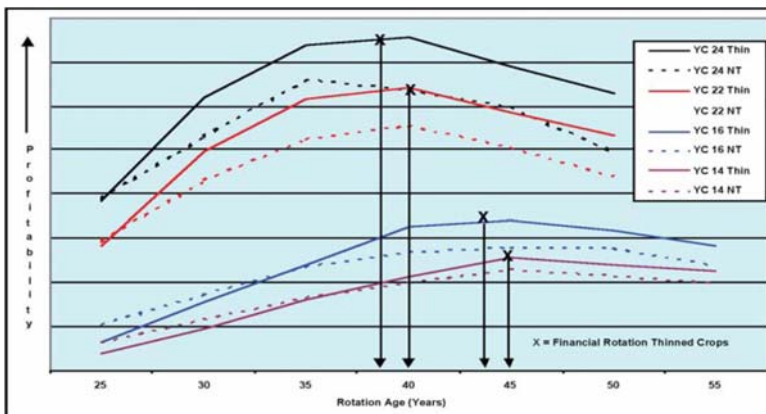
FIGURE 1: Price size curve for conifers 1985-2001.



**Timing of Thinning** — The timing of first and subsequent thinnings depends on the productivity of the site. Yield Class is used to identify the productivity of the site. The higher the yield class the greater the growth rate, the shorter the rotation and the earlier the age of first thinning.

The timing of first thinning is especially important in Ireland due to our windy climate and wet soils. On these typical forestry sites if thinning is delayed or not undertaken in time the possibility of ever safely thinning the plantation can be lost. The recommended ages of thinning for Sitka Spruce are shown across. These should be treated as maximum ages for Irish conditions. Not all sites are suitable for thinning and as a general rule crops on wet exposed sites should not be thinned

**Economics of Thinning & First Thinning** — The economics of thinning depend on a combination of yield class, price and site stability. Thinning increases revenue but incurs a risk in terms of wind-throw on unstable sites. As a general rule of thumb: 1. Thinning is more profitable than no thinning for yield class 14 or greater and 2., Thin early rather than late. First thinning represents a special case. Many private growers have decided to leave their plantations un-thinned or postponed thinning due to the fact that, up until recently the returns from thinning did not cover the costs. While this was understandable, research has shown that it is possible to undertake a first thinning with a loss was between €3 & €6 m<sup>3</sup> and still achieve significantly better returns over the rotation than leaving the crop un-thinned. This is in addition to the increased saleability of the thinned plantation should the owner wish to sell the plantation. A comparison of profitability of thinning versus no thinning is shown below. Now with first thinnings almost always showing a profit over costs there is no reason not to thin where possible.



## Services Provided by MWF —

Mid Western Forestry can assist and advise you on all aspects of thinning. We buy thinnings standing where owners have no outlay, costs or risks. We also undertake all works associated with thinnings on a consultancy basis including but not limited to :

1. Road grant application and road construction
2. Application for Felling Licence to thin
3. Cutting inspection paths in plantations for access
4. Full/partial inventory of crop to establish thin age
5. Purchase of standing thinnings on a price per ton.
6. Road and drain repairs after thinnings
7. Aerial fertiliser of poor sections of plantations

*For further details please contact our office on 068 32266.*

**Mid Western Forestry Services Ltd. 068 32266**

Abbeyfeale Co. Limerick Phone: 068 32266 Fax: 068 32577 Email: [info@ireland-forestry.com](mailto:info@ireland-forestry.com)

Website: [www.ireland-forestry.com](http://www.ireland-forestry.com)