

POLICY SUPPORT FOR AGROFORESTRY IN THE EU: RESULTS FROM EUROPEAN E-CONFERENCE (MAY 2006) ON FARM WOODLANDS IN THE NEW RURAL DEVELOPMENT REGULATION (2007-2013)

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From 8th - 26th May an electronic conference took place on the subject of agroforestry policy in Europe with 232 subscribers, and 26 contributions from nine countries. A second phase will follow in October 2006. There were three topics, each stimulated by a discussion paper:

1. Article 44 of the Rural Development Regulation (2007-2013) - will this opportunity to establish areas of new agroforestry be exploited by member states? (moderated by F. Liagre)
2. The Single Farm Payment - are member states excluding areas with scattered tree cover from payment? (moderated by P. Burgess).
3. Agri-environment payments and the establishment of trees on farms - past and future? (moderated by G. Moreno).

Topic 1 concluded that whilst no national administration had finalised its national programme, only Greece seemed certain to adopt Article 44. Some administrations were confused by the meaning of 'agroforestry', others found more pressing national or regional priorities, but most countries were consulting interesting parties and the final conclusion was unclear.

Topic 2. With < 50-60 trees/ha SFP appears to be paid in full without problems provided the understorey is managed in a similar way to a 'no tree' situation. With > 50-60 trees per hectare, SFP can be maintained using silvopastoral systems provided understorey growth remains suitable for grazing; but this may reduce payments in proportion to the area occupied by the trees. Silvo-arable systems may also be eligible in particular circumstances (e.g. traditional orchards), but these rules are less clear.

Topic 3. Only in France is there an agri-environmental payment focused directly on agroforestry, and even this is implemented only in a few departments. Payments often exist for riparian tree-strips, hedgerows, bocages, wood pastures but the diversity of regional approaches is huge. Rules may exist in statute but uptake has been low. Clearly much effort is needed to optimise the use of agri-environment and forest-environment payments in national plans which implement the new RDR.

