

Overview of Agroforestry Legal Regulation Practices

An analysis of legislative frameworks in European countries reveals that insufficient attention is given by policymakers to the regulation and/or promotion of agroforestry practices.

Although agroforestry covers a significant area in Europe—approximately 15 million hectares—and represents a traditional farming method in some countries (for example, in Greece and other Balkan states, traditional grazing often takes place on mountain slopes and valleys with scattered trees or tree groups providing shade for livestock), there are very few specific legal provisions dedicated to the regulation of this practice.

Positive developments can be observed in certain countries. For instance, France is introducing regulations that encourage the planting of trees in vineyards as a measure to mitigate the effects of rising air temperatures driven by climate change. Additionally, in countries such as the Czech Republic, Poland, and France, grassroots initiatives are emerging, with associations of agroforestry enthusiasts actively engaging in legislative processes. These organizations draft legal proposals, conduct advocacy campaigns, and strive to raise awareness among the public and policymakers about the benefits of agroforestry practices.

A similar situation exists in Lithuania. Due to the requirement to transpose European Union legislation (directives and regulations) into national law, references to agroforestry as a farming practice have begun to appear in Lithuanian legal acts. However, the application of this concept lacks a systemic approach. There is a notable absence of coherence among legal provisions, which is necessary to ensure the consistent and strategic development of this environmentally and climate-friendly farming method. Furthermore, Lithuania has yet to establish a long-term vision to harness the potential of agroforestry for achieving ecological, economic, and social benefits.

Addressing this issue requires not only improvements to national legislation but also international cooperation and the adaptation of best practices from other countries. A long-term and consistent approach could foster the expansion of this farming model, helping to tackle climate change challenges and contributing to the creation of sustainable land-use systems.

Summary



Belarus

The goals set for 2030 aim to develop agroforestry through methods such as educating school students on this topic, providing incentives for farmers to develop agroforestry as a business sector, and organizing courses and seminars. However, there is a lack of detailed data to precisely identify the current progress in this area.



Czech Republic

Agroforestry is not widely practiced, and there are no specific legal regulations governing this activity in the country. Attempts have been made to propose legislative amendments that could further complicate agricultural processes by introducing restrictions on agriculture as a means of landscape protection.



France

The development of agroforestry has been set as a goal in the Rural Development Program. State support is provided through the EURAF organization. However, there is no separate legal regulation for the development of agroforestry. Currently, this farming method is not widely applied, with the main obstacle being the insufficient knowledge of farmers in this field.



Germany

National legislation not only fails to regulate the application of agroforestry practices, but it also creates barriers to the use of support measures for farmers wishing to experiment with these methods. For example, farmers are prohibited from cutting trees that have not reached a certain age.



Ireland

Agroforestry remains underdeveloped; however, the forestry sector in the country is notably advanced. It is one of the few, if not the only, European Union member states that does not utilize EU support for forestry but instead promotes the sector's development using national budget funds.

The development of agroforestry holds potential to be financed through the forestry sector. However, it is currently framed as an aspirational goal aimed at supporting the growth of Ireland's agriculture, providing additional income streams for farmers, and fostering a more sustainable land-use model.



Latvia

Agroforestry is being developed through the application of rotational planting systems and silvopastoral systems, but there is no separate regulation in place to govern this practice. Broader implementation is hindered by regulations that prohibit the cutting of trees that have not yet reached a certain age.



Netherlands



Poland

Agroforestry is not legally regulated, and there are no incentives in place to promote its development, which is why this farming method is not widely adopted. However, there is an agroforestry association in the country, which brings together 30 members.



Slovenia

Conditions for the development of agroforestry are not favorable: agricultural land makes up about 30% of the country's area, and there is insufficient fertile land available. Legally, this practice is not regulated, and there is a lack of knowledge among the stakeholders involved.



Spain

The legal regulation may be favorable for the development of agroforestry. The Forest Act specifies that forests planted on agricultural land are not considered part of forested areas. This means they are not subject to most of the restrictions that apply to forests growing on designated forest land.



Sweden

Support for the implementation of agrienvironmental measures on farms is provided through the Rural Development Program and various EU funding programs (e.g., LEADER). The primary initiatives for the development of this farming method are driven not by the public sector, but by the farmers themselves.



United Kingdom

Agroforestry is not being actively developed. National legislation not only fails to regulate the application of agroforestry practices but also creates barriers for farmers who wish to experiment with such methods. For instance, farmers are prohibited from cutting trees that have not reached a specific age.

Financial support for agroforestry is currently available only in the regions of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, leaving other areas without access to funding for this sustainable farming practice.

About the project

„Agroforestry Solutions – New Climate Champions“

Agroforestry practices can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector and improve environmental conditions. This method involves integrating trees and shrubs into crop and livestock systems to achieve ecological, economic, and social benefits. However, agroforestry remains underutilized in certain EU countries, such as Lithuania, where there are neither legal regulations nor public policy measures supporting its implementation. Farmers also lack empirically based information on how to apply this method effectively.

The goal of this project is to promote agroforestry in the Baltic States by facilitating access to information and strengthening farmers' competencies. Additionally, it aims to propose adjustments to legal and public policy frameworks. A pilot project will assess the feasibility of agroforestry implementation and identify potential challenges. By providing access to developed materials, the project will raise public awareness of the necessity and benefits of agroforestry.

The project is being implemented by the public institution "Green Policy Institute" in collaboration with Vilnius University. The project implementation period spans from December 2023 to January 2026.

The project is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action as part of the European Climate Initiative (EUKI). The primary goal of EUKI is to foster cooperation on climate action within the European Union, aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



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