

Silvopasture and CAP in the EU Continental Region

- Silvopasture is a type of agroforestry practice that combines woody perennials, either trees or shrubs, with livestock feeding based on grazing in situ.
- In the Continental region, silvopasture is the most common agroforestry practice, but its extent remains regionally uneven and strongly influenced by land ownership patterns, vegetation types and historical trajectories of land management.
- CAP support for silvopasture in the Continental region has remained limited, with only a slight increase in Rural Development measures between 2007–2013 and 2014–2020, despite the high potential of these systems to contribute to climate mitigation, adaptation and wider environmental commitments.

Defining silvopasture in the Continental region

Silvopasture combines trees or shrubs with grazing livestock and takes different forms across the Continental region depending on land cover, forest type and ownership patterns. While grasslands and broadleaved forests dominate most areas, eastern regions are often more crop-oriented, showing that the regional context for silvopasture is highly diverse.

Silvopasture is the most common agroforestry practice in the Continental region. Its presence is strongest in Bulgaria, Croatia, parts of Italy and Rhône-Alpes..

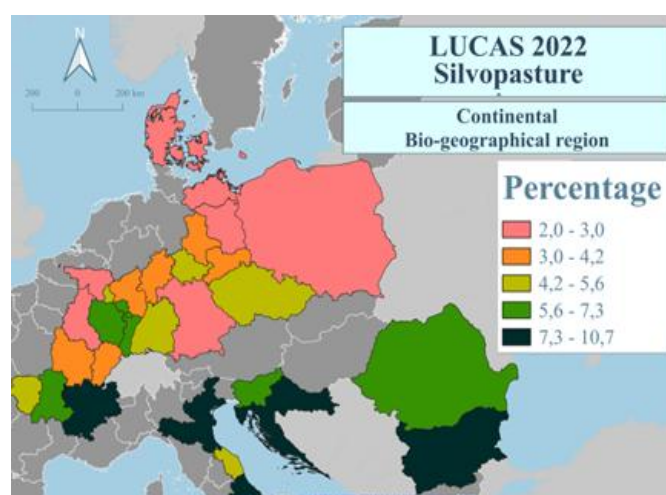


FIGURE 1. Percentage of the territory where silvopasture is present. Santiago-Freijanes J.J.

Silvopasture extent and CAP contribution in the Continental region

Silvopasture is the most common agroforestry practice in the European Continental biogeographic region, but its distribution is highly uneven. The highest shares are found in Bulgaria, Croatia, Veneto, Emilia-Romagna, Abruzzo and Rhône-Alpes, where it reaches around 7–11% of land. Intermediate values appear in Romania, Slovenia and several French and German regions, while the lowest shares are found in Poland, Denmark, parts of Germany, Champagne-Ardenne and Wallonia. Silvopasture linked to permanent crops is especially relevant in Croatia, the Czech Republic, several German regions, Alsace, Veneto, Marche and Abruzzo. Woodland silvopasture is more important in the western part of the region, while shrubland silvopasture is more relevant in southern and mountain-related areas. This confirms that silvopasture takes different territorial forms across the region. Despite this potential, CAP support has remained modest. The number of Rural Development measures promoting silvopasture increased only from 13 to 14 between 2007–2013 and 2014–2020. Veneto had the highest number of such measures in both periods, Denmark maintained two, and most other regions showed very limited uptake, with some measures disappearing altogether. Support in 2007–2013 was stronger for related practices such as meadow orchards, forest understory grazing and mountain pastoralism than for silvopasture itself. This suggests that CAP has recognized some related systems, but has not yet translated that recognition into broad and consistent support for silvopasture across the region.

Silvopasture promotion by the CAP in the Continental region

The promotion of silvopasture in the Continental region is shaped not only by environmental conditions but also by historical and institutional factors. In eastern Europe, communist land regimes and subsequent restitution processes influenced ownership structures and management dynamics. At the same time, many traditional agroforestry systems declined after 1945 due to modernization and collectivization, reducing the presence of multifunctional tree-based grazing systems. This is important for policy because the Continental region combines extensive grasslands, significant livestock production and broadleaved forest dominance with relatively low silvopasture coverage in many territories. Broadleaved forests, meadow orchards and grazed permanent crops offer clear entry points for stronger promotion, especially in eastern regions where potential remains underused. A further constraint has been the interaction between CAP pillars. In previous periods, support under Pillar II could conflict with Pillar I eligibility, discouraging uptake on farms. At the same time, support remained fragmented across measures and regions. More coherent policy is therefore needed for the conservation, maintenance and expansion of silvopasture systems. Conservation and promotion of agroforestry landscapes and silvopasture practices should be reinforced, especially in eastern Continental regions and in areas with favourable land productivity

and climatic conditions. Stronger Rural Development support, together with payments for ecosystem services, could help unlock this potential and support climate neutrality goals.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

- Silvopasture is the most common agroforestry practice in the European Continental region, but its extent remains highly uneven across territories.
- Its distribution is strongly shaped by sociohistorical land ownership patterns, dominant vegetation, forest type and regional farming systems.
- Current CAP support has remained limited, with only a slight increase in Rural Development measures between programming periods.
- Future policy should strengthen the conservation and promotion of silvopasture, especially in eastern Continental regions, through more coherent Rural Development support and instruments that better reward ecosystem services and climate contributions.

CAP support increased slightly between 2007–2013 and 2014–2020. Eastern regions show major untapped potential for future promotion.

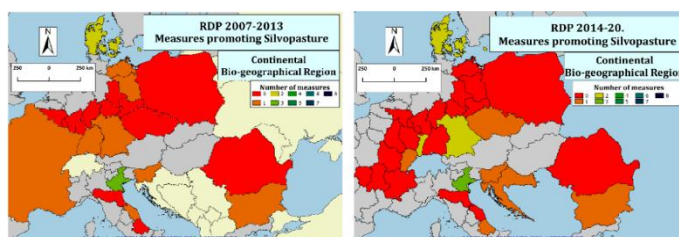


FIGURE 2. Measures promoting silvopasture. Santiago-Freiianes J.J.

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Continental region combines strong grassland and livestock relevance with broadleaved forest resources and a rich, though uneven, silvopastoral tradition. Current policy support remains limited and fragmented. Stronger CAP support could help preserve and expand silvopasture in regions where it can contribute to climate resilience, ecosystem services and more multifunctional rural landscapes.

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