

## Five actions for policymakers to promote agroforestry adoption in the UK

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*Agroforestry can provide environmental benefits, increase food security and contribute to net-zero nationally. A lack of knowledge about agroforestry amongst land managers is one of the primary barriers to agroforestry adoption.*



### Headlines

We identified **five actions for policymakers** to promote agroforestry adoption:

One: Create **educational schemes** to support **farmer-to-farmer mentoring**.

Two: **Fund on-farm living labs** within agri-environmental schemes.

Three: Stabilise and clarify **government agroforestry subsidies** within and between nations.

Four: **Consolidate farm advisory systems** and implement cross-disciplinary training.

Five: Fund **long-term, transdisciplinary research**.

### Background

Rates of agroforestry adoption are currently low, despite interest and willingness among many farmers. Knowledge is a primary barrier to adoption, including gaps in research (information is not available) and education (land managers do not think they know enough to implement agroforestry) (Source: [Tranchina et al. 2024](#), [Tosh et al. 2021](#)). During 2023-24, we engaged 220 stakeholders across the UK including farmers, policy makers, NGOs, and researchers. We conducted surveys, interviews and workshops to identify educational barriers and research gaps. We then co-produced solutions to these barriers and a list of research priorities.

### Findings

#### Research: priority knowledge gaps

Stakeholders identified 40 high-priority research questions, including quantifying:

- The **impacts of tree species on biodiversity, carbon, and climate resilience**.
- The contribution widespread agroforestry adoption can make to **net-zero and food security**.
- The potential current and future **markets for agroforestry products**.

#### Education: key barriers

- The primary obstacles to learning about agroforestry were a **perceived lack of time and a shortage of trustworthy information**.
- Barriers were highest for the **business-related aspects of agroforestry management**, including the legal, regulatory and financial impacts.



# Implications & Recommendations

## One: Create educational schemes to support farmer-to-farmer mentoring.

Farmer-to-farmer learning is particularly **effective for knowledge-exchange and changing behaviour**. However, it is often based on good will, and this can overburden existing agroforestry farmers. Government schemes that **formalise and fund farmer-to-farmer mentoring** can promote agroforestry tree planting.

## Two: Fund on-farm living labs within agri-environmental schemes.

Living labs are a community of practice where stakeholders co-produce and test new practices on farms. They can address research gaps and educational barriers at the same time due to the value of testing/seeing real-farm examples, co-designing experiments, and being part of a community. However, existing initiatives such as Climate Farm Demo or the Trees-in-fields Network are hindered by short-term funding; **living labs work better with long-term funding, a dedicated facilitator and flexible subsidies** that encourage farmers to participate in science.

## Three: Stabilise and clarify government agroforestry subsidies within and between nations.

Participants expressed the need for greater stability and better co-ordination within and between nations for agroforestry policies. Lack of clarity is also an issue, and participants called for government websites to **improve FAQ sections and create an interactive tool** that could help farmers identify funding opportunities, including stack offers.

## Four: Consolidate farm advisory systems and implement cross-disciplinary training.

The fragmented landscape of multiple farming advisory bodies – and resulting conflicting information – is undermining trust in agroforestry advice. This is compounded by the separation of forestry and farming advice (many advisors are only trained in one or the other). **Streamlining farm advisory bodies and implementing cross-disciplinary training** would improve the effectiveness of advice.

## Five: Fund long-term, transdisciplinary research.

There are several critical research gaps that are preventing farmers from making informed decisions around the establishment and management of agroforestry systems. There is a particular need for long-term trials and baseline data.

Addressing these five recommendations will empower a large pool of land managers to implement and manage agroforestry effectively, helping to deliver benefits to food security, net zero and the environment.



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