

## LOWLAND AGROFORESTRY SYSTEMS IN FRANCE

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In France, the multipurpose tree was used in many cultivated systems. Because it improved fodder, fruit and timber production, it was easily integrated in a manual and subsistence agriculture. The “pré-verger” or grazing orchard is the most important system in the North of France. From 1600, a landscape of hedged farmland and spaced orchards was developed which peaked in area at the beginning of the twentieth century. Now these grazing orchards cover less than 140 000 ha. But historically, Mediterranean associations are older. Some descriptions made by Classical Roman authors mention associations of walnut trees or olive trees with crops.

While in Italy or Spain, these associations still exist, in France, only a few areas are now intercropping. The reasons for the decrease are the intensification of agriculture but also incompatibility of regulations and compartmentalization of research and development.

Since the 1980s, we experienced a slow “come back” of the tree following to the excess of deforestation. Farmers began to diversify their income and their capital, and to develop an environmental approach to their farming systems. INRA and CEMAGREF initiated research programs, and new projects associated valuable species with annual or perennial crops, supported by important reforms of regulations in 2001.

In 2001, farmers obtained 3 reforms for silvoarable systems in France:

- The intercrop area became eligible for the crop payment (1<sup>st</sup> pillar)
- Owners could get a grant for planting trees (2<sup>nd</sup> pillar)
- Farmers could benefit from an agroforestry AEM

After 2001, we observe a progressive development of a modern agroforestry. In the continuity of the SAFE programme, where a farmers' survey showed that one third of them were interesting in creating some silvoarable project, a new development programme aims to promote the silvoarable systems. Some 50 new projects will be set up in 20 departments.

#### *References*

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