

Jo Ellis
The Forestry Commission
National Office for England
Great Eastern House
Tenison Road
Cambridge
CB1 2DU



28 January 2002

Dear Jo Ellis,

I am writing on behalf of the Executive Committee (England Strategy Sub-Committee) of the UK Agroforestry Forum to comment on the Sustaining England's Woodlands consultation document. This letter should be read in conjunction with forum's questionnaire response.

The forum is an informal group of people with a common interest in agroforestry; it has been research based since its inception in 1985 but has expanded to include farmers, foresters, advisers, representatives of conservation organizations 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 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 define 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 simply a combination of agriculture and forestry. Nor is it not simply alley cropping. It deals with a far greater range of economic species, products, potential users, and planting arrangements than current UK forestry from an integrated perspective of sustainability. Hence our subtitle "Farming with Trees".

The forum has responded to the questionnaire by concentrating answers and comments on those questions that we consider to be of direct relevance to our objectives. In order to inform you of the views that underpin our questionnaire response I include the following statements or points of concern.

The forum consider that it is necessary to:

1. Critically assess the England Forestry Strategy from the perspective of agroforestry and new sustainable rural enterprise.
2. Develop an agroforestry policy rather than separate agricultural and woodland policies for England.
3. Reform policy instruments that prevent adoption of agroforestry in practice.
4. Fund participatory research and development on the mature stages of integrated tree-pasture and tree-crop systems (networks of sites exist where the establishment phase has been well researched but work on management of the mature phase is now required).

5. Set up and fund the provision of specialist advice.

It is our view that a more unified approach to land use policy, and to support mechanisms, is required in order to eliminate the present divisions that obstruct the potential contribution to sustainable development that can be made by agroforestry.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Dutson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the left of a vertical line.

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SUSTAINING ENGLAND'S WOODLANDS

Questionnaire

Please continue on separate sheets as necessary. You do not need to answer every question.

Name Tom Dutson¹ MICFor & Dr Paul Burgess²

Address

1. National School of Forestry, Cumbria Campus at Newton Rigg, University of Central Lancashire, Penrith, Cumbria CA11 0AH.
2. Institute of Water and Environment, Cranfield University, Silsoe, Bedfordshire, MK45 4DT.

If this response reflects the views of a representative body, please supply details: UK Agroforestry Forum (England Strategy Sub-Committee).

How would you best describe yourself (or your organisation)? Please tick one:

<u>Woodland owner</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>Local/public authority</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Forestry agent/consultant/contractor</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>Forest user</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Environmental organisation</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>Timber processor</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Other (please state) ✓</u> <u>The UK Agroforestry Forum is an informal group of people with a common interest in agroforestry (farming with trees). It has been research based since its inception in 1985 but is now expanding to include farmers, foresters, advisers and representatives of conservation agencies.</u>			

Do you (or does your organisation) own woodland?

<u>Yes, more than 10 hectares</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Yes, less than 10 hectares</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>No</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Do your views reflect your experience of a particular region? If so, please tick. This is so that differences in priorities for each Government region can be assessed.

<u>North East England</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>West Midlands</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>North West England</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>East England</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Yorkshire & Humber</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>South East England</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>East Midlands</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>South West England</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Greater London</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>All England</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Do you want your views to be confidential? If so please tick here:

Please return by 28 January 2002 to:

Jo Ellis

The Forestry Commission

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Section 1.

Questions about how the FC engages with woodland owners, and how the FC could help to ensure that forestry is sustainable in economic, environmental and social terms. Please refer to paragraphs 23–43 of the consultation document.

Q. 1 Do woodland owners and the wider public need to know more about what sustainable woodland management means?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

If so, what should be the FC's role in achieving this?

There is a need for policy-makers to have a broad vision of sustainable 'woodland' management. An important part of England's 'woodland' resource exists as relatively small parcels, or even individual trees, on agricultural land. The England Forestry Strategy says that the Government wants to promote not only substantial woodlands, but also rejuvenated hedgerows, parklands, orchards, copses, and shelterbelts. In such situations, sustainable woodland management needs to be integrated within the broader issue of the sustainability of rural environments, businesses and communities.

To achieve this we consider that the Forestry Commission, working closely with DEFRA, should support on-farm research to quantify the existing economic, environmental and social benefits provided by even relatively small parcels of woodland and individual trees. This research should be done on a regional basis in England.

Q. 2 How can the FC engage with the owners of woodlands where it sees appropriate active management as being a priority for sustainability? What are the main barriers preventing engagement?

