



REFOREST

Strengthening advisory and knowledge-sharing systems to support agroforestry expansion in northern Europe

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Why is advice and knowledge sharing needed?



Planning and design



Implementation



Harvesting, processing, marketing



Management and maintenance

The challenge of delivering effective agroforestry advice

- Requires knowledge of agronomy, animal husbandry, horticulture, forestry, and their interactions
- Lack of knowledge and technical expertise is a key barrier to agroforestry expansion^{1,2}
- Learning from peers and demonstration examples is a driver of uptake³

1. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.70110>

2. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10457-024-01047-x>

3. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10457-017-0139-9>



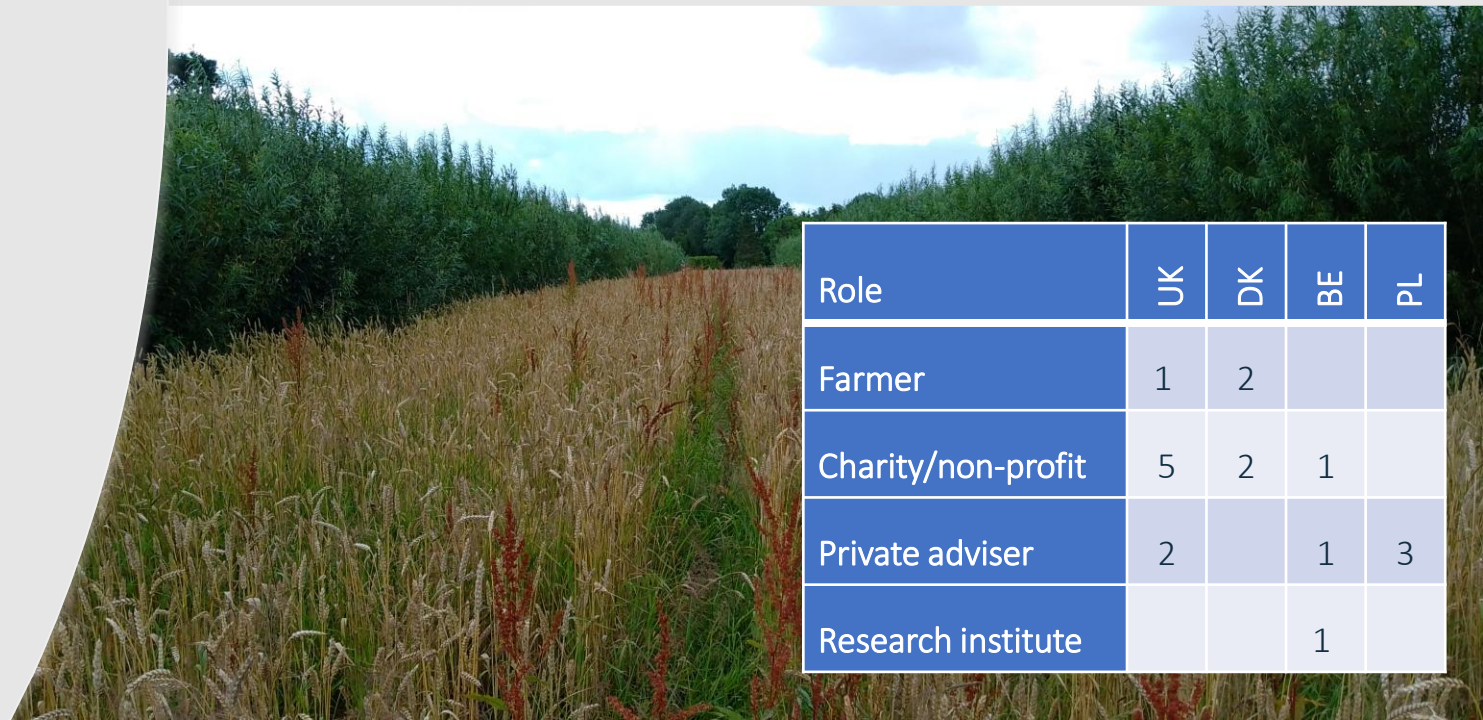
Our question...

