EURAF European Agroforestry Federation

- Newsletter N°13, September 2015 –

1. EURAF ACTIVITIES

EURAF organized an event at the Milan Expo 2015 titled "Agroforestry: Sustainably Feeding the Planet and Providing Energy". It was held in the European Commission building, and chaired by Rosa Mosquera and Adolfo Rosati. The successful event was followed by several press releases like the one published by Teatro Naturale with the heading "Agroforestry is the Future", the one in Agricultura News titled "Bring Back Trees in Fields" or the one in Mondo Agricolo titled "Agroforestry, different plants on the same land". During the morning, a session focused on the European context explained what is EURAF, what agroforestry is, the FAO view of the role of agroforestry and food security and the certification in agroforestry. These initial presentations were followed by talks dealing with the role of agroforestry within European policy, provided by the European Commission and European Environmental Bureau. Later on, excellent examples of agroforestry implementation were given by the AGFORWARD project and by the agroforestry associations of France and Italy. Presentations in the afternoon, focused on Italy: e.g. "Death and Rebirth of "Piantata" in the Po area", "Modernity of Integrated Agro-silvo-pastoral Systems in Italy", and "Water Purification Functions of Tree Systems in the Plains". Two presentations showed the benefits that agroforestry provides from a practical point of view: "Growing Hardwoods in a Modern farm in the Veneto Region: the Casaria di Masi farm", and "Agroforestry and Conservation Agriculture: the case of Francesco da Schio's Farm". The session ended with a round table, where the speakers tackled important agroforestry issues like how to remove technical, bureaucratic, and policy obstacles to agroforestry development.

On behalf of EURAF, Gerry Lawson attended a conference on greenhouse gas accounting in the land use sector on 14-15th September 2015, and a separate article follows.

Rosa Mosquera represented EURAF in the LEADER/CLLD Conference of the EC: "Strengthening local development through cooperation" (25th September 2015). Excellent examples of cooperation between European and other world regions were presented. EURAF aims at pushing forward Agroforestry through the promotion of Operational Groups and the Cooperation between Local Action Groups already established within the Rural Development Program Framework. If you are interested please contact EURAF.

Source: María Rosa Mosquera Losada (EURAF President), Adolfo Rosati (EURAF Deputy Secretary) and Gerry Lawson (EURAF Deputy President), September 2015.

2. REGIONAL AGROFORESTRY NEWS

2.1 Meeting on agroforestry in Flanders (Belgium)

On 3th September 2015 in Linter (Flanders, Belgium), some seventy farmers, civil servants, researchers and interested civilians participated at the yearly agroforestry information meeting on the farm of Eric Avermaete.

The visit started with a walk through the young agroforestry plantation, where a technical explanation was given. Next, participants could attend to a series of presentations on the agroforestry project in Flanders and its first field results, Flemish subsidies and legal issues, the expected effect of agroforestry on the wildlife at the farm, and the possibilities for assistance in the development of an agroforestry project. The evening was closed by a cocktail and networking session.

The fact that quite some farmers participated at this field visit and study evening was a heartwarming boost for the members of the project consortium and proved that there is a growing interest in agroforestry in Flanders.

Fig. 1: Some pictures taken during the meeting

Source: Bart Vleeschouwers (Project consortium "Agroforestry in Flanders". This project is subsidized by the Flemish regional government), September 2015.

2.2 Festival "Sójka Mazowiecka" in Poland

On 9th August 2015, EURAF and *OSA* (*Ogólnopolskie Stowarzyszenia Agroleśnictwa* - Polish Agroforestry Association) representatives were invited by the head of Cegłów municipality (Mińsk district, near Warsaw) to promote agroforestry systems during the regional festival "*Sójka Mazowiecka*", organized by the authorities.

Fig. 2: Robert Borek and Krzysztof Rawski promoting agroforestry during the event

The event attracted large number of farmers from Mazowieckie region. The event was attended by Mr. Marek Sawicki, the Polish Minister of Agriculture. Participants had a possibility to learn agroforestry ideas through discussion with agroforestry experts. Additionally, the brochures presenting EURAF activities were distributed among the participants. The presented ideas were well received by the Minister, who expressed the willingness to discuss about the development of agroforestry in Poland, since this idea is consistent with the National Strategy for Agriculture, in particular linked to production and promotion of local agricultural products that is one of the priorities of the Polish Ministry.

Fig. 3: Minister Marek Sawicki (on the right) with EURAF brochure

Source: Robert Borek (EURAF National Delegate), September 2015.

2.3 MEPs visit agroforestry plots in SW France

MEPs Eric Andrieu (France) and Paul Brannen (United Kingdom) took part in a visit organised by AliénorEU and the French Agroforestry Association (AFAF), to two agroforestry farms in Gers Department (Toulouse). Gerry Lawson, Vice President of EURAF also attended.

