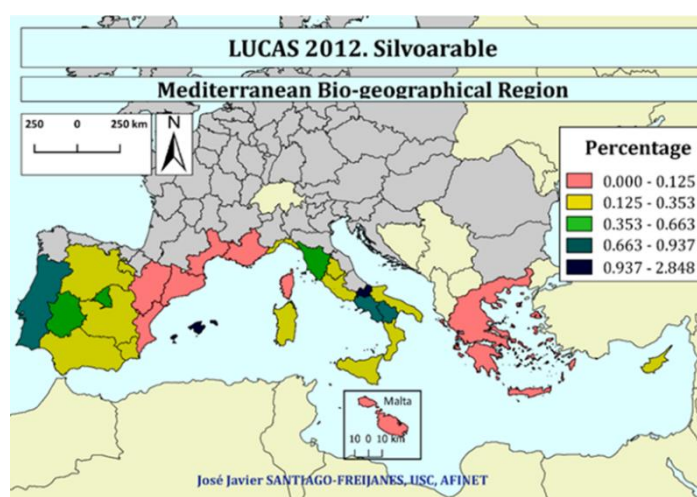


# Silvoarable and CAP in the EU Mediterranean Region

- Silvoarable is a type of agroforestry practice that combines woody perennials, either trees or shrubs, with crops growing as understory.
- In the Mediterranean region, silvoarable remains limited in extent despite its high relevance for climate adaptation, soil protection, water regulation and wider ecosystem-service delivery in one of the most climate-vulnerable areas of Europe.
- CAP support has been mainly channelled through Pillar II Rural Development Programmes, but future promotion needs stronger attention to extension services, business planning and the development of supply and value chains linked to the woody component.

## Defining silvoarable in the Mediterranean region

Silvoarable combines woody perennials with annual or perennial crops and can take different forms across Mediterranean agricultural landscapes. It includes systems with isolated or scattered trees, hedges and line belts, and also linear elements such as riparian buffer strips and landscape features associated with arable land. In the Mediterranean region, this diversity is important because farming systems are strongly shaped by water scarcity, uneven rainfall distribution and long summer droughts. These conditions make silvoarable particularly relevant as a land use that can combine production with environmental protection. The Mediterranean region is highly exposed to climate pressures, while arable intensification has reduced natural capital, especially soil resources. In this context, silvoarable is especially relevant because it can deliver more ecosystem services than monocultures while supporting adaptation and mitigation objectives.



**FIGURE 1. Percentage of land occupied by silvoarable AF practices in agricultural lands. Santiago-Freijanes J.J.**

**Silvoarable in the Mediterranean region remains limited in extent, despite its high potential to improve soil protection, water regulation and climate resilience.**

## Extent and CAP contribution in the Mediterranean region

Silvoarable in the Mediterranean region currently has a low overall extent, even though it was historically more widespread and could potentially be implemented in large areas of Mediterranean agricultural land. This contrast between low current uptake and high territorial potential is central to policy design. CAP support has mainly operated through Pillar II Rural Development Programmes. The policy focus has largely been placed on the introduction, restoration and maintenance of woody perennials and landscape features in arable lands, especially where these contribute to environmental objectives. This means that support has been more clearly linked to ecosystem-service delivery than to the broader productive and business potential of silvoarable systems. At the same time, the analysis of 27 Mediterranean Rural Development Programmes shows that policy implementation has not yet translated silvoarable potential into broad and consistent promotion across the region. The future CAP therefore needs to move beyond partial support and better connect agroforestry adoption with practical implementation conditions on farms.

# Silvoarable promotion by the CAP in the Mediterranean

Silvoarable promotion in the Mediterranean region should be understood in relation to climate vulnerability, ecosystem services and rural development. The region combines strong climatic constraints with a high need for land uses that can protect soils, improve water-related functions, recycle nutrients and support more resilient production systems. Silvoarable responds well to these challenges because woody vegetation and crops interact in ways that improve ecological functioning compared with simplified arable monocultures. Still, policy support has not linked enough to the productive use of the woody component. Silvoarable promotion should support the creation of adequate supply and value chains, alternative uses of woody biomass, initial infrastructures, and farm-level business planning. This is closely related to the wider bioeconomy perspective, where woody components can contribute to new products, local value creation and reduced dependence on non-renewable resources. Mediterranean silvoarable systems are knowledge-intensive and require support for establishment, management and adaptation to local conditions. Stronger extension services, demonstration fields and similar practical support structures are therefore essential if CAP support is to translate into real uptake. Policy should not only preserve woody elements in arable land, but also make silvoarable easier to implement, manage and valorise economically. CAP support has so far been mainly associated with Pillar II measures. Future promotion should better connect environmental objectives with extension support,

**Rodríguez-Rigueiro FJ, Couso-Viana A, Ferreiro-Domínguez N, Santiago-Freijanes JJ, Mosquera-Losada MR (2025) *Universidade de Santiago de Compostela***

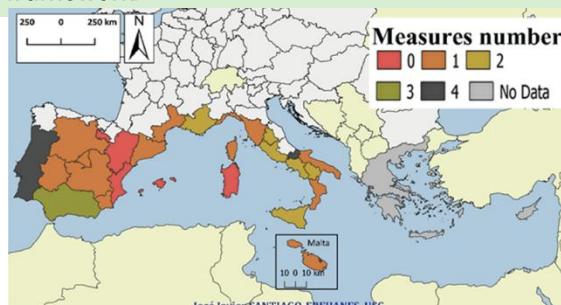


business planning and value-chain development within a bioeconomy perspective.

**Future CAP support should reinforce silvoarable through stronger extension services and the development of supply and value chains linked to the woody component.**

## MAIN CONCLUSION

- Silvoarable remains limited despite its strong potential across much of the agricultural land.
- Its policy relevance is especially high since it is one of the most climate-vulnerable areas of Europe, with strong pressures on soils, water and long-term agricultural resilience.
- Current CAP support has mainly operated through Pillar II and has focused more on environmental functions than on the full productive and business potential of silvoarable systems.
- Future policy should strengthen silvoarable promotion through improved extension services, farm-level implementation support, and the development of supply and value chains linked to the woody component within a bioeconomy framework.



**FIGURE 2. Number of RDP 2014–2020 measures promoting silvoarable AF practices. Santiago-Freijanes JJ.**

## References

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Silvoarable systems in the Mediterranean region combine strong environmental value with underused productive potential. Their wider uptake depends not only on CAP support for environmental services, but also on practical implementation, advisory capacity and better development of value chains linked to woody perennials.

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