

## Silvopasture and CAP in the EU Mediterranean 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 Mediterranean region, silvopasture is highly relevant because of its adaptation to drought-prone conditions, its role in livestock feeding, and its capacity to deliver ecosystem services in vulnerable landscapes, yet its territorial extent remains uneven.
- CAP support for silvopasture in the Mediterranean region is strongly shaped by local conditions: where silvopasture already exists, support tends to focus on regeneration and maintenance, while in more degraded or abandoned areas it is mainly linked to forest fire prevention and land management.

### Defining silvopasture in the Mediterranean region

Silvopasture combines trees or shrubs with grazing livestock and can occur in agricultural and forest-related land. In the Mediterranean region, it is mainly linked to oak woodlands, shrublands, permanent grasslands and, in some territories, permanent crops such as olive orchards. Its relevance is closely associated with Mediterranean climatic conditions, where deep-rooted woody perennials and herbaceous layers together help sustain animal feeding under recurrent summer drought and variable rainfall. Silvopasture in the Mediterranean region is therefore not only a production system, but also a land-use strategy adapted to difficult environmental conditions. In many southern areas, shrubs and small trees are an important source of feed for goats and sheep, especially during the driest periods of the year.



FIGURE 1. Percentage of land occupied by silvopasture. Santiago-Freijanes J.J.

**Woody vegetation helps livestock systems cope with long dry summers and strong rainfall variability. The highest concentration of silvopasture is found in the western Mediterranean (dehesa/montado landscapes), where policy support is also stronger.**

### Extent and CAP contribution in the Mediterranean region

Silvopasture is unevenly distributed across the Mediterranean, with its strongest presence in western Iberia, especially in dehesa and montado systems. Elsewhere, it is often limited by either agricultural intensification or land abandonment, which can increase unmanaged vegetation and fire risk. CAP support reflects these territorial differences, with some regions applying only one measure and others using broader policy mixes. Overall, support is region-specific and shaped by land use, degradation and management history.

### Silvopasture CAP promotion in the Mediterranean region

Silvopasture promotion in the Mediterranean region should be understood in relation to landscape condition and local necessity. In well-established systems such as dehesa/montado, CAP support is largely associated with regeneration and maintenance. This is particularly important because many of these systems depend on very old trees and are increasingly affected by poor regeneration, inadequate grazing management and climate-related oak mortality. Agri-environmental support is also especially relevant in these landscapes because of the wide range of ecosystem services they provide.

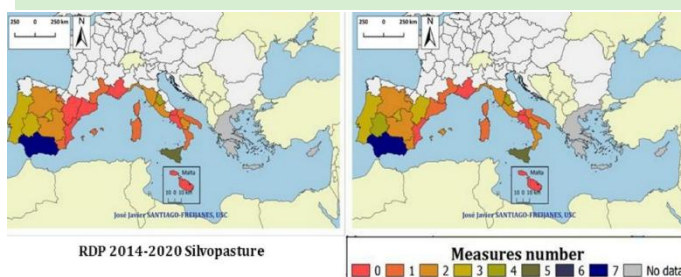
# Silvopasture CAP promotion in the Mediterranean region

In more degraded or abandoned Mediterranean areas, CAP support is more closely linked to forest fire prevention and forest management, especially in pine-dominated or marginal lands where silvopasture is less developed and policy focuses on reducing fuel loads, improving resilience and limiting degradation. This reflects two broad policy situations in the region: conserving and regenerating existing multifunctional silvopasture systems, or using grazing and woody vegetation management to reduce risk and restore landscape functionality where silvopasture is weak or absent. At the same time, stronger support should not be limited to environmental functions alone, since long-term continuity is also greater where management, products and markets are connected. Future policy should therefore reinforce silvopasture through regionally adapted support, combining regeneration, maintenance and ecosystem service payments in established systems with active grazing management, fire prevention and restoration measures in more vulnerable landscapes.

**CAP support is not uniform: in established systems it is linked to regeneration and maintenance, while in marginal or abandoned areas it is often linked to forest fire prevention.**

## MAIN CONCLUSION

- Silvopasture is highly relevant in the Mediterranean region because it is well adapted to drought-prone conditions and supports livestock systems while delivering important ecosystem services.
- Its extent is uneven across the region, with the strongest presence in western Mediterranean oak-based systems such as dehesa and montado, while many other areas show low implementation linked either to intensification or abandonment.
- Current CAP support is strongly shaped by local necessity: in established silvopasture areas it focuses mainly on regeneration and maintenance, while in degraded or abandoned landscapes it is more closely linked to forest fire prevention and land management.
- Future policy should strengthen silvopasture through regionally differentiated CAP support that combines regeneration of existing systems, active management of vulnerable landscapes, and better recognition of the productive and environmental value of woody grazing systems.



**FIGURE 2. Number of Rural Development Programmes (RDP) 2014–2020 measures promoting silvopasture with annual cropland forest farming. Santiago-Freijanes J.J.**

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



## References

Rodríguez-Rigueiro, F. J., Santiago-Freijanes, J. J., Mosquera-Losada, M. R., Castro, M., Silva-Losada, P., Pisanelli, A., Pantera, A., Rigueiro-Rodríguez, A., & Ferreiro-Domínguez, N. (2021). Silvopasture policy promotion in European Mediterranean areas. PLOS ONE, 16(1), e0245846.

Silvopasture in the Mediterranean region is not promoted through a single CAP logic. Policy support changes according to territorial context: conserving and regenerating long-established systems where they persist and reducing degradation and fire risk where silvopasture has declined or disappeared. This makes regional targeting essential for effective future CAP design.

Get to know more!



[www.af4eu.eu](http://www.af4eu.eu)