



Agroforestry opportunities

The EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) supports sustainable land use including the establishment and maintenance of agroforestry systems. The new CAP Strategic Plans (CSPs) for 2023-2027 provide Member States with options and opportunities to support agroforestry systems where trees are grown on agricultural land to help boost farm incomes while improving environmental conditions.

Defined by the [European Agroforestry Federation](#) as planting trees on farmland or introducing agriculture in existing woodland/orchards, agroforestry opportunities are available for agricultural systems throughout Europe. Some 15.4 million hectares in the EU (equivalent to 3.6% of the territorial area or 8.8% of the utilised agricultural area) are [estimated](#) to already be used for agroforestry purposes. Most agroforestry within the EU is currently constituted by livestock farms, where trees are established individually or in blocks within improved grasslands and traditional silvopastoral systems, like [montados/dehesas](#). In these situations, grazing land is often combined with intercropping of permanent trees, offering additional products such as fruits, nuts, olives, or timber. Another option is to integrate [agroforestry areas](#) in and around arable land, as seen across much of the EU, including in outermost regions.

Agroforestry coverage forms part of the CSP performance review indicator set and the EU will be closely following agroforestry data during the new programming period. This will help highlight CAP contributions to the [New EU Forest Strategy for 2030](#), which notes the potential of agroforestry for accelerating roll out of carbon farming for climate mitigation, among other benefits offered by this multifunctional land use.

Agroforestry advantages

International analysis by the [United Nations](#) advocates for wider uptake of [agroforestry](#), observing that such land use systems tend to be more resilient than conventional agriculture to environmental shocks and the effects of climate change. Depending on the system and local conditions, agroforestry can improve crop productivity while allowing for better food security and nutrition as well as support a high percent of the biodiversity of natural forests.

By example, a recent [European assessment](#) revealed that the shelter provided for livestock grazing within trees delivered savings per head of livestock, e.g. by reducing [heat and cold stress](#), in addition to offering economic profits from the tree crops. Important climate action impacts are also attributed to agroforestry via silvoarable and silvopastoral systems' capacity to sequester tonnes of CO₂ per hectare annually over the long term. This benefit underscores agroforestry's potential contributions to the EU's action plan for developing [sustainable carbon cycles](#) and the [related regulatory framework for certification of carbon removals](#).



CAP's role

Despite the high productivity potential of agroforestry systems, farmers may still perceive them as less productive and thus financially risky. CAP support can be directed to facilitate greater uptake of agroforestry through demonstrations of successful agroforestry systems to address gaps in knowledge and raise awareness about agroforestry's multiple benefits. Advisory services are needed to offer guidance for land users in adopting and managing competitive agroforestry systems. Knowledge on tree productivity and disease risk will be important, particularly in terms of sourcing native tree stock species with EU provenance.

Further key advice can help farmers identify possibilities for ecosystem services from existing trees and hedges, including management actions to conserve biodiversity or maximise [carbon](#) outcomes.

CSP funding from both [CAP Pillars](#) can help optimise the profitability of the land within agroforestry systems while the trees are maturing. This can offset concerns about delayed return on investment. Market awareness about additional products from agroforestry trees and their value chains can also be strengthened. National CAP networking may play a useful role in collating and sharing understanding about the benefits of agroforestry and its importance for climate neutrality and resilience. Solutions to barriers that hinder upscaling agroforestry can be investigated while intervention tools in the approved CSPs could be mapped to identify success factors and effective approaches for supporting the establishment and regeneration of agroforestry.

An insightful and inspiring collection of associated agroforestry material is available for sharing from EU CAP Network's [EIP-AGRI](#) and [ENRD](#) libraries.



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