The FC can help farmers recognise the potential value of existing or new trees and woodlands. The UK Agroforestry Forum is running an open day entitled 'Farming with trees - new options for short-term profit' in June 2002. The FC should support such activities.

On the basis of research (such as that described above) and consultation, the FC with others should establish regional priorities, setting regional objectives and then target those woodland owners best able to contribute to achieving these objectives.

Q. 3 Is there a case for the FC supporting work that enhances the economic value of timber?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

If so, how should this support be given?

The FC should ensure that the factors that influence timber quality can be recognised and addressed in grant aid and advice on woodland management where timber production is an objective. In relation to farm woodlands and trees on farms this would include basal weed control, formative pruning, appropriate stocking densities and thinning regimes, restocking and enrichment with improved stock. For example in France new measures have recently been introduced, as part of their agri-environmental measures, to support the pruning and management of recently planted trees (until 10 years old) to create high value timber.

Q. 4 Should the FC support owners and/or woodland businesses in the harvesting, processing and sale of timber products from their woodlands?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

If so, why is this necessary and how should this support be given?

There is a need to initiate innovative programmes to encourage owners to derive greater value from existing woodlands. A programme such as that of Coed Cymru, which is developing a market for Welsh hardwoods, is a good example of work that should be repeated in England.

The FC should also provide support and guidance to help existing businesses in the transition from traditional production orientated forestry operations to multi-objective forest and woodland management operations. The FC should also provide support to collective/group processing and marketing initiatives.

Q. 5 To what extent should the FC (rather than other bodies) involve itself in developing markets for woodland products and services? Which woodland products and services should the FC support?

The FC should encourage innovation and entrepreneurial processing and marketing initiatives.

Q. 6 Do you see a role for the FC in helping owners to exploit the commercial potential of their woodlands in areas other than timber production?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

If so, how might the FC help?

The FC should support research into assessing the commercial potential of non-timber forest products: for example nut crops and elderflower.

The FC should provide advice to woodland owners on the wider range of funding opportunities available, in addition to Woodland Grant Scheme and Farm Woodland Premium Scheme.

Q. 7 In what situations is direct public support for non-market benefits necessary to ensure the economic sustainability of woodland management?

Direct public support may be given to threatened or new woodlands, with limited or no economic potential, which offer considerable social and/or environmental value. This includes public benefits such as recreation, biodiversity conservation, carbon storage, watershed management, and mitigation of pollution.

Q. 8 Should the FC do more to support the implementation of Habitat Action Plans and/or Species Action Plans in woods?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

If so, how should this support be provided?

Conservation of woodland or ancient and semi-natural origin is rightly a priority.

There should also be targeted support of wood-pasture and parkland as priority habitat groups designated under the Habitat Action Plan. Although the Forestry Commission may not have considered these historic forms of agroforestry as woodland, they are worthy of targeted support to encourage conservation. In France, new agri-environment measures have recently been introduced to support the creation and formation of such agroforestry habitats.

Q. 9 What other measures are needed from the FC to support woodland biodiversity and conservation?

Importance is (rightly) attached to the conservation of woodlands of ancient and semi-natural origin that account for 20% of England's woodland area.

The Forestry Commission should support research into the potential biodiversity benefits of trees & woodlands integrated with farming systems, e.g. acceptable levels and timing of grazing of livestock in woodlands and the management of woodlands for shelter of livestock and crops. Trees and shrubs in farmed landscapes in some cases represent historic links to or are relics of such woodlands and as such are worthy of targeted support. Trees in farmed landscapes in some cases act as or provide links/corridors/stepping stones between remnant woodland patches and as such their conservation and development is an integral part of wider woodland management.

Moreover because tree and woodland management is outside the experience of many farmers, the provision of appropriate and accessible advice is critical if farmers and society are to derive the greatest benefits from farm woodlands.

Q. 10 Which environmental issues need to be tackled by co-operative working at a scale larger than individual woods? How should the FC help to tackle these issues?

There should be greater research into the quantifying of the environmental value of trees (outside of large forests). It is on the basis of such research that the government can target policies and support effectively. Such research should be undertaken at a regional level.

Q. 11 Should the FC do more to help to reduce the damage caused by deer in woods?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

If so, how could this help be most effectively delivered?

Q. 12 Should the FC do more to help to reduce the damage caused by grey squirrels in woods?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

If so, how could this help be most effectively delivered?

Trees within farmed landscapes are vulnerable to grey squirrel damage. Sycamore is a tree species that demonstrates great potential for use in silvopastoral agroforestry. Such systems may rely upon trees being established at 'final crop' spacing and therefore opportunities to remove damaged trees through thinning are considerably reduced. Grey squirrels may also threaten nut crops from trees on farms.

