



Agroforestry and policy: extent and practices definitions

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"Agroforestry is a sustainable land use system that integrates a woody perennial (forest or fruit trees or shrubs) with a lower agricultural production. There are identified five main agroforestry practices: silvopasture, silvoarable, riparian buffer strips, homegardens and forest farming. The main subjacent practices are silvopasture and silvoarable that can be implemented in any type of land use (agricultural (arable, permanent grasslands and permanent crops) and forestland. Silvopasture represents the 85% of the 19.5 million hectares of agroforestry practices in Europe and it is defined as the integration of livestock production (lower story) and woody perennials. Silvopasture practices are mostly located in the Southern countries of Europe and only used in the 10% of European Permanent Grasslands. Silvopasture practices can be implemented in arable land, permanent grassland, permanent crops and forest lands. Silvoarable practices meaning the integration of woody perennials on arable land only occupy around 450 thousand hectares, mostly in the South of Europe. Silvoarable practices can be used in the 99% of the arable land implying an extraordinary potential to combat climate change through mitigation and increase biodiversity. Riparian buffer strips are woody perennials placed between and arable or permanent grassland and water bodies. They are mostly located in the western part of Europe where winds can cause reduction of productivity or soil erosion.

Homegardens is a type of agroforestry practice linked to human settlements, usually surrounding houses on which fruit trees are combined with vegetable production to produce food. Around 60% of lands surrounding houses have fruit trees and vegetables below and they are spread all over Europe. Forest farming is a type of agroforestry practice linked to forest lands and could be identified as those forest areas delivering no timber forest products (NTFP) such as mushrooms, berries, medicinal plants and that usually increases profitability from forestlands in an important form.



Figure 1. Examples of agroforestry systems (silvopasture, Homegardens, silvoarable and forest farming).

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