

Synthesis of topic 1: Article 44 of the Rural Development Regulation (2007-2013) - will this opportunity to establish areas of new agroforestry be exploited by member states?

This report forms part of a synthesis of the responses to an e-mail-based conference held between 5 and 26 May 2006. The conference, supported by the Farm Woodland Forum (www.agroforestry.ac.uk), was initiated as Single Farm Payments were being introduced across the European Union, and before the national implementation of the new Rural Development Regulation (2007-2013), which includes an Article (44) allowing payments for establishment of new agroforestry systems. The conference also considered the opportunities for new agro-environment and forest-environment payments.

The conference covered three topics.

- Topic 1 considered Article 44 of the Rural Development Regulation (2007-2013) and asked if member states will use this opportunity to establish new areas of agroforestry.
- Topic 2 considered the Single Farm Payment and whether member states would exclude areas with scattered tree cover from payment?
- Topic 3 considered the links between agri-environment payments and the establishment of trees on farms.

This report synthesises the results for topic 1.

Introduction

The current Rural Development Regulation (Regulation 1257/99) is a single legal instrument to ensure coherence between rural development and the prices and market policy of the common agricultural policy (CAP). It encourages regional and national policy-makers to present their rural development policies within the context of a menu of Articles, only one of which (agri-environmental payments) was mandatory.

Whilst Article 31 of the Rural Development Regulation offered payments related to planting on agricultural land, there was no possibility to support silvoarable systems. Grants for planting were restricted to conventional forestry tree-densities, with intercrops precluded. Therefore, provision of a subsidy for agroforestry with low tree-density was almost impossible....

But the situation will change in 2007: a new European measure recognizes the benefits of the agroforestry systems and gives the opportunity to each member state to support the establishment of new agroforestry systems.

The new Rural Development Regulation (2007-2013) includes a special measure in favour of agroforestry. Article 44 of the RDR (COM(2004)490) contains for the first time a mechanism to support the establishment of agroforestry. Planting costs are eligible and support means 70% to 85% of the total establishment cost.

Extract – Regulation 1698/2005:

Whereas 39:

“Agriforestry systems have a high ecological and social value by combining extensive agriculture and forestry systems, aimed at the production of high-quality wood and other forest products. Their establishment should be supported.”

Article 44:

First establishment of agroforestry systems on agricultural land

1. Support provided for in Article 36(b)(ii), shall be granted to farmers to create agroforestry systems combining extensive agriculture and forestry systems. Support shall cover the establishment costs.
2. Agroforestry systems refer to land use systems in which trees are grown in combination with agriculture on the same land.
3. Christmas trees and fast-growing species for short-term cultivation shall be excluded from support.
4. Support shall be limited to the maximum rate laid down in the Annex.

Situation in each country

United Kingdom

A consultation has just finished on the 'Rural Development Programme for England 2007-2009'. The consultation provides a 'Draft Strategy' but did not indicate which measures (Articles) will be selected. Under the heading 'Improving the Environment and the Countryside', which mostly maps to Axis 2 and to which 80% of the funding will go, 4 challenges were mentioned. These were 1) the decline in the national index of farmland birds 2) N and P emissions from agriculture 3) pollution of rivers, lakes, estuaries and coasts 4) under-utilisation of the timber growing in England.

The next step is therefore to match agroforestry to one of these challenges. Agroforestry was mentioned in an Annex to the consultation document. But some measures won't be used for the national programme (as in all the European Countries) and the point is to be aware of how the agroforestry measure will be maintained in the national programme.

In Scotland, the Scottish Rural Development Plan draft, now in consultation, whilst it quotes 'agroforestry' in the appendices abbreviating the EAFRD and Article 44, does not embrace this option. The draft new Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme which is the forestry/woodland part of the new SRDP and will fit together within the integrated Land Management contracts does not include low density planting or true agroforestry. The Scottish Forestry Strategy proposes doubling the rate of new planting but in a forestry system, with the aim to replace the farming systems by forest (10 000 ha per year).

France

The fate of Article 44 is not yet decided in France. In a recent version of the national Programme, the French Ministry of Agriculture decided to separate clearly the national measures from the regional ones which will depend on decisions taken in each Province before the end of the summer. Almost all of the measures coming from the Axe 2 of the RDR

should have been selected at a regional scale in France. But the French Ministry of Agriculture decided for the moment not to include the agroforestry measure in the forestry section of the next French PDRN (Programme de Développement Rural National). But Agroforestry could respond to the 2 main priorities declared for the Programme: maintenance of the biodiversity and the water protection (Axe 2).