Are advisory services and knowledge-sharing systems 'fit for purpose' to support the upscaling of agroforestry in northern Europe?



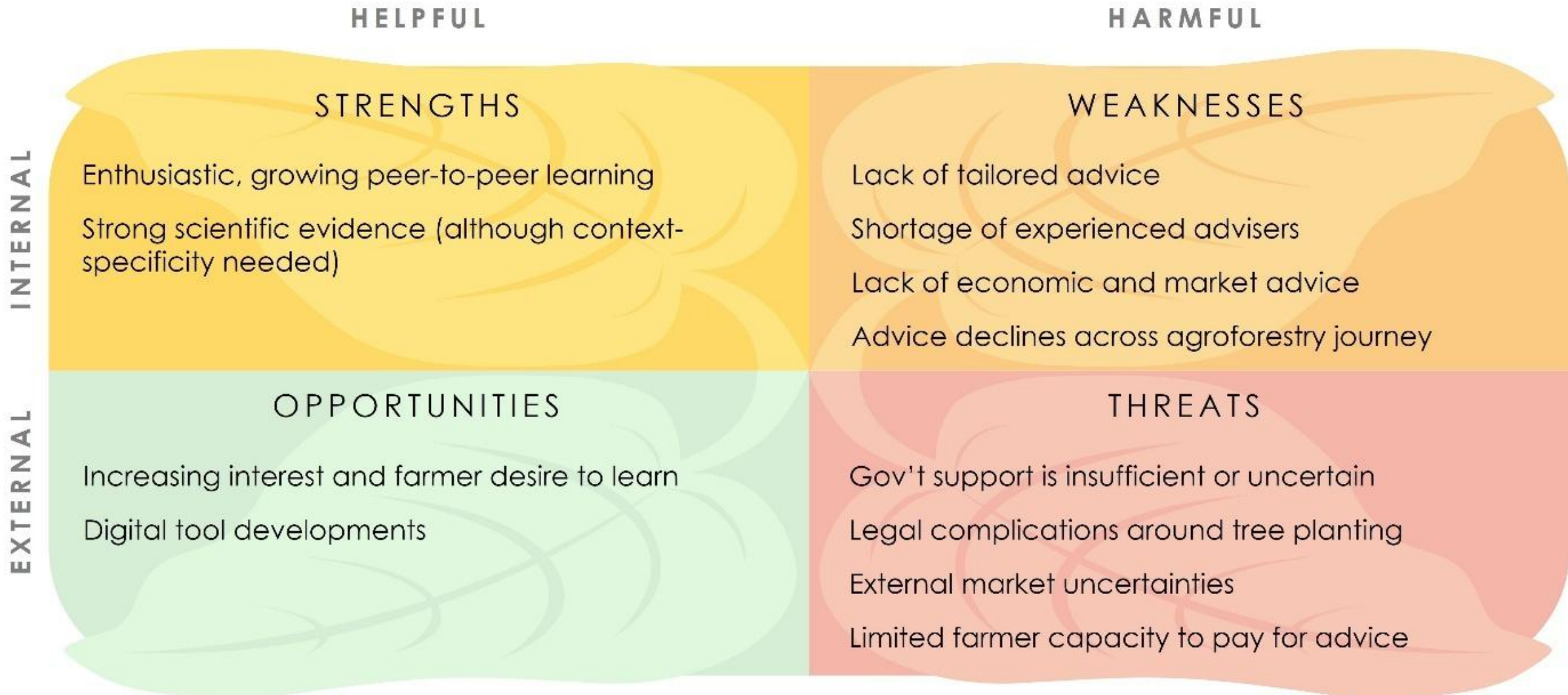
Approach

- Surveys and interviews with stakeholders engaged in agroforestry advice
- 16 participants:
 - 6 in UK
 - 4 in Denmark
 - 3 in Belgium
 - 3 in Poland



Role	UK	DK	BE	PL
Farmer	1	2		
Charity/non-profit	5	2	1	
Private adviser	2		1	3
Research institute			1	

Results



Strengths

Enthusiastic, growing peer-to-peer learning

“People who are interested... are very willing to talk to each other. This exchange of information is quite intense.” (PL)

BUT...

