

COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY REFORM – AN OPPORTUNITY FOR NEW RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TREES AND AGRICULTURE?

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There is a consensus in favour of greater integration between trees, woods and agriculture. Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy has broken the link between food production and subsidy. Farmers will receive income support payments, subject to conditions.

Forestry is not directly included in EU treaties or supported by the CAP. The complex relationship between trees, woods and agriculture means the changes present both threats and opportunities. Farmers must maintain land in "Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition." These Conditions are set by Member States of the European Union according to Europe wide Regulations. Trees and woodland can be protected as landscape features. Regeneration of trees may be seen as loss of "agricultural condition". Some situations where trees and agriculture are combined may lose payments. There may be incentives to remove trees, or graze woodlands.

Careful and sometimes imaginative interpretation of regulations and policies is needed to identify practical mechanisms for farmers and regulators. Measures must be adapted to Member State, Regional and sub-regional conditions. Some issues can only be resolved by further reform.

There will be new opportunities to develop recognition of agroforestry practices and farm woodland landscapes which better combine forestry and agriculture.