



How to protect young trees against grazing livestock or game? - Hungarian farmers' experiences

www.eurafagroforestry.eu/afinet/

Protection of young trees is one of the key questions to establish and maintain agroforestry systems. There are many possibilities for artificial and natural protection methods. Based on farmers' knowledge and research experiments, in Hungarian ancient wood systems with oak and wild pear trees grazed by sheep and cattle, the best option for oak tree regeneration was proved to be protection of young trees with fence and thorny shrubs around the stems or just plant young trees in small shrub plots. Note that damages by game and mowing can decrease significantly the number of young trees in a pastureland.

Therefore, discussions with all related stakeholders - eg. owners of neighboring lands and the driver of the hay-cutting machine - is of high importance. Landscape historical data and local people knowledge can help the farmer by highlighting the main constraint to tree regeneration (eg. trees are suffering from dryness due to changing to drier area from a formerly floodplain). It means that the regeneration and sustainability of the agroforestry system requires an understanding of the historical landscape and soil and water

regulation as well. There are several modern forms to protect trees against animal damage that includes plastic cylinders with some holes that facilitate aeration. This system is good for some areas but not for others. If the micro-environment is so dry or humid these conditions can limit the proper lignifications of the young tree causing problems. Both, fencing against wild animals and thorny species placed around the tree have proven to be the best option to reduce tree damages.

Read more about the experiences of Hungarian farmers: Anna Varga (2017): Restoration of abandoned wood pasture
<https://www.agforward.eu/index.php/en/Innovation-leaflets.html>



Figure 1. Protection of young trees is essential for regenerating high natural and cultural value wood pastures with ancient trees. Photo by Varga A.

Anna Varga & Andrea Vityi

University of Sopron, Co-operational
Research Centre Nonprofit Ltd, Sopron