



Press release

IRISH AGROFORESTRY FORUM-WEBSITE LAUNCH

Agroforestry - growing trees on farmland within a wide range of spatial configurations - can support land use systems in dealing with climate mitigation and resilience as well as delivering a range of other key environmental benefits. There is scientific evidence (much of it from the island of Ireland) that Agroforestry can deliver a wide range of ecosystem services and align and facilitate these into sustainable agriculture and forestry land management policies.

Introducing trees into farming systems dramatically enhances the opportunity for a much more comprehensive range of **biodiversity** including numbers and species of pollinators. Trees have a proven role in **protecting watercourses** in riparian buffer zones and trees planted as agroforestry improve soil structure across the landscape, allowing the soil to soak and filter water at much larger volumes over a broader area. Tree roots extend well below the understorey roots and absorb **excess nutrients** that would otherwise end up in the groundwater. There is a huge opportunity to offset agricultural emissions by increasing the **carbon storage** potential from farmland through soils, crops and trees. This will help meet climate change directives and implement mitigation and resilience-strategies. Silvopasture brings real benefits in terms of **animal welfare**. In silvopastoral systems, animals have access to “browse” or leaf material which broadens their range of diet, addresses mineral deficiencies and reduces **methane emissions**. Agroforestry has been shown to extend the grazing season by up to 15 weeks through improved carrying capacity of the soil and better grassland utilisation. This also has a significant positive impact on **ammonia emissions** from housed stock. Agroforestry is well placed to deliver high-quality **hardwood** timber and contribute to the broadleaf deficit in Ireland, **reducing a dependency on expensive non-native imports** and creating a resource for local sawmills and woodland culture into communities.

With carefully planned silvopasture, all farms could integrate trees into their operations with minimal loss in pasture area, and produce integrated harvests of timber, or tree crops, all the while mitigating emissions, enhancing the environment and increasing farm resilience to climate challenges.

The wide body of interest in agroforestry within the farming, forestry, horticulture and environmental sectors on the island of Ireland prompted the formation of the **Irish Agroforestry Forum (IAF)** in 2021.

The Forum has already run a conference, a number of field visits, delivered best-practice videos and given presentations to promote the message and uptake of agroforestry across the island. It is particularly grateful to have received support from the **DAFM Woodland Support Grant** which has enabled it to run the above events, appoint a Project Officer and form linkages and collaborative events with other organisations with broadly similar objectives. The support has also enabled the IAF to build an effective

website to foster these collaborations and act as a dissemination hub of information tailored to the growing interest in agroforestry.

The IAF is pleased to be able to formally launch this valuable website

<https://www.irishagroforestry.ie/>

Launch date: Wednesday 23rd March

Contact: irishagroforestryforum@gmail.com

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An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
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Food and the Marine