

UK Agroforestry Forum – Farming with Trees
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting,
School of Biology, University of Leeds
26 June 2001, at 8:30 pm



1. Present:

From the Committee:

L.D. Incoll (Vice-Chairman, Chairman for the Meeting)
P. Burgess (Treasurer)
A.R. Sibbald (Secretary)
A. Beaton
A. Patterson

Plus: 31 other members (see Appendix – to be added)

2. Apologies:

Apologies were received from:

Euan Brierley	Cranfield University
Richard Crowe (Committee)	Greenmount College
Barbara Hart	Royal Agricultural College
Gerry Hoppé	DARD
Rodney Johnson	IGER
Jim McAdam (Chairman)	DARD
Fergus Sinclair (Committee)	University of Wales
Jim Vale	IGER
Matthew Wenban-Smith	Soil Association
Martin Wolfe	Wakelyns Agroforestry

3. Chairman's Report

In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman read out a report tabled by the Chairman:

UK AGROFORESTRY FORUM

Chairman's Report and Address to the Meeting

“Firstly, my apologies for not being able to attend this meeting. It is the first I have missed since the Forum was formed and it also comes at what I believe is a key time in the development of agroforestry in these Islands. Perhaps the reason for my non-attendance - my Department's dread of any possible risk of Foot and Mouth disease reappearing in Northern Ireland, - might also eventually offer a lifeline to land use systems which minimise or reduce the livestock component.

I'm sure that in the past the phrase "we are at a cross-roads" in terms of the relationship between Technology Transfer and Research has been levelled at Agroforestry. With agriculture having weathered the successive crises it has over the past few years I feel we really are in the middle of the cross-roads now. Whether we get mown down by the impending juggernaut of agricultural reform or jump onto the bus which contains a raft of packages offering a range of multi-functional land use options and as pushed out as part of a new, reformed UK agricultural industry is anybody's guess.

One thing I think is absolutely certain agriculture, or land use, is going to change and perhaps in a much more radical direction than we can imagine. The scrapping of MAFF and creation of a Ministry which embraces the environment and rural development is a major change of direction, and one which I feel we are well placed to align with. The 'old' MAFF environmental regulations will almost certainly be subsumed into the new Ministry and the key thrust of European Policy over the next 5 years to place much more severe emphasis on nutrient management and sustainability offers the Forum an opportunity to deliver systems which are environmentally friendly and sustainable, while accommodating reduction in animal output.

Either way, I am certain the playing field on which those of us who are agricultural scientists operate, is going to change and the broader the base we can offer, the stronger we can play. The post-Foot and Mouth analysis and debate will serve to drive this process all the faster. Our overall aim must be to offer agroforestry as a system which can deliver within all these areas I have talked about yet is inclusive enough to see itself as part of a far wider drive towards the introduction of trees onto farms.

We have built up a considerable fund of research knowledge on at least the early years of silvoarable or silvopastoral systems and yet we will probably not have the luxury of seeing our systems through to completion of the research phase without offering them to the wider land-using public. We must strive to retain the integrity of our research yet see it within a wider framework of ecological interaction.

The key phase we must now embrace is of course, technology transfer and it is here that we will have to broaden our thinking considerably. **We must see agroforestry as one of a suite of land use options which embrace the concept of introducing trees into farmed landscapes.**

If we accept this then our attitude to technology transfer must follow the same concept. We cannot afford to be utterly purist in our introduction of farmers to alternative land use options - we must be prepared to have a technology transfer process which offers the widest possible options to farmers to incorporate trees into their farming systems. We need people with the breadth of vision, expertise and knowledge to do this. These people must come from both the forestry and

agriculture sectors and have vision and interactive skills with farmers and land owners to get their message across.

Where might the Forum lie within this? We have already established that Technology Transfer is an integral function of the Forum therefore if we accept that agroforestry as we envisage it is a part of a much wider new-agriculture land use strategy which embraces biodiversity and sustainability objectives, then we must see the Forum as being broad-based and diverse enough to accommodate the breadth of options.

The one way we can do this is by, - as Arnold Beaton's thought-provoking paper and Richard Crowe's stark realism point out - aligning ourselves with a wider range of thinking and organisations which represent some of that broader diversity of opinion, skill and expertise.

