

PRESS RELEASE

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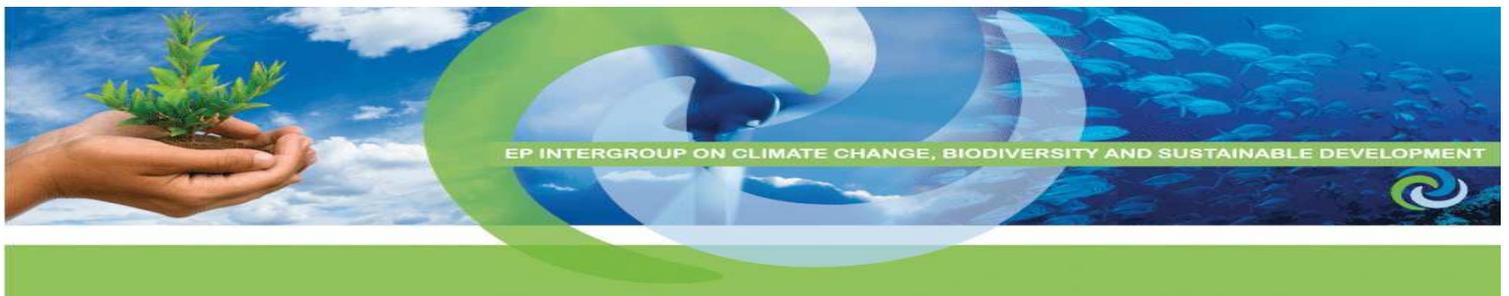
“Agroforestry is a rediscovered form of sustainable and creative agriculture,” said Mrs Benitez Salas from the European Commission

Brussels, 10th October 2012: “In the face of the food security, environmental and economic challenges, agroforestry makes us rethink the place of trees under an integrated high nature value farming,” stated **Gaston Franco, Member of the European Parliament** and Chair of the conference titled **“Agroforestry: Trees for a Sustainable European Agriculture”**.

Bringing together over 80 participants including policy makers, farmer’s representatives, NGOs and renowned scientists, the event provided solutions to boost the potential of agroforestry in Europe under a greener and more competitive Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Now is the opportune time to put this new farming system at the heart of the discussion on the CAP reform.

“Agroforestry offers innovative solutions to modern challenges of rural development,” argued **Christian Dupraz, Researcher and President of the European Agroforestry Federation**. “It is clearly a societal challenge allowing optimising the use of natural resources and combining production and environmental protection,” recalled **Alain Canet - President of the French Agroforestry Association** -. Agroforestry is not an impediment to agriculture but an asset. It can contribute significantly to the fight against climate change, soil erosion, to biodiversity preservation, water storage and purification while increasing productivity and farmers’ income. Economic analyses have demonstrated that farms, which will have 25% of their land area planted with high quality timber (pears, cherries, walnuts, etc), will double their annual income, particularly by selling trees.

Mrs Benitez Salas, Director in DG Agriculture – European Commission - voiced strong support for agroforestry. In her view, developing agroforestry requires taking action on training through the exchange of best practices and research through knowledge sharing. The European Innovation Partnership on **“Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability”**, recently launched by the European Commission, will be highly beneficial in this regard. Furthermore, as stressed by **Dominique Chalumeaux - farmer, in charge of forest and agroforestry issues at the French Agricultural Chambers Assembly** - personalized and technical support given to farmers on the spot is key.



“European farmers are keen to apply agroforestry assuming that political, legal, and financial obstacles are overcome,” claimed **Antonia Andúgar from Copa-Cogeca**. For instance, it is necessary to provide the eligibility of plots for CAP direct payments with more flexibility, since the diversity of agricultural systems, including agroforestry, is a reality. Traditional landscape features and / or the presence of trees should not *a priori* be criteria for exclusion of lands from CAP direct payments.

Strong EU recognition of the multiple assets of agroforestry is essential. The on-going CAP reform should pave the way to enshrined and spread agroforestry practices in Europe.

The conference was organized by the Secretariat of the European Parliament Intergroup “*Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development*,” run jointly by the European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Other speakers:

- Stephen Briggs, Farmer in Cambridgeshire, Director of Abacus Organic Associates
- Jana Polakova, Senior Policy Analyst on agriculture and rural development, Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP)

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