



Fruit production in agroforestry systems: how to make the right species and variety choice?

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When establishing agroforestry plots, quite often a combination with high standard fruit trees is chosen again these days. The economic added value of these trees in that case is not the wood production but the added value the fruits can offer. The harvested fruit is often processed into fruit juice, cider, syrup, wine, jelly, jam ... The freshly picked fruit of many traditional varieties can, together with the processed products, be sold as a farm product. Certainly in the bio segment there are opportunities for this way of working. Various factors play a role in making the most suitable species and variety choice when establishing a new agroforestry plot with fruit trees: (1) The benefits of more diversity (biodiversity and genetic diversity); (2) The economic added value of the future harvest of these fruit trees. This is largely determined by how the farmer intends to market the fruit or processed products; (3) The present conditions of soil and microclimate, which help to determine which types of fruit you should or should not plant on the plot; (4) The individual properties of the different varieties (taste, picking time, properties for storage, processing, resistances, etc.); (5) The spread in the picking and consumption season according to the objectives of the harvested fruit; (6) The mutual (necessary) cross-pollination. When you have to make a choice between different, equivalent varieties, it is best to opt for regional varieties.

More detailed information (in Dutch) can be found here:

<https://www.agroforestryvlaanderen.be/NL/Kennisloket/Praktischeaanpak/Boomspecificatieinfo/Hoogstamfruitbomen/tabid/9783/language/nl-BE/Default.aspx>.



Figure 1: Example of fruit trees in a Belgian agroforestry system. Source: Bert Reubens, Consortium Agroforestry Flanders.



Figure 2: Exposition of apple varieties suitable for agroforestry context. Source: Willem Van Colen, Consortium Agroforestry Flanders

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