



Alternative uses for agroforestry products: wood fuel from hedgerow management

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Hedgerows are ubiquitous in the English landscape and an important part of the cultural heritage of the countryside. Hedgerows have always been regarded as multi-functional. Traditionally hedge management provided a variety of wood products including firewood, but as labour became more expensive and wood was replaced with fossil fuels, the practice of managing hedges for firewood was lost. Currently many UK hedges are flailed annually or neglected altogether; both practices are eventually detrimental.

Hedges need periodic rejuvenation work by either laying or coppicing, both relatively time consuming and costly management options. Identifying practical economic uses for hedges and hedge material could offer a solution and encourage farmers to manage their hedges sustainably. Managing hedges for woodfuel through coppicing provides an opportunity to rejuvenate hedges restoring their economic value and value the wider landscape. Managing hedges by coppicing has the potential to:

- improve hedgerow vigour, longevity and value to wildlife
- provide timber, woodchips and logs which can be used on farm or sold
- reduce the cost of annual management

Although markets for hedgerow woodchip are in the early stages of development, those able to harvest and use woodfuel from hedges have the opportunity to make the most of this underutilised resource and bring our hedges back into the farm business.



Figure 1. Hedge coppicing at Elm Farm, UK. Photo Jo Smith 2015

References:

A Guide to Harvesting Woodfuel from Hedges

<http://tinyurl.com/TWECOM-BPG>

Productive Hedges: Guidance on bringing hedges back into the farm business

<https://zenodo.org/record/2641808#.XdPiNtXgrct>

TWECOM project outputs: www.twecom.eu

Video: Hedge coppicing at Wakelyns Agroforestry, UK:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7P5OHYKnD8

Video: Dymax tree shears harvesting Elm Farm hedge,

UK: www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHLPxH55Om4

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