

# Agroforestry



Integrating trees with agriculture to encourage positive interactions in order to improve farm resilience, lead to an overall increase in productivity, biodiversity and other mutual benefits

Agroforestry is a way of managing land that mixes farming with trees in a sustainable way. At its simplest, it means growing trees on farms, for example hedgerows, windbreaks, trees in pastures, or small woodlands. More complex systems grow rows of trees alongside crops or livestock in structured designs like alley cropping.

Our research looks at how different types of agroforestry, using both animals and crops, perform in terms of productivity, environmental benefits, and economics. Trees and farm elements work together, often boosting output and offering extra benefits like better soil, natural shelter, weed control, and carbon storage.

These systems can produce a wide range of outputs, such as food, fuel, timber, forage, craft materials, and more. We also study hedgerows not just for wildlife, but as valuable sources of biofuels and woodchip, and research how to help meet national targets for planting and restoring them.

## Some of our projects

### REFOREST

REFOREST is a 4-year Horizon Europe project, bringing together 14 institutions from 10 European countries with the aim to support agroforestry in Europe and removing the barriers preventing its wider use.

ORC has focused on working with stakeholders and modelling. In the North of England Living Lab, we've created case studies, gathered

field data, shared updates through newsletters, and hosted webinars and workshops. We've also helped set up a platform and hub to share knowledge, and formed a group to support farmer training in agroforestry. Our modelling work uses AI and satellite imagery to predict how planting trees affects soil carbon and biodiversity.



### Agroforestry advice and guidance Test & Trial

This is ORC's second agroforestry Test & Trial, supporting the development of agroforestry options under the new Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS). Led by the Woodland Trust with the National Trust and ORC, the project looks at the best ways to help farmers gain the confidence and knowledge to start agroforestry. Farmers choose from four learning

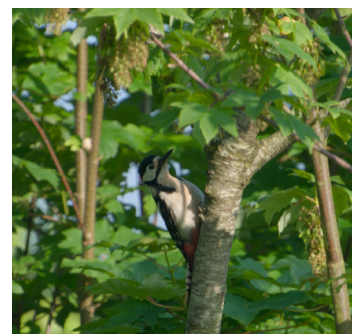
options: webinars, farm walks, advisor visits, or self-learning. ORC designed the webinar series and tracks how each option works using surveys, interviews, and by reviewing the agroforestry plans farmers create. The training and evaluation focus on setting goals, designing the system, establishing it, and managing it long term.



## Importance of Hedgerows as Wildlife Corridors

This two-year project, funded by the Marmot Charitable Trust and ORC supporters through the Big Give Green Match Fund, aims to provide the first solid data on how hedgerows act as wildlife corridors in the fragmented UK farmed

landscape. ORC staff visited 18 woodland sites across Suffolk and Norfolk in summer and autumn 2024, collecting 144 invertebrate samples. Data analysis is underway, with results due in summer 2025.



## On-farm Tree Resilience

This project 'Supporting farmers' on-farm integration of tree resilience actions' is funded through the Centre for Forest Protection, a collaboration between Forest Research and Royal Botanic

Gardens, Kew, as part of the Government's Plan for Change. ORC's role is providing access to farmers through our networks, co-leading on development and delivery of interventions.

## Wakelyns Stewardship

This project centres on our work at Wakelyns in Suffolk, aiming to boost its role in promoting agroforestry more widely. It has supported the update of the Resilience through Diversity booklet and helped run events marking 30 years of

agroforestry at Wakelyns. We're now developing training materials and display boards on tree management and aim to ensure Wakelyns continues as a valuable site for research and demonstration into the future.



More on our agroforestry research



## Farming the Future

This project aims to help farmers deal with the financial challenges of agroforestry. It will do this by sharing real-life examples to guide and inspire those interested in selling products from their agroforestry trees. We also hope the project will support policy makers and local groups in creating new ways to market and sell these products.

## Our staff



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