

Agroforestry in the UK

Agroforestry farming systems are receiving increasing recognition across Europe for their economic, environmental and welfare benefits as we look for ways to sustainably intensify agricultural production and increase resilience to climatic uncertainty. In 2017 there were 547,600 ha of silvopastoral agroforestry recorded in the UK and only 2000 ha of silvoarable agroforestry (Den Herder *et al.*, 2017). Agroforestry in the UK offers great potential, and a few pioneer farmers have developed successful, innovative and profitable agroforestry projects on their land. However, the number of people talking about agroforestry doesn't match the number of people implementing new systems and we wanted to understand better the barriers to uptake in the UK.

Traditionally agroforestry practices were widespread in the UK, for example:



In more recent years there has been an interest in innovative agroforestry systems to fit with modern farming practices, for example:



Uptake of agroforestry in the UK

A 2016 survey of more than 1,100 farmers asked how trees could benefit them and what the main challenges to future establishment of trees on farms were (Stocks, 2016). Wildlife protection, shelter for livestock, wood fuel and soil protection were the top benefits of trees identified by farmers, with a lack of financial help and advice the main barriers to tree planting. As part of the EU-funded AgroForestry Innovation NETworks (AFINET) project we wanted to find out what was limiting uptake of agroforestry in the UK and how to help those farmers that are interested but not yet making the next step towards planting trees.

What is preventing wider adoption?

To further understand the limiting factors and barriers to uptake we created and circulated a short online survey. Out of a total 132 responses, 46% were farmers. Barriers to establishing new agroforestry systems were further explored via three multi-practitioner stakeholder workshops. These workshops, held in different locations aimed to get practitioners (including farmers, foresters and advisors) with a common interest in trees on farms together. The workshop results built on the survey results and established a baseline of common bottlenecks to address.



Table 1. Summary of the top three answers to questions about barriers and information needs and examples of how these challenges will be addressed in the UK

Question asked	Top three categories of answers	Ways to address challenge
What are the biggest problems and barriers to setting up an agroforestry system ?	1.Lack of data on economics, and finance to establish system	Information on available financial support and economic case studies. Agroforestry handbook
	2. Policy uncertainties	Regular concise updates on UK policy landscape via the Farm Woodland Forum website
	3. Lack of time and expertise	Options for alternative working models e.g. split tree/ agricultural tenancies. Training and workshops
What additional information on agroforestry would be useful to you?	1. Working examples and case studies	Programme of agroforestry farm visits, digital map of agroforestry farms with links to case studies
	2. Profitability, costs of establishment	Economic case studies from different farms
	3. System design and species choice	Design workshops for different systems including guidance on species choice and online training module

The Farm Woodland Forum (www.agroforestry.ac.uk)

The Farm Woodland Forum is a forum for farmers, foresters and researchers with a common interest in farming with trees in all its aspects. The Farm Woodland Forum aims to facilitate the generation and exchange of information that supports best practice in, and improves opportunities for, farming with trees and all aspects of agroforestry in the UK and Ireland. The Farm Woodland Forum holds annual meetings which include field visits to agroforestry sites and presentations to describe the latest research, development and practice related to agroforestry and farming with trees.



References

Den Herder et al (2017). Current extent and stratification of agroforestry in the European Union. Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment. 241: 121-132
Stocks, Caroline (2016). Farmer Weekly article 21 October 2016. Woodland Trust survey: The benefits of trees on farms. <https://www.fwi.co.uk/business/woodland-trust-survey-benefits-trees-farms>

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