Hence I am tending to come round to the view that while we have been right and proper in maintaining the relative purity of our research programmes into agroforestry, what we must now offer, as a result of that research, slots into a far wider picture embodying the whole concept of trees on farms. We cannot go down this route alone, there are others out there who can offer some of the other facets to the trees-on-farms option.

Perhaps now is the time to actively unite with other Fora and other interest groups - the opportunities are presenting themselves much more clearly with the radical rethink of the whole business of agriculture in the UK and the need for us all to have some of the solutions to what are seemingly intractable problems. We have come a long way, we should be proud of and content with the research we have done and by all means retain its integrity, as in most cases there are still significant and important biological principles and problems to be resolved. Yet we are now in an era when we should move alongside others who have similar messages to offer and who would welcome the expertise this group can bring. At this time my feeling is that this is the road we should go down to offer our skills and expertise to a farming business which is going to be demanding systems which allow multiple objectives and which the general public will tolerate.

I would request that you all think broadly and deeply about this and I wish you and the Forum Annual Meeting well. Enjoy the meeting which Lynton and his colleagues have put together under such trying circumstances - they deserve all of our admiration and support. Thank you.

Jim McAdam"

. A formal vote of thanks to the Chairman for his written report was proposed by Patrick Norris and seconded by Gerry Lawson, the proposal was carried unanimously.

4. Matters arising from the Chairman's Report

It was agreed that all of the matters arising from the report were covered in the agenda.

5. Report of the 2000 Business Meeting

The report was accepted *nem con* as a true record of the meeting.

6. Secretary's Report

It was agreed that all secretarial matters were covered under subsequent items on the agenda.

7. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported that the Forum had no funds.

8. Elections

There was one nomination for the vacant place for an ordinary member on the Committee: Tom Dutson (University of Central Lancashire) was nominated by Lynton Incoll and seconded by David Pilbeam. Tom was elected as there were no other nominations.

There were no nominations for Secretary to replace Alan Sibbald upon his imminent retirement from the Macaulay Institute. The Vice-Chairman announced that Alan was prepared to be re-elected but pointed out that this would only be possible if the Forum had a source of funds to cover travel, accommodation and consumables costs. He also expressed the opinion that the continuing tendency to accept the *status quo* and the failure to nominate a replacement was worrying. The willingness of Alan to continue to act as webmaster was gratifying but the Forum should have a Secretary who was a research-active and employed agroforester. The decision must be faced by the Forum soon rather than at the last minute.

It was pointed out by the Secretary that the Constitution of the Forum did not allow for a membership charge and that a change in the Constitution would therefore be required before a membership subscription could be levied. An additional charge for attendance at meetings is allowed under the Constitution.

There followed a debate on possible source of funding, the following emerged as candidate solutions:

- Sponsorship (required if the costs of technology transfer (demonstration sites, literature and etc.) are also to be covered);
- Subscription charges (£10 to £20 with a 50% reduction for students and retired members);

- Meeting charges (a charge could be levied for the 2002 annual meeting prior to the required change in the Constitution to allow subscription charges (see below));

9. Strategy papers

The Vice-Chairman informed the Meeting that the Committee had agreed at their October meeting that separate papers outlining a strategy for the adoption of agroforestry should be prepared for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. The papers would reflect the potential differences in the overall rural strategies developed by the rural affairs departments in each of the countries.

The following reports were presented:

9.1 *Wales (written report tabled by Fergus Sinclair):*

“A strategy paper for Wales is in preparation in consultation with John Good and Huw Davies. A preliminary meeting to plan the structure and content has already taken place and a survey of extant farm tree planting initiatives in Wales compiled. John Good is in the process of relating the main items of these findings to the Wales Woodland Strategy document. At this stage, it is anticipated that the paper will be ready for release during the autumn. It is also anticipated that there will be an opportunity to air conclusions of the paper with policy makers in September, during a visit of Assembly members to the Institute of Environmental Science at UWB, in addition to presentation at the RASE/RFS conference on *Opportunities for Diversification in Woods and Forests* being held at Stoneleigh next March and publication in the *Quarterly Journal of Forestry*.”

9.2 *Scotland:*

Alan Sibbald reported that the Scottish strategy paper had been delayed until the publication of the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department's paper *A Forward Strategy for Scottish Agriculture* had been published. The paper had been launched by the Scottish Minister for the Environment and Rural Affairs on the day of the Forum's Annual Business Meeting (26 June 2001). The strategy paper for agroforestry in Scotland would be prepared by Alan Sibbald and Max Hislop over the next few months.