Control of grey squirrel damage involves dealing with complex and sensitive issues, the FC should co-ordinate control nationally and regionally and take a leading role in advising on best practice.

Q. 13 What would encourage more woodland owners to open their woods for public access, especially in areas where there is a demand for woodland recreation or the woodland forms part of a wider countryside recreation and access initiative? In particular, what would encourage the provision of access over a long term, for example the lifetime of the owner?

Q. 14 What mechanisms could be used to encourage the provision of high quality and a diverse range of recreational opportunities in appropriate woodlands?

The supporting and publicising/reporting research into the current and potential role of farm woodland and farm trees in the provision of recreation opportunities.

Q. 15 Is there a role for Forest Enterprise in helping owners to manage woods where there may be especially complex public demands?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

Q. 16 Are there other ways in which local communities should be involved in forestry?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

If so, how can the FC facilitate this involvement?

By ensuring that grant mechanisms are sufficiently flexible to support imaginative and unconventional community initiatives, e.g. community forest gardens.

Section 2.

Questions about how the FC could remove some of the barriers to woodland management which are currently faced by woodland owners, and questions about the current grants. See paragraphs 44–57 of the consultation paper.

Q. 17 Are current planning grants an appropriate way to help woodland owners plan management effectively?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

Are there other ways in which the FC should help owners to plan management?

Q. 18 Should FC grants be conditional upon long-term planning?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

If so, is this necessary in all woods, or is it a higher priority in particular kinds of woods?

Long-term management plans are essential in order to achieve the objectives of sustainable management. The management of all types of woods stands to benefit from long-term planning. The challenge is to establish planning templates that are accessible and meaningful to all woodland owners whilst being sufficiently complex to integrate woodland management with other land uses and activities on a landscape scale. Again the French Institut pour le Developpement Forestier sets a high standard with its publication “Afforesting agricultural land”.

Q. 19 Is a lack of suitable contractors preventing sustainable woodland management?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

If so, should the FC involve itself in supporting the contractor base, and how could it do this most effectively?

Contractors are entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs seek profit, and little profit currently results from many woodland operations. However, if appropriately targeted support for multi-objective woodland and tree management can generate business opportunities then provision of appropriate training opportunities and business support will be required.

Training and extension in relation to the practical management of trees and woodlands on farms is necessary in order to equip the farming community with appropriate skills to support agroforestry and to ensure that forestry contractors are suitably skilled to deal with trees on farms.

Support for farmers and rural/agricultural workers in depressed areas may provide the greatest social benefit (and lowest shadow cost). Initiatives to develop a contractor base from the rural workforce should be considered where underemployment occurs.

Q. 20 Do woodland owners and managers need additional advice or training to help them manage woods sustainably?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

If so, in what areas (subjects) is advice and training particularly needed?

Training and extension in relation to the practical management of trees and woodlands on farms is necessary in order to equip the farming community with appropriate skills to support agroforestry. Arable and livestock farmers are not natural foresters, they need to learn how to add value to woodland products e.g. by understorey management, canopy management and optimised wood quality by pruning and thinning, by pest control, and by well-planned restocking.

Q. 21 Would a publicly funded 'extension service' be the most appropriate method of providing good quality advice and support to woodland owners and managers?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

What would be the most effective ways of delivering such advice?

Effective extension involves field workshops and demonstrations combined with good literature.

Q. 22 What role should grants play in encouraging sustainable forest management?

A central role.

Q. 23 Please use the following table to comment on current grants. Sometimes a grant may be good in principle, but the actual delivery of the grant reduces its effectiveness. For this reason, the table asks for your comments on both the principle and the delivery of each kind of grant.

	<u>Your comments on the principle of this form of grant</u>	<u>Your comments on the delivery of this grant and suggestions for improvement – for example the rate of payment; the activities included or excluded; the accompanying regulations.</u>
<u>Annual Management Grant</u>		
<u>Restocking Grant</u>		
<u>Woodland Improvement Grant 1 (Public access)</u>		
<u>Woodland Improvement Grant 2 (Under-managed)</u>		
<u>Woodland Improvement Grant 3 (Biodiversity)</u>		

Q. 24 In principle, are Challenge funds effective at encouraging sustainable woodland management in existing woods?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

Q. 25 Is it appropriate for the FC to support UKWAS certification through grant aid?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

If so, what would be the best way of providing this support?

Section 3.

Questions about how the FC should work with partners and target action to achieve the Government's priorities for forestry. See paragraphs 59–68 of the consultation paper.

