



UK Agroforestry Forum

30 April, 2002

Mr Mark Pritchard,
Secretary, Forestry Devolution Review,
Great Eastern House,
Tenison Road,
Cambridge
CB1 2DU

Dear Mr Pritchard,

Forestry Devolution Review

I am writing on behalf of the UK Agroforestry Forum in response to your invitation to submit views on potential improvements that could arise from new administrative arrangements for forestry in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Forum is a group of people with a common interest in agroforestry; it has been research based since its inception in 1985 but has expanded in the past five years to include farmers, foresters, advisers, representatives of conservation organisations and those involved with education and training. The objectives of the Forum are:

1. To promote agroforestry as a viable and sustainable use of land.
2. To encourage and co-ordinate research so far as is possible to underpin the understanding of the viability and sustainability of agroforestry.
3. To co-ordinate technology transfer of agroforestry knowledge to land users and advisors.

The International Centre for Research in Agroforestry defines agroforestry as:

...a dynamic, ecologically based, natural resources management system that, through the integration of trees on farms and in the agricultural landscape, diversifies and sustains production for increased social, economic and environmental benefits for land users at all levels.

Agroforestry is not, therefore, a simple combination of areas of agriculture and forestry, nor is it simply alley cropping or woodland grazing. It deals with a far greater range of economic species, products, potential users, and planting arrangements from an integrated perspective of sustainability than does current UK forestry. Hence our subtitle above - "Farming with Trees".

All correspondence should be addressed to:
The Secretary, UK Agroforestry Forum, Sylvan, Monymusk, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire, AB51 7HJ
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I have consulted members of the Forum and our considered view is that the major weakness in the present structure of administrative arrangements for forestry in Great Britain, with respect to the uptake of agroforestry as a valuable, diversifying and sustainable land use, is the potential for differing philosophy and practice in England, Scotland and Wales.

The major obstacle to rational and integrated policies for planting trees on farms is that the three countries now have their own rural affairs departments (DEFRA in England, SEERAD in Scotland and the National Assembly's Agriculture Department in Wales). These departments administer agriculture; agroforestry is a farm-based enterprise but trees on farms need quality forestry knowledge. A GB-wide administration for forestry could confound promising developments of farming with trees if it failed to recognize different requirements and priorities in the three countries. In Northern Ireland, where the administrative links between agriculture and forestry have been close for many decades, the uptake of agroforestry is already supported by better payments under the Woodland Grants Scheme than in GB and by the provision of an agroforestry advisory service for farmers.

We would therefore support a devolution of the administrative arrangements for forestry to England, Scotland and Wales because we believe that it would create stronger links with the three new rural affairs departments and would greatly benefit the uptake of agroforestry as an alternative and beneficial land use on farm land and the better management of existing trees on farms.

In terms of current strengths of the present administrative arrangements, we would encourage the retention of the Forestry Commission's Research agency as a GB organization responsible for forestry research. Our experience in the Forum is that there are significant benefits to be gained from a concerted GB research effort, provided that the priorities of the separate administrations in England, Scotland and Wales are taken into account in the determination of the overall research programme and that collaboration with Northern Ireland is encouraged.

We believe that international aspects of forest policy should remain an UK-wide responsibility provided that it ensures that the interests of the UK and its separate countries are properly represented in Brussels, especially regarding issues relating to subsidy regimes. An arrangement by which the views of the separate countries, with respect particularly to matters in Europe, are gathered and furthered will ensure that duplication of effort and dilution of a political voice are avoided.

If you have any questions on the matters we have raised please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Alan R Sibbald
Secretary, UK Agroforestry Forum

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