



Farmers' Network for Fodder Trees & Multifunctional Land Use

Goal This knowledge sharing network for farmers, advisors and researchers was set up in the Netherlands in 2011 to promote the multifunctional use of trees and shrubs in modern farming systems, and to create agroforestry and silvopastoral systems. To gain experience with the cultivation and harvest of trees and shrubs, field trials and demonstration projects have been started on four dairy farms with cows and goats. These trials will also provide insight into the use of trees and shrubs as fodder for livestock, biomass for renewable energy production, and other purposes.

Background The use of trees and shrubs in Dutch farming systems dates back to the beginning of domestic agriculture. Trees provided many useful products, such as firewood and building material, wood for wooden shoes and tool handles, and twigs for wicker baskets. The trees and shrubs also served as natural fencing around farm yards and pastures, and provided fodder and shelter for livestock. Although people at that time were not really aware of this, the trees and shrubs also played an essential role in balancing agroecosystems and closing nutrient cycles.

Fodder trees Unfortunately, with the decline in traditional on-farm uses of wood, trees are disappearing from Dutch farms and therefore from the Dutch landscape. As a result, biodiversity and landscape quality are decreasing, and knowledge about the on-farm use of trees and shrubs is being lost. By setting up this farmers' network we have created a platform for capturing and preserving knowledge about agroforestry systems, with the purpose to share and further develop practical experience with fodder trees.

Activities The network organizes various activities for participants, such as field trials and demonstration projects, farmer meetings and excursions (e.g. an excursion to the Elm Farm agroforestry project in the UK).

The network was founded in 2011 by the *Overlegplatform Duinboeren* and the Louis Bolk Institute. For more information please contact Nick van Eekeren (n.vaneekeren@louisbolk.nl) or Mark Vonk (mark@duinboeren.nl).

www.louisbolk.org

www.duinboeren.nl