



REFOREST



Upscaling Agroforestry in Europe – Policy Dialogues on Regulation and Finance

Organised by: **the Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association**

Europe's agricultural landscapes are at a critical turning point. The challenge is no longer whether we can produce food sustainably, but whether food systems can remain viable on a planet that has already warmed by about 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels. We are heading towards far more dangerous projections, with rising risks of crop yield losses and land degradation beyond a 1.5°C scenario (IPCC, 2023). This calls for society to reconcile productivity with climate resilience, biodiversity restoration, and long-term land stewardship.

Agroforestry—the integration of trees into farming systems—offers a transformative, nature-based pathway. It enhances carbon sequestration, strengthens ecosystem services, improves soil health, and diversifies farm income. Yet despite its well-documented benefits, agroforestry remains under-scaled across Europe, covering only about 15.4 million hectares—or 8.8% of the EU's utilised agricultural area (den Herder et al., 2017).

Why is this the case?

Past CAP programming periods have shown that institutional fragmentation and policy silos continue to hinder progress. Agroforestry has often fallen between agricultural and forestry departments, too agricultural for forestry and too forestry-oriented for agriculture. At the same time, farmers considering agroforestry face high upfront costs, long payback periods, and limited access to blended or private finance.

We're at a critical moment, with agroforestry now prominently reflected in National Energy and Climate Plans and Climate Adaptation Strategies, and with the proposed National and Regional Partnership Regulation (2028–34) offering new governance opportunities.

Scaling agroforestry requires more than stated ambition. It requires:

- Regulatory coherence across agricultural, forestry and climate frameworks
- Integrated national and regional planning mechanisms
- Innovative financial instruments that de-risk long-term ecological investments
- Stronger bridges between public incentives and private capital



Preliminary Agenda & Speakers

Session Description	Time
Welcoming and Registration Coffee	13:00-14:00
Welcoming & Opening Remarks Yara Saab, Director, Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA) Christine de Visser, Project Manager, Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA) Project Officer European Commission	14:00 – 14:20
Key policy-relevant research outputs Presentation and discussion of main research outputs from the ReForest and DigitAF projects Martin Lukac, Project Coordinator ReForest Marie Gosme, Project Coordinator DigitAF Gerry Lawson, Policy Advisor, European Agroforestry Federation, DigitAF Tiago Zibecchi, Researcher, Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association, ReForest	14:20-15:00
First Policy Dialogue – Leveraging the National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs) to integrate agroforestry and forestry support.	15:00-16:00
Coffee Break	16:00-16:30
Second Policy Dialogue - Assessing pathways to integrate innovative financing schemes into the new CAP to bridge the investment gap	16:30-17:30
Networking and Drinks	17:30-18:30

Venue : CEPS Conference Room. 1 Place du Congrès. 1000 Brussels

Event Registration Page : <https://www.ceps.eu/ceps-events/upscaling-agroforestry-in-europe-regulation-and-finance-policy-dialogues/>

Organised within the framework of the [ReForest](#) and [DigitAF](#) projects by the [Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association \(EMEA\)](#) in collaboration with the [European Agroforestry Federation \(EURAF\)](#) and the [German Association for Agroforestry \(DeFAF\)](#) and hosted at the [Centre for European Policy Studies \(CEPS\)](#), this Policy Dialogue will bring together policymakers, researchers, financial actors and practitioners to explore how Europe can move from pilot success to the systemic adoption of agroforestry.



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First Policy Dialogue

Leveraging the National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs) to integrate agroforestry and forestry support.

The lack of success of agroforestry policies during recent CAP periods is often attributed to "policy silos". Agroforestry is too alien for Agricultural Departments, and too closely linked to agriculture for the comfort of Forestry Departments. Farmers also worry that having more than 50 or 100 trees per hectare will remove their eligibility for basic income support, and they dislike the bureaucracy and the long-payback periods. This resulted in the agroforestry measure in the CAP 2014-2022 established less than 5,000 ha of the planned 80,000 ha. In the CAP 2023-2027 it is formally supported by only ten Member States, and usually with very small budgets. Another blow was the removal of the "stick" of statutory minimum areas of "landscape features and non-productive areas" in the 2024 Simplification Regulation, and the lack of meaningful replacement by "carrots" in the form of ecoschemes focused on woody landscape features.

Yet agroforestry now figures prominently in the National Energy and Climate Plans of most Member States, and the Climate Adaptation Strategies of many Member State and regions. The new National and Regional Partnership Regulation (NRPR), proposed in July 2025 for the 2028–2034 programming period, could be an opportunity to stress this regional approach to agroforestry. By merging the former Pillar II (rural development) funds with cohesion and regional funds into a single National and Regional Partnership Fund (NRPF), the opportunity exists to finally break down the "policy silos" and allow Member States to design "landscape-wide" interventions. These will allow integrated agri-environment-climate schemes to be planned based on results rather than the "cost incurred" limits imposed by WTO rules. But there are risks. Competition with infrastructure, energy, and digital projects within a single fund, may disfavour agroforestry - which requires multi-year patience. While the "rural target", i.e. earmarking at least 10% of the envelope for rural areas, offers some protection, the success of agroforestry will depend entirely on how aggressively individual regions prioritize it in their specific partnership plans.

Moderator: **Gerry Lawson**, Policy Advisor, European Agroforestry Federation

Panellists:

Arnaud Schwartz, Board Member of the European Environmental Bureau, Member of the European Economic and Social Committee, and former president of France Nature Environnement

Bert Reubens, Coordinator Agroforestry Flanders and scientific staff member at Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (ILVO)

Emmanuel Petel, Environmental policy coordinator, at the European Commission for DG AGRI.

Beatrice Croce, Project & Policy Officer, Biodiversity and Carbon Credits, European Landowners' Organization.



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Second Policy Dialogue

Assessing pathways to integrate innovative financing schemes into the new CAP to bridge the investment gap

Agroforestry is being recognised in EU policy, but its upscaling still runs into a familiar obstacle: finance. Establishment costs are high, returns take time, and cash flows are often most constrained in the early years, right when the transition requires the greatest effort. While CAP support provides important incentives, it is not always structured to deliver the long-term predictability farmers need once establishment payments expire, nor to mobilise private capital at scale.

With the CAP 2028–2034 discussions gaining momentum and the Carbon Removals Certification Framework (CRCF) moving from concept to implementation, there is a real opportunity to rethink how AF investments are supported. The CRCF Carbon Farming Delegated Act proposals on the "Financial Viability Test" raise the practical question: What financing arrangements are required to demonstrate that AF and carbon farming depend on stable and performance-based remuneration? More fundamentally, how can AF move beyond reliance on short-term establishment subsidies toward more resilient, performance-based, and market-aligned revenue streams?

ReForest contributes to this debate through its Sustainable Financing Scheme, co-developed and tested with Living Lab actors across Europe. The scheme combines early-stage support, action-based incentives, and results-based payments, complemented by advisory services. This session will explore how blended finance, guarantees, insurance markets, carbon and nature credit revenues, and alignment with regulatory frameworks can collectively improve bankability, market access, and investment attractiveness. The objective is to define the conditions under which these mechanisms can be accessible to farmers, attractive to investors, and administratively feasible.

Moderator: **Prof. Martin Lukac**, Professor at the Czech University of Life Sciences, Prague, and Coordinator of the ReForest project

Panellists:

Valeria Forlin, Deputy Head of Unit, DG CLIMA, European Commission

Krystyna Springer, Senior Policy Analyst – Land Use and Climate, Institute for European Environmental Policy

Tiago Zibecchi, Researcher, Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association

Peenaz Irani, Customer Partnerships Specialist, The Landbanking Group GmbH

Jean-Christophe Renaud, Regenerative Project manager, ReForest'Action