After the meeting the MEPs indicated that: "*Today's visit demonstrated that agroforestry is an answer to the various challenges that the European agricultural sector is currently facing: profitability, competitiveness, biodiversity, climate change and territorial planning. Mr. Hamot and Mr. de Lozzo are innovative farmers who chose to apply agro-ecological methods to produce as much but in a better way. We will now reflect on how to better promote agroforestry at the European level.*"

Alain Canet, Chair of AFAF added:*"It is clearly established that putting trees and hedges at the heart of crop and animal systems makes it possible to produce food while protecting the environment. Agroforestry leads to better use of natural resources such as water, soil, light and minerals, and provides a form of ´sustainable intensification´."*

Mr. Hamot and Mr. de Lozzo are optimizing their systems by adopting agroforestry and combining it with proven techniques of cover crops and direct seeding. They limit the use of inputs, improve soil fertility, stimulate biodiversity (for example bees and other pollinators) and decrease their production costs. They also protect water quality, which is the primary objective of the Agr'eau Programme, being implemented by the farmers in Adour Garonne watershed. These farmers are convinced that they made the right decision in opting for agroforestry. Not only does it improve the ecosystems on their farms, but it helps mitigate climate change by sequestering carbon and reducing emissions of nitrous oxide.

Fig. 4: Some pictures taken during the meeting

Source: Fabien Balaguer (French Agroforestry Association (AFAF)) and Gerry Lawson (EURAF Deputy President), September 2015.

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3. FEATURED FARM: agroforestry initiatives in Flanders (Belgium)

Eric Avermaete is a farmer in the neighborhood of Tienen, about 50 km east of Brussels. He grows cereals, sugar beets, potatoes and corn.

Around the farm buildings he has about 7 ha of land where until last year pears were grown. Because of the Russian boycott of European fruit export the prices were slumping so terribly that he decided to remove all his pear trees in 2014.

Eric and his wife saw the circumstances as a chance to increase the aesthetic value of these fields around their house and farm buildings. Therefore, they decided to plant quality wood in an agroforestry setting.

For the design of the planting scheme he was assisted by the project consortium working in the IWT-project “Agroforestry in Flanders”.

All together some 7 ha were planted with oak and walnut trees. The opportunity was taken to experiment with planting material of different sizes and with different types of protection. The work was done in cooperation between the farmer and the entire project consortium on a warm and clear day in March 2015. Unfortunately, the trees had to face a very dry and cool spring and then a hot and even dryer summer in 2015. Hence particularly the bigger trees had difficulties to survive the Belgian summer of 2015.

Fig. 5: Some pictures of the farm, taken at the planting day (top) and about half a year later (bottom)

However, an interesting observation is that smaller planting material did start well and that the use of Tubex protection tubes did have a beneficial effect.

Eric Avermaete remains convinced of the interesting possibilities of agroforestry and will replace the dead trees by new ones, hoping that these will take off better than their big brothers planted last spring.

Asked for his motivation he stated: “I did it because I like trees and I’d like to embellish my farm. That in the long run a good price can be obtained for the quality timber that eventually will be produced on my fields and will be a benefit for my successors.”

Source: Bart Vleeschouwers (Boerenbond, Partner in the IWT-project “Agroforestry in Flanders”), September 2015.

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4. MULCHING AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO HERBICIDES: APPLICATION IN AGROFORESTRY SYSTEMS

The FP7 project SUSTAFFOR, participated by 6 SMEs and 4 RTDs coordinated by CTFC, aims at developing and validating innovative techniques of forest restoration, including soil conditioners and novel mulching models. The novel mulching models are based on new biopolymers, treated woven jute and recycled rubber. These techniques aim at increasing the technical, economic and environmental outcomes of tree planting, and are suitable to be utilized in agroforestry systems.

A fundamental aspect of agroforestry management, in both technical and economic terms, is weed control, especially in the area around the stem of the young tree. Weeds compete for water, nutrients and light with the tree, reducing its growth, vigour and survival. Another negative effect of not managing weeds is the creation of weed seed banks which are further released into the agricultural / pastoral component, increasing the maintenance costs.

Weeding around and between trees requires an accurate implementation to avoid damaging the trees or their protection, which often impedes mechanizing its application. The most common weeding technique is chemical (herbicide application), which brings together social and environmental concern. Using herbicides can be a disputable manner of managing systems characterized by enhanced environmental services, especially, soil and water protection and biodiversity. Moreover, herbicide weeding implies recurrent interventions, at least once per year, resulting in a massive investment of resources along the rotation.