9.3 *Northern Ireland:*

No strategy report was available for Northern Ireland. The report is to be developed by Jim McAdam and Richard Crowe.

9.4 *England:*

Steve Newman reported that the agroforestry policy paper he had presented to the main session of the Forum earlier in the day would form the basis of the strategy paper for England. The report would be developed by Steve Newman, Arnold Beaton, Paul Burgess and Andrew Patterson.

It was agreed, following a proposal from Andrew Patterson, that further debate on the strategy to be adopted should be delayed until the agenda items dealing with technology transfer (Agenda item 9), including demonstration sites (Agenda item 10) and the future direction of the Forum (Agenda item 11) had been dealt with. It was further agreed to delay these items until all other matters had been dealt with.

10. Expertise database

The Secretary reported that 30 members had volunteered to act as expert consultants when technology transfer enquiries were received by the Forum. He provided a breakdown of the general areas of expertise covered:

Arable	10
Pastoral	15
Tree Establishment	11
Tree Protection	7
Biodiversity	5

11. Membership/ mailing list

The Secretary reported that the list currently contained 174 members of which 162 were based in the UK. He provided a breakdown of the subject areas in which members were employed:

	No.	%
Advisory/Extension	10	6
Charity	19	12
Farmer	7	4
Forestry	3	2
Quango/Govt	23	14
Research/Teaching	92	57
Others	8	5

12. JISCmail agroforestry mailing list

The Vice-Chairman reported the transfer of the agroforestry mailing list from Mailbase to JISCmail – a superior system. He also reported that following last year’s decision he now actively moderated the mailing list to remove unwanted messages. Activity on the mailing list had been intermittent with a long period of inactivity because the compulsory transfer to JISCmail had not been 100% successful – we had been unaware that JISCmail

had not provided a posting button! (See appended report.) It was agreed by the Meeting however, that the list should be kept and its use reviewed again.

13. Forum web site

The Secretary reported that the new URL for the Forum web site (<http://www.agroforestry.ac.uk>) had been acquired for a two-year period. The cost (£80 for the two-year period) had been covered by the Macaulay Institute, however the Forum would have to bear in mind that the cost would have to be covered in future. IT staff at the Macaulay Institute were currently working on setting up links to the new site and access to it should be available with a few weeks. The Secretary will contact members by e-mail when it is available. The URL is issued by the Joint Academic Network (JANET) and could be hosted in future by any site registered with JANET. Members were invited by the Secretary to provide new and updated information and appropriate links to keep the site up-to-date.

The Secretary also reported that he had set up a Download site from which various documents, for example, the Forum Constitution and instructions for authors submitting papers to the Forum newsletter, could be copied. It had already been used extensively to support publicity for this year's annual meeting.

14. The Forum newsletter

14.1 Agroforestry Systems:

A paper on developments in the international journal *Agroforestry Systems* which now incorporates *Agroforestry Forum* was tabled by Fergus Sinclair:

“The number of subscribers receiving *Agroforestry Systems* at the reduced rate offered to members of the UK Agroforestry Forum and members of the IUFRO research group on agroforestry presently stands at 33. Subscription forms for this offer are available from Zewge Teklehaimanot at the meeting, or by contacting Fergus Sinclair at f.l.sinclair@bangor.ac.uk. In order for Kluwer to guarantee continuation of this arrangement, we need to achieve 100 individual subscriptions. We anticipate a further 30 or so from IUFRO members but would encourage Forum members to promote this offer to colleagues.”

14.2 Forum Newsletter:

A paper was tabled by Fergus Sinclair:

“The first issue of the new electronic Forum Newsletter, *The UK Agroforestry Forum Newsletter*, appeared in January 2001. It was intended to publish the Newsletter twice a year but the current submission rate of articles is very low (no articles received for publication in the June 2001 issue). We have one excellent article from Chris Doyle, submitted in advance of this year's annual meeting and

intended for circulation along with others following the meeting. All presenters of papers at this meeting should note that the copy date for the next issue is the end of July (but articles should be submitted during the meeting).”

