



Silvopasture practices with Cherry trees

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Cherry trees together with walnut is one of the most promising and valued trees whose timber may provide over 3000 euros per tree to farmers after growing several decades (30 years in Galicia). However, initial investment associated to the plantation itself and the silviculture operations such as clearing, pruning and thinning together with the lack of production of the land during the life of the stand prevents farmers to plant them. One of the alternatives to overcome these concerns from farmers is to implement silvopastoral practices. Silvopasture not only reduces the tree maintenance costs associated to clearing but allows farmer to deliver animal products from the cherry plantation that otherwise will produce nothing from the understory. An experiment was carried out in Galicia to evaluate the feasibility of implementing silvopasture in cherry plantations, showing that continuous stocking rates of around 8 sheep ha⁻¹ increases carbon sequestration in the soil, soil fertility, pasture biodiversity, tree growth and reduces tree production costs associated with clearing when compared with exclusive cherry plantations managed with herbicides application to control the understory. Moreover, the grass growing season was extended as the drought effect on grass production was less effective under the trees than in open sites.

Tree damaged caused by sheep scratch was negligible and no root damage was shown. On the contrary, due to the introduction of sheep in the cherry plantation the farmer was able to maintain an annual output from the meat that compensates the lack of economic return of the cherry plantation until trees are harvested.



Figure 1. Sheep grazing under cherry trees

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