

Press Release

Opportunities for agroforestry in the EU Nature Restoration Law

The German Agroforestry Association (DeFAF) e. V. welcomes the high priority given to agroforestry in the adopted EU Nature Restoration Law

30.08.2024

Many current restrictions for the wider adoption of agroforestry stem from the want to maintain the status quo and are an obstacle to achieving positive changes in the agricultural landscape. The Nature Restoration Law (Regulation (EU) 2024/1991), which came into force on August 18, 2024 therefore raises great hopes.

This new EU law is directly applicable and sets legally binding restoration targets for the long-term regeneration of nature in Europe, with the overarching goal of taking restoration measures in 20% of degraded ecosystems in the EU by 2030 and in all ecosystems by 2050. However, these measures have not only to be implemented within protected areas but rather across the entire landscape. The German government now has two years to draw up national nature restoration plans and submit them to the EU Commission so that they can be implemented no later than three years after the regulation comes into force.

Strengthening the role of agroforestry

Fortunately, the EU Commission and the EU Council see agroforestry as a very suitable measure to adapt land use for the long-term functioning and productivity of agricultural ecosystems. It calls for the expansion of areas under agroecological management, specifically to *“Increase the agricultural area subject to agro-ecological management approaches such as organic agriculture or agro-forestry, multicropping and crop rotation, integrated pest and nutrient management.”* (Annex VII, 17) It is made clear that the aim is not to stop agricultural production, but to create sustainable, resilient and biodiverse agricultural ecosystems in order to provide safe, sustainable, nutritious, and affordable food. Agroforestry is therefore stated as one of the key restoration measures mentioned in the law (Annex VII).

Attractive funding promised

It is also pleasing that the law calls for a reward for voluntary, sustainable management methods. *“Financially attractive funding schemes for owners, farmers and other land-managers to voluntarily engage in such practices are important in delivering the long-term benefits of restoration”* are foreseen (para 54). A farmer being asked what they think of the role of agroforestry, replied: *“The potential of agroforestry in Germany is huge, we have too many fields with far way too few trees.”*

Agroforestry trees not legally protected landscape features

An important indicator for monitoring and complying with the directive is the *“Share of agricultural land with high-diversity landscape features”*, as these can already fulfill the legal

obligation. However, agroforestry systems are not considered as legally protected non-productive landscape features and should not be declared as such either, as they count as productive land. The legislator has also made provision for this, so that the special role for agroforestry is taken into account. *“Productive trees part of sustainable agroforestry systems or trees in extensive old orchards on permanent grassland and productive elements in [] hedges can also be considered as high diversity landscape features, if they comply with criterion set out under (b) of the second paragraph, and if harvests take place only at moments where it would not compromise high biodiversity levels.”* (Annex IV). This implies that these areas are not treated with fertilizers or pesticides, with the exception of the application of solid manure on a small scale. Fertilization and chemical plant protection are neither practicable nor common in the agricultural practice of agroforestry.

Conclusion

The EU Nature Restoration Law reveals potential for stronger implementation and promotion of agroforestry in Germany and in the EU. DeFAF e. V. expressly welcomes the specific designation of agroforestry as a suitable measure for restoring nature and is willing to contribute to its implementation and design within the framework of the national restoration plans.

Source

European Parliament legislative resolution of 27 February 2024 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on nature restoration (COM(2022)0304 – C9-0208/2022 – 2022/0195(COD)) URL: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2024-0089_EN.pdf

About DeFAF e.V.

The German Association for Agroforestry (DeFAF e.V.) was founded in 2019 and has set itself the goal of promoting agroforestry in Germany. The association brings together farmers, scientists, political decision-makers and other interest groups and is committed to sustainable and future-oriented agriculture. [Here](#) you can find the activity report of DeFAF e.V. for 2023.

Contacts

Dr. Rico Hübner / Anke Hahn (DeFAF International Section)
international@defaf.de, +49 355 752 132 44

Deutscher Fachverband für Agroforstwirtschaft (DeFAF) e.V.
Karl-Liebknecht-Straße 102, Haus B
03046 Cottbus
GERMANY