

European Agroforestry Conference 2024 in Brno, Czech Republic

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The European Agroforestry Federation (EURAF) aims to promote the adoption and implementation of agroforestry systems throughout Europe. To help achieve this, biannual conferences are organised to share recent research developments in the European agroforestry space and improve knowledge exchange. This year, the 7th European Agroforestry Conference was held at Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic from 27th to 31st May 2024.



Figure 1 - Panel discussion between Stephen Briggs, Michael Gold, Patrick Worms, Christian Dupraz, and Ion Codescu (L-R), chaired by Bohdan Lojka.

During the Opening Ceremony, speeches and presentations were given by special guests such as the European Commissioner for Agriculture, the Czech Republic Minister of Agriculture, and the Czech Republic Minister of the Environment.

In addition, keynote speakers were invited from all over Europe, as well as the United States and Australia. Their presentations gave an interesting overview of the challenges faced in each respective country regarding the adoption and establishment of agroforestry systems. It was highlighted that while European systems are typically

established based on subsidy requirements, there are less subsidies available in the United States and as a result the design of their systems are much more market driven.

Rowan Reid, a farmer from Australia, also stressed the importance of farmers being involved in the process of integrating trees on farms, as it is important that they are able to realise their own goals from implementing agroforestry rather than only what other stakeholders hope to achieve.

Across the four days of the conference, there were over 130 presentations across a variety of themes including agroforestry and the environment, productivity, economics, and policy. Parallel sessions meant that it was impossible to hear every presentation, but the ones that I attended were very interesting. I particularly enjoyed the sessions on farmers' experiences, which perfectly demonstrated how there is no 'one



Figure 2 – Rowan Reid giving a presentation during the Closing Ceremony.

size fits all', each agroforestry system is adapted to suit the local environment of each farm, as well as its intended ecological or productivity outcomes.

There was also the opportunity to go on field trips to visit local agroforestry systems. I chose the silvoarable systems trip, which took us to sites located throughout the region of Southern Moravia, Czech Republic (Figure 2) as well as in Northern Austria (Figure 3). It was great to see more examples of agroforestry systems being successfully implemented.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed my experience at the European Agroforestry Conference, as I only started my PhD on the life cycle assessment of alternative tree systems a few months ago. Attending the conference provided me with a unique opportunity to learn a lot about recent research progress in a short timeframe. I came away with a much better understanding of the challenges faced by European farmers, as well as what the current knowledge gaps are.

I would like to thank the Farm Woodland Forum for awarding me a bursary that enabled me to attend, I am very grateful to have had this opportunity. I look forward to attending the next conference in Neuchâtel, Switzerland in 2026 where I will hopefully be able to present the results of my own PhD research.



Figure 2 - Silvoarable system located near Příbice, Czech Republic established in 2019.



Figure 3 – Silvoarable system located near Wolkersdorf, Austria established in 2012.