The reasons why this article was not retained by the forestry services are the following: it was considered that too few agroforestry projects were established during the last 4 years in France, which indicates that agroforestry is not an option that deserves support... They added that to keep visibility and simplification in the application of the national programme, it was important to concentrate their effort on few but “essential” measures.

Greece

A draft National Planning Report for the 4th programming period (2007-2013) was prepared by the authorities of the Ministry of Rural Development and Food on 15th of May 2006. The 4 axes of this report follow the structure of the RDR.

Special targets for Axis 2 are soil conservation, water conservation, maintenance of biodiversity, climatic changes and improvement of animal welfare. No specific measure has been detailed for the moment. The Ministry authorities are now preparing the specific measures to implement Axis 2, where Article 44 is also included, and the work will be finished by the end of June. One of these measures is the establishment of agroforestry systems on agricultural land. The person who is working on it attended the SAFE national conference at Thessaloniki in 2005. And the Greek partners seem optimistic about a possible selection of the agroforestry measure...

Germany

The planning commission (PLANAK) of GAK (commune agricultural policy of Germany) has published the decisions for the relevant measures to adopt according to the European RDR. As expected by the German partners, Agroforestry Art. 44 hasn't been implemented.

Nevertheless there are some specific Agro-Environment Measures which could be adapted for Agroforestry plots (see AEM part written by Gerardo Moreno). In a near future for Germany, it seems that Agroforestry will be supported in the environmental payment guidelines rather than using Article 44 into German policy, because this guideline has a wide space of arrangement for the Länder and the regions.

The point is that in Germany, the knowledge about Agroforestry is very poor and makes difficult to support the agroforestry alternative in the national programme (but also in each Länder). But an interesting point is that the cross compliance will support the tree presence in the agricultural land and wake up the interest for the farmers to plant some trees... which could relaunch the opportunity of applying the art 44. In June, German partners have a meeting with politicians in Berlin to discuss the way to put Agroforestry into German policy.

Synthesis

A first comment is that no State Member has finalized its national Programme. If they prepared a draft version, all the specific measures for each axis are not yet selected. However, we can underline different elements at this stage of discussions or negotiations:

1. The word of agroforestry seems to disturb some administrations. Many of them seem to discover this word and ask themselves what the definition covers exactly... We can also point out a lack of information about the potential of agroforestry. The knowledge

is poor about the goals which exist behind this measure. And a conclusion made by different administrations is therefore that agroforestry is something interesting to develop but adapted only for the other countries.

2. Some of you suggested to precise the meaning of agroforestry to adapt it better in each country, such as “grazed farm woodlands” or “cropped orchard” for example. This proposal points out the lack of definition of the word agroforestry in the European Regulation. An alternative could be to speak about agricultural trees instead of agroforestry? And therefore to plan a measure which support individual trees rather than hectare of agroforestry?
3. In some countries, the discussion underlined the difficulties to coordinate the actions to support between a national government and the provinces, between national measures and regional measures. If art. 44 becomes a regional measure, and face to the lack of information I mentioned, which province will adopt it? First discussions with the national governments showed some problems of knowledge about the idea of agroforestry. If the governments let each province to decide which measures to adopt, the future of the agroforestry measure is in danger. Indeed, it will be more difficult to inform various regions than one government... Furthermore, some regional budgets seem not to be prepared to support various actions.

In conclusion, the situation of article 44 is not very optimistic (only Greece seems to select it in their national programme). But we don't have any idea of the situation in other countries for the moment.

An essential question is therefore: to support an innovative measure, is it possible to let the possibility to each province to define themselves their mechanisms of support? Wouldn't it be better to define it at a national or perhaps at European level? By definition, an innovating measure is always bad known and will concern only few farmers at the beginning. And we have to recognize that the selection of the different measures in each province is based on the number of farmers concerned by each measure (more important is this number and more possibilities you have to choose the measure) and the possibility to build collective project. In an innovative way, generally the measure is bad known and you will have only pioneer farmers, single farmers.

In this context, some of you ask directly how to change the government opinions, how to incept new practises such as agroforestry... Good question, indeed!

It seems that the AEM are an option easier to adopt than the art.44. But, if we take into account only the regulations aspects, a logical approach would be on one hand, not to penalize the agroforesters and on the other hand, to simplify the regulations procedures. In that sense, a full eligibility to SFP of the agroforestry parcels with an investment subsidy (art 44) should be the best option. And the article 44 could cover all the tree systems (orchard, hedges, silvoarable systems, isolated trees). The AEM could be therefore adopted in some special case, in a very specific environmental context where we want to develop agroforestry (water protection area for example).

Rendez-vous in a few months, when each government will have written their national programme...

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