A cost-effective alternative to herbicide application is mulching: this technique consists on covering the ground in the area around the stem to avoid weed establishment (physical barrier) or development (light deprivation). Moreover, mulching increases soil water content during dry periods, by reducing weed transpiration and soil water evaporation given a lower sunlight direct impact.. There is a wide range of mulching options, including continuous covers (films or mats based on plastic, bio-plastic, textiles, treated paper or cardboard) or particle mulches (stacking straw, woodchips, stones, etc., around the tree). Each model has particular pros and cons in terms of durability, degradability, need for maintenance, cost

of purchase / transport / application, effect on soil temperature and physical-chemical properties... Each manager decides the most suitable mulching option depending on local availability and needs.

Fig. 6: Mulching prototypes evaluated during Sustaffor project based on new biopolymers, on treated woven jute and on recycled rubber

Source: Jaime Coello (Sustainable Forest Management Unit, Forest Sciences Centre of Catalonia (Spain), jaime.coello@ctfc.es), September 2015.

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5. AGRICULTURE AND LULUCF IN THE 2030 EU CLIMATE AND ENERGY FRAMEWORK. DG CLIMA CONFERENCE, BRUSSELS 14-15th SEPTEMBER

Gerry Lawson attended this workshop on behalf of EURAF and stressed: a) the role of agroforestry as a mitigation and adaptation activity; b) the need to monitor emissions using an integrated Agriculture Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) pillar rather than the separate agriculture and LULUCF (Land Use Land Use Change and Forestry) pillars that exist now; and c) the need to develop tools to allow ´climate budgeting´ of net emissions at the farm scale. There was quite a lot of support for this last point, and recognition that the national/regional Land Parcel Identification Systems (which show all farm fields and most forest blocks) could eventually be used, together with ever-improving models of GHG fluxes, to predict net fluxes for individual farmers.

The DG CLIMA consultation closed in June and requested views on whether GHG accounting from 2020 onwards should continue with separate pillars for agriculture and LULUCF (Option 1) or merge these into an integrated land use pillar (Option 2) with carbon and non-carbon emissions accounted for across the whole land use sector. The latter option is effectively the AFOLU pillar advocated since 2006 by IPCC. The majority of NGOs favoured Option 1, however, (since "Option 2 would "dangerously dilute the commitment to the 40% reduction target"), as did the forestry trade organisations (since "Option 2 means

that forestry would be meeting the climate bill for agriculture"). Many respondents felt that adequate information was not available to take a decision. The Commission will finalise its proposals in 2016.

GHG Emission mitigation options were also discussed, and agroforestry (including implanting trees in hedges) is increasingly considered amongst these. Scientific understanding is still lacking in lots of areas, however, particularly predicting and modelling net emissions of N_2O and CH_4. The mitigation studies only considered carbon sequestration in agroforestry systems, not its potential ´safety net´ role in uptake of soil nitrate and ammonium, nor the scavenging of ammonia that takes place in tree canopies.

Further details are available here

Source: Gerry Lawson (Vice President EURAF, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Edinburgh), September 2015.

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6. MISCELLANEOUS

A new module on Agroforestry has just been added to the FAO Sustainable Forest Management Toolbox

In addition to an overview of Agroforestry, the module contain tools, case studies and further reading that FAO hopes will be useful to the different stakeholders dealing with agroforestry issues. The module is intended to be a living document and FAO would greatly appreciate any comments you might have on the text but more important are new case studies, tools and new publications that you would like to contribute with. More info here

European Parliament Seminar

Birdlife, Pogany-Havas and European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism will organize a European Parliament Seminar on ***"Europe's wood pastures: condemned to a slow death by the CAP? A test case for EU agriculture and biodiversity policy"***. More info here

9th International Symposium on Plant-Soil Interactions at Low pH

The 9th International Symposium on Plant-Soil Interactions at Low pH will take place in Dubrovnik, Croatia during 18th – 23rd October 2015. More info here

12th European IFSA (International Farming Systems Association) Symposium

The 12th European IFSA Symposium will take place at Harper Adams University, Shropshire, UK during 12th – 15th July 2016. The theme of the Symposium will be "Social and technological transformation of farming systems: Diverging and converging pathways". More info here

EcoSummit 2016, Ecological Sustainability: Engineering Change

The 5th International EcoSummit Congress will take place at The Corum Convention Center, Montpellier, France, during 29th Augut – 1st September 2016. More info here

World Congress Silvo-Pastoral Systems 2016

The World Congress Silvo-Pastoral Systems 2016 will take place in Évora, Portugal during 27th – 30th September 2016. The theme of the Congress will be "Silvo-Pastoral Systems in a changing world: functions, management and people". More info here

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This is your newsletter! If there's anything you think should be included, please send suggestions to euraf@agroforestry.eu for the next issue.

This newsletter is carried out in collaboration with the European AGFORWARD Project.

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