The Vice-Chairman thanked Fergus Sinclair for submitting the two papers. He encouraged those who had presented papers to the Forum meeting to submit them for publication in the newsletter. He suggested that members of the Committee should take responsibility for soliciting articles in the future to ensure the success of the electronic newsletter.

In closing this item, the Vice-Chairman thanked Fergus Sinclair, Michelle Jones and the University of Wales at Bangor for their editing and financial support of *Agroforestry Forum* in the past and of the new newsletter now.

15. Future meetings

The Secretary reported that he had received only one offer from Tom Dutson to organise a meeting, preferably in 2003 at the Newton Rigg site of the University of Central Lancashire in Cumbria. Regretably it appeared that the 1999 offer from Bangor had been unauthorised and did not stand. Arnold Beaton reported that Barbara Hart had offered to host a meeting at the Royal Agricultural College (RAC), Cirencester, and proposed that the 2002 meeting could be held there. Mark Malins offered to contribute to the organisation of the meeting at RAC and is prepared to set it up as a joint meeting in the calendar of events for the local branch of the Institute of Agricultural Management. Patrick Norris also offered a contribution to the meeting from the Great Western Community Forest. It was agreed that the 2002 meeting of the UK Agroforestry Forum should be held at RAC. The proposed dates, a week earlier than normal, might clash with examination duties at term end for many members, so members would be canvassed when firm dates were put forward.

It was agreed that the 2003 meeting of the UK Agroforestry Forum should be held at the Newton Rigg site of the University of Central Lancashire in Cumbria. The date is yet to be arranged.

16. The future of the Forum

Arnold Beaton introduced his paper as being deliberately contentious. He sensed a falling level of interest in agroforestry and believed that the Forum had two choices: to continue as a small research-based group or to widen its interests in a move to influence policy and to transfer technology, while maintaining a continued interest in research. Paul Tabbush believed that the Forum was at a cross-roads but that the Poplar Forum, with which Arnold Beaton had recommended a merger, was in a different position in that there was a need for it to have a continued, separate existence in order to reflect the Poplar Commissions which exist in other European countries.

In the general discussion which followed, a number of main points emerged.

- Agroforestry is a philosophy of land use which is multi-objective and seeks to optimise the financial, environmental and social outputs from the land rather than to maximise financial output.
- It was agreed that the present problem in understanding the potential of agroforestry was because of a narrow definition.
- Agroforestry should be considered as farming with trees rather than being focused on trees planted at wide spacing in arable or pastoral systems.
- Under such a definition, agroforestry fits well with the government's policy of sustainable development.
- Christian Dupraz advocated the continued use of the term "Agroforestry" as, in the broad sense, it was understood in Europe to mean farming with trees.

Gerry Lawson moved that the meeting should proceed to a vote: "That the UK Agroforestry Forum should change its name". A show of hands was taken with 10 votes for the motion and 12 against. The motion was defeated.

Gerry Lawson then proposed a second motion: "That the title and logo of the UK Agroforestry Forum should include a sub-head 'Farming with trees'." A show of hands was taken with 19 votes for the motion and one abstention. The motion was carried.

The Vice-Chairman closed the discussion by proposing a vote of thanks to Arnold Beaton for his discussion paper and to Steve Newman for his policy paper both of which had contributed most constructively to the basis for moving the Forum forward.

17. Strategy papers (continued)

It was agreed that the matter of the preparation of strategy papers would be sent back to the Committee for action.

18. Technology transfer paper

It was agreed the Committee would be asked to follow up on this item based upon a technology transfer paper submitted to the Committee by Richard Crowe.

19. Demonstration sites

Andrew Patterson proposed that, following the cancellation of the Royal Show this year, the Forum should have a presence at Stoneleigh in 2002. This was agreed.

A report on the management of the demonstration site at the Royal Agricultural Society's show-ground at Stoneleigh was tabled by Fergus Sinclair:

"Pruning poplar at Stoneleigh - a party of UWB MSc students was keen to do this and Simon Ayres from UWB discussed it with Arnold Beaton in January. It was

hoped that the pruning could be done at a time when students could be involved but the timing (June) did not fit in the student calendar and so this was deferred.”

20. Any other competent business

No other competent business was raised.

21. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next Annual Business Meeting would be held during the 2002 Annual UK Agroforestry Forum meeting at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, on a date to be arranged.

Alan Sibbald
Secretary, UK Agroforestry Forum

2 July 2001