“There's good stuff out there, but ... it's probably patchy” (UK)



Strong scientific evidence

“Currently, knowledge is sufficient to develop advice. However, there are still difficulties in determining factors like planting distances...” (BE)

But context-specificity needed:

“...some of that evidence is not UK evidence and may not be quite as relevant” (UK)



Weaknesses

Lack of tailored advice

*“Personalised advice? Contextualised advice?
Totally inadequate.” (UK)*

Lack of economic and market advice

*“...if you grow apples you can get advice. And if
you have timber you can get advice for that. But not
in an agroforestry system.” (DK)*

Shortage of experienced advisers

*“There is actually no agroforestry in advisory services... Of
the advisers I know, two people.” (PL)*

In UK, more concern about quality of advisers:

*“...people are saying they're professional advisers in
agroforestry who have only been doing it for two or three
years, and I don't consider that to be an expert.” (UK)*

Advice declines across AF journey

*“...we're well served in terms of planning, design,
establishment... It's a degrading thing as you go
along...” (UK)*



Opportunities

Increasing interest and farmer desire to learn

“we've got momentum now... It would be a shame if we didn't grab the opportunity by getting adequate support in terms of advisors” (UK)

“this movement is growing... it is starting to become a crowd.” (PL)

Digital tool developments

But still a need for contextualised advice:

“Tools offer a useful first selection... [but] they cannot replace expert advice.” (BE)



	HELPFUL	HARMFUL
INTERNAL	STRENGTHS Enthusiastic, growing peer-to-peer learning Strong scientific evidence (although context-specificity needed)	WEAKNESSES Lack of tailored advice Shortage of experienced advisers Lack of economic and market advice Advice declines across agroforestry journey
EXTERNAL	OPPORTUNITIES Increasing interest and farmer desire to learn Digital tool developments	THREATS Gov't support is insufficient or uncertain Legal complications around tree planting External market uncertainties Limited farmer capacity to pay for advice

Threats

Government support is insufficient or uncertain

“There's funding for capital for installing agroforestry, but... [not enough] advice to help you plan your system” (UK)

External market uncertainties

“There's a real gap in terms of products... and available local markets.” (UK)

“Connecting agroforestry with wood production would be fantastic. However, forest groups are currently resistant to this.” (BE)

Legal complications around tree planting

“There are a lot of regulations... everyone is afraid and prefers not to touch this topic” (PL)

More positive in UK:

“If we're thinking about infield agroforestry then I think we're good” (UK)

Limited farmer capacity to pay for advice

“it's easier for a big farm to pay.” (DK)

But some disagreement:

“...it's more of a limitation of thought, that kind of open-mindedness” (PL)

Recommendations: Policy

1

Fund advisory services alongside capital / maintenance payments for agroforestry

E.g. Regionalised schemes in Belgium and Germany, funded advisory visits in Scotland

2

Provide stable and coherent agroforestry policy frameworks, reducing uncertainty and risk

3

Invest in demonstration farms, farmer networks and knowledge-exchange platforms



Integrating Trees Network

Shelterbelts and shelter woodlands: Discussing practical examples and benefits

Tuesday 27 January 7 - 8pm



Recommendations: Industry and Advisory Organisations

1

Fund advisory support alongside tree planting schemes

2

Sponsor knowledge exchange events and shows

3

Establish agroforestry adviser training and certification courses

4

Establish independent accreditation for experienced agroforestry advisers

Recommendations: Research

1

Expand collaborations with farmers to promote peer learning e.g. living labs

2

Co-produce research agendas with farmers and advisers

3

Strengthen knowledge exchange with advisory services



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AN ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM FOR AGROFORESTRY ENTHUSIASTS TO COLLABORATE, CO-CREATE, AND SHARE KNOWLEDGE

Thank you for listening

Any questions?

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