Q. 26 Do you think that the FC should increase its role as an ambassador for forestry, doing more to promote forestry as an instrument of policy delivery?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

If so, please suggest which areas it should increase its activity.

Q. 27 Do you think that doing more to support others who are delivering the forestry agenda would be a cost-effective way for the FC to support sustainable forestry?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

If so, what type of projects or initiatives should it support?

The FC should support and help in the reporting of research on the economic, environmental and social benefits of a range of woodland systems. This could be at regional level.

Q. 28 In what circumstances should the FC take a lead in co-ordinating the formation and working of partnerships?

The FC could support forums such as the Poplar Forum and the Agroforestry Forum both of which are committed to better management of existing and new plantings of trees on farms.

Q. 29 Do you support the principle of flexibility and targeting of support for sustainable forest management?

Yes Maybe No No opinion

If so, how should this support be targeted? If not, why not?

Q. 30 What steps need to be taken to ensure that FC support for forestry is better integrated with other government support mechanisms?

We think that there should be a fuller consideration of the benefits of new and existing small parcels of trees, or even individual trees, on farms. Such an analysis will highlight a number of areas where there are currently gaps between 'support for forestry' and other government support mechanisms. This is because many grants assume that land is either all forestry or all agriculture. There is also a need to be observant of new support measures being used in other EU countries e.g. France where recent new support mechanisms do not discriminate against low density plantings of trees with intercrops.

Q. 31 In your experience, which areas of FC support for sustainable forestry need most improvement in efficiency? Do you have suggestions for how improvements should be made?

In general terms there is an urgent need for the closer integration of government departments and agencies dealing with aspects of sustainable development.

Please refer to comments under Q.1 for more specific recommendations.

Section 4.

Questions on the priorities for spending. See paragraphs 69–71 of the consultation document.

<u>Q. 32 Please rank the six most important areas for support from 1 to 6, with 1 being of highest priority. You may wish to suggest other priorities for support – please include these in your ranking.</u>	
	<u>Ranking (1 to 6)</u>
<u>Helping owners and the wider public to understand what sustainable forest management means (paragraph 24)</u>	
<u>Engaging with owners of woodland where the FC would particularly like to see management (paragraph 25)</u>	
<u>Promoting the economic sustainability of woodland management through help with improving timber quality, harvesting, processing and/or sale of wood and timber (paragraphs 26–27)</u>	
<u>Promoting economic sustainability through market development (paragraph 28)</u>	
<u>Promoting economic sustainability through helping with the sale of other goods and services (paragraph 29)</u>	
<u>Doing more to support the environmental sustainability of woodland management (paragraphs 32–33)</u>	
<u>Working in partnership to tackle large-scale environmental issues (paragraphs 33–35)</u>	
<u>Helping to reduce the damage caused by grey squirrels (paragraph 35)</u>	
<u>Helping to reduce the damage caused by deer (paragraph 36)</u>	
<u>Helping owners to encourage public access and recreation (paragraphs 37–43)</u>	
<u>Helping owners to increase community involvement in forestry (paragraphs 37–43)</u>	
<u>Helping owners to plan management effectively (paragraphs 45–46)</u>	
<u>Ensuring that there is a skilled contractor resource available to owners (paragraphs 47–48)</u>	
<u>Ensuring that good advice is readily available to owners and managers (paragraphs 49–51)</u>	
<u>Altering existing grants to better support sustainable forest management (paragraphs 52–55)</u>	
<u>Supporting owners in achieving certification against the UKWAS standard (paragraphs 56–57)</u>	
<u>Increasing the FC’s ‘ambassadorial role’ for forestry (paragraph 60)</u>	
<u>Doing more to support others who are delivering the forestry agenda (paragraph 60)</u>	
<u>Taking a lead in co-ordinating partnerships (paragraph 61)</u>	
<u>Improving the flexibility and targeting of support (paragraphs 62–65)</u>	
<u>Other: The FC has a role in supporting and reporting research to maximise the economic, environmental and social benefits from trees in England.</u>	<u>✓</u>
<u>Other</u>	

Q. 33 Is the current balance (see paragraph 70) between support for woodland creation and support for existing woodland management reasonable?

Yes

No, too much support for existing woodland

No, not enough support for existing woodland

No opinion

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

Q. 34 Could changes to the tax regime make an important contribution to supporting sustainable forest management in existing woods?

Yes

Maybe

No

No opinion

If so, what changes would you like to see, and why?

Q. 35 Are there any other means of support that the FC should provide to ensure the sustainable management of existing woodland, which are not covered in your responses to the questions above? Please be specific.