



REFOREST

ABSTRACT

5

Agroforestry as a historical anchor for farm diversification

Problem:

Many European farmers remain uncertain whether tree-based farming fits their local landscape and agricultural traditions. Agroforestry adoption is a cultural process, framed by economics and traditions. Landscapes with surviving agroforestry memory are more receptive to agroforestry, while the historical continuity provides the basis for differentiated value chains.

Solution:

Many modern agroforestry systems are not entirely new but represent the restoration or adaptation of traditional landscape structures such as orchard meadows, wood pastures, hedgerows, scattered field trees and silvopastoral systems. This historical continuity creates cultural compatibility, the degree to which a new agroforestry system is perceived as belonging to the location. Culturally compatible systems are easier to adopt because they build on existing local knowledge, traditions and landscape identity.



Benefits and Practical Recommendations:

Start with the history of the landscape. Before designing a new agroforestry system, identify traditional tree-based farming practices that existed in your region and consider how they can be adapted to modern conditions.

Preserve existing landscape features. Mature trees, hedgerows and traditional orchards are often valuable productive assets as well as symbols of local identity.

Build products around place. Consumers increasingly value products connected to recognisable landscapes and local heritage. Agroforestry provides an authentic story that supports premium markets.

Develop value chains that reflect landscape diversity. Combining agricultural and tree products, local processing, tourism and direct sales can create businesses that are difficult to replicate in standardised commodity systems.

Use local knowledge to reduce barriers to adoption. Engaging with older farming traditions and community experience can increase confidence in agroforestry and strengthen public support for landscape restoration.

Geographical Location:

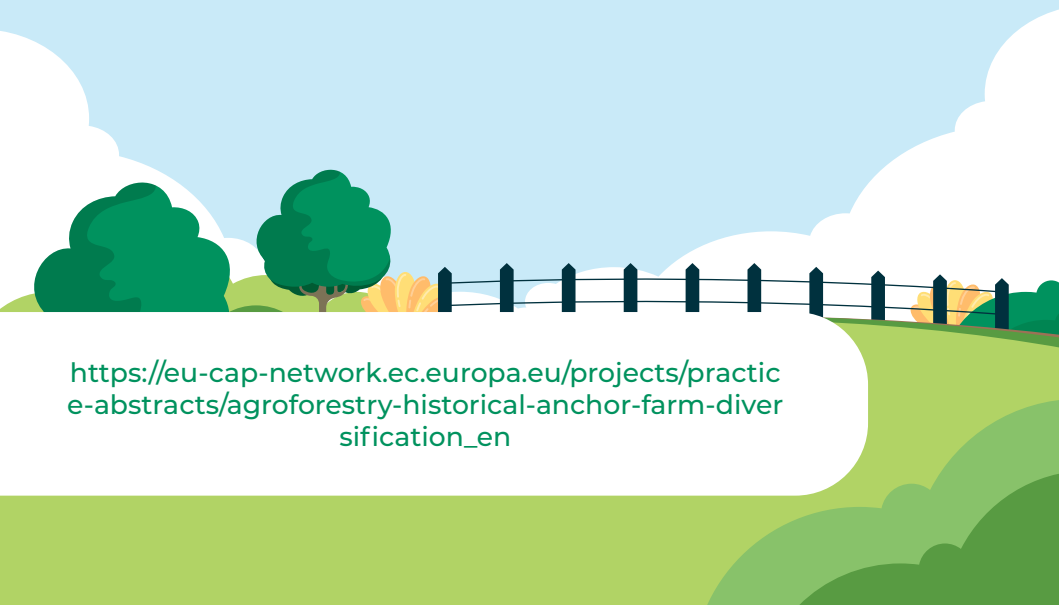


How to Use the Results:

Farmers and advisors should consider not only the ecological suitability of agroforestry but also its cultural fit within the landscape. Historic maps, local archives and conversations with local communities can reveal former agroforestry systems that may provide practical inspiration for modern designs. The ReForest research suggests that successful agroforestry development follows the following pathway:

Landscape memory → Cultural compatibility → Social acceptability → Distinctive products → Stronger value chains → Long-term agroforestry adoption

By reconnecting farming with the historical character of the landscape, agroforestry can become more than a land-use practice. It can provide the foundation for resilient rural economies, stronger local identities and value chains that reward the environmental and cultural richness of European agricultural landscapes.



https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/projects/practice-abstracts/agroforestry-historical-anchor-